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Bethlehem, City of David

Bethlehem, also known as City of David will be the topic for the research paper. There are actually two cities named, "Bethlehem " in Israel. Bethlehem in Galilee which was originally known as Bethlehem of Zebulun. It is located in the Jezreel valley. On the other hand, There is Bethlehem in Judah. Bethlehem, a town in the West Bank, is located in Judean Hills 5 miles south of Jerusalem. In this research paper, it will mostly cover Bethlehem in Judah, City of David, as there are more historical events, and it is richly known for its tourist attractions. The research paper will address the history of the location, significant events, important people, and any Archeological structures that remain today.

First, Bethlehem in Judah is known as the City of David. In the bible the city is referred to as Bethlehem Ephrathah. It was founded in 1400 BCE. It was mentioned in the Tell El-Amarna letters from the Egyptian governor of Palestine to the Pharaoh Amenhotep III. It was an ancient settlement as it was important for staging and rest stops for travelers. It is also known as the house of Bread. Bethlehem is an agricultural market and trade town that is closely linked to nearby Jerusalem. For a long period of time. Bethlehem has been described as a pilgrimage and

tourist destination, although it was consistently affected by the constant conflicts. A large proportion of the town's population is Christian. The city is located in the region called, "West Bank." West Bank is a former British area of Palestine west of the Jordan river. From 1949 to 1988 as part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, but it was occupied from 1967 by Israel. Few geographical features are the West Bank is mostly on north- south oriented limestone hills having an average height of 2,300 to 3,000 feet. The hills descend eastwardly to the Great Rift Valley of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. For climate, annual rainfall of more than 27 inches comes in the highly elevated places in the region of the northwest and reduces in the southwest and south east, along the Dead Sea, to less than 4 inches. More on later history according to the Oxford Reference, "The church survived the persian invasion in 614, which wreaked havoc elsewhere. The town was surrendered to the Arabs under Caliph Omar in 634, who it was said, following the intercession of a priest, maintained sanctity of the church while claiming the southern apse as a Muslim place of prayer." (Master). It is also written that there are many natural caves in the limestone near Bait Sahur and Bethlehem. It was used from early times to the present as dwellings, workshops, barns, shelters, and places of Christian worship. The archaeological investigation of Bethlehem was limited except the work on the church of the Nativity itself and on construction during construction work.

Furthermore, There are major significant events that occurred in Bethlehem. First, Bethlehem was the birthplace of Jesus Christ. "When Mary is almost ready to give birth, she and Joseph must travel to Bethlehem in order to participate in a Roman census. When they arrive in Bethlehem, there is not enough room for all of the travelers in the inns. Mary gives birth to Jesus

in a stable. Then the angel of the Lord appears to shepherds in a nearby field, saying, ‘I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord’ (Luke 2:10-11)” (Hudson). As mentioned by Christopher Hudson, Bethlehem was the town where Mary and Joseph gave birth to Jesus Christ. It has also been known that Jesus was born in a stable. About 338 CE, Constantine had a church built over the site of Jesus’s birth. It is called the Church of the Nativity. Later in the paper, it will mention more about the Church of the Nativity. It has a cave that holds the birthplace of Jesus Christ, and it is still present today where people can tour and witness the spot. Secondly, Bethlehem was the site where it was mentioned in the first book of the bible when Jacob, son of Abraham, and his family journeyed to the city of Hebron passing by Bethlehem. His wife Rache died giving birth to Benjamin, and he buried her by the side of Bethlehem. The name of Bethlehem (Ephrata) “the fruitful.” Thirdly, Bethlehem was the site where King David was born. “Born into humble circumstances, David is the youngest son of Jesse, a lowly shepherd from Bethlehem in the tribe of Judah.” (Hudson). According to Oxford Reference, Bethlehem was where David’s career began. He was brought to play the lyre for Saul, the other that he was a shepherd whom Samuel had anointed as king. Micah also prophesies a shepherd king from Bethlehem.

The water sources are a primary source consideration. It was missing strong springs in the vicinity, but many wells and cisterns existed. The use of cisterns were generally thought to have begun in the Late Bronze Age; wells have a much longer history. According to Oxford Reference, “The Jerusalem Lower Aqueduct may have originated during Hasmonean times but

certainly existed in the time of Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.E). It provided for the first time a strong supply of fresh water to the upper ridge.” (Master). The town of Bethlehem has gone through a conflict of obtaining fresh water.

Moreover, There is a lack of archaeological evidence considering the Old Testament. There isn't any archaeological evidence from Bethlehem itself to support the accounts of the patriarchal narrative of the Israelite settlement or of the home and wars of David. Bethlehem is mentioned in the book of Judges, but rare findings of any archaeological evidence of Israelite settlement. The archaeological evidence increases in the Iron Age II. According to Oxford Reference, “The Early Bronze-I site on the lower eastern end of the Bethlehem ridge was reoccupied and a nearby cave had Iron Age -II material in the debris.” (Master). As it is written, there was evidence to support many findings such as a large group of pottery was found. However, in the Old Testament, the story of Rachel is mentioned where it was taken in the place of Bethlehem. In the similar manner, in the New Testament due to the birth of Jesus Christ, Bethlehem appears in the book of Luke and others.

Foundationally, the archaeological remains that are still found today are the Church of the Nativity. Tradition states that the cave under the church is the actual spot where Jesus Christ was born. It was built by Constantine the Great around AD 330 and still stands in Bethlehem. “ The Church of the Nativity, which marks the birthplace of the Savior, is one of the best authenticated sites in the Holy Land. The present structure, built over the cave area that served as a stable for the inn, goes back to the time of the Roman emperor Justinian.” (Harrison). It is still present

today, and many tourists come to visit the site of the birth of Jesus Christ. It appears that it has been built over a cave, and the cave leads down to a stable. The grotto is the oldest site continuously used as a place of worship in Christianity, and the basilica is the oldest major church in the Holy Land. The original structure was constructed by St. Macarius I of Jerusalem at the command of Constantine the Great and his mother Helena. It was finalized sometime between 333 and 339. However, it was burnt down in the Samaritan revolt of 529. It was newly built in 565 by Justinian. The Church of the Nativity has gone through multiple repairs and additions.

To conclude, Bethlehem has two cities in Israel. The Bethlehem in Galilee and the Bethlehem in Judah is found in Israel. Bethlehem in Judah is well known to many people in the world as it has many significant events and tourist attractions. It is the birthplace of Jesus Christ and King David. It is mentioned in the New Testament and the Old Testament in the Bible. There are still archaeological remains that are present today. Bethlehem has multiple geographical features that give a clue about the lifestyle in Bethlehem.

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