

3 Pilgrimage Paths from Galilee to Jerusalem

Explore first-century pilgrimage routes connecting Galilee and Judea

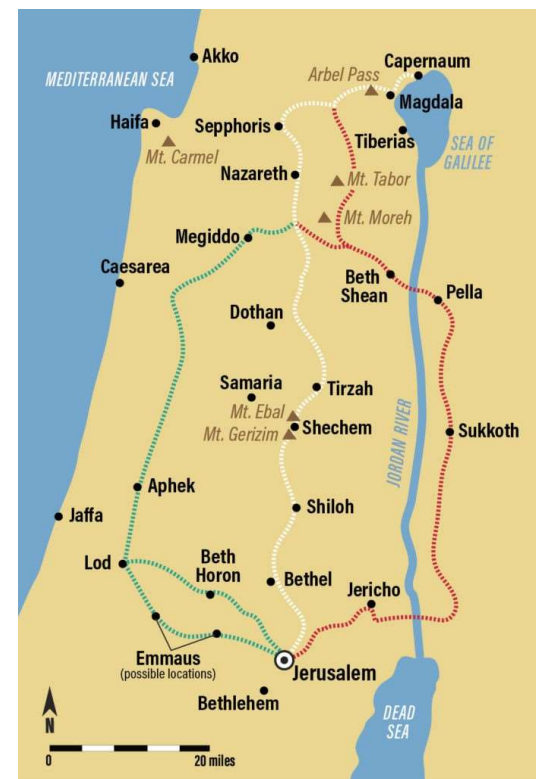
□ Megan Sauter □ February 24, 2022

To celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), and the Feast of Booths (Sukkot), many Jews traveled to the Jerusalem Temple during the first century C.E. This was sometimes a long journey. Even for those living in Galilee, it could take up to a week

Jeffrey P. García of Nyack College explores pilgrimage routes connecting Galilee and Jerusalem in his article [“Jesus and His Pilgrimage Practices,”](#) published in the Summer 2021 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*. The Gospels record several pilgrimages taken by Jesus and his disciples. Using these accounts, García reconstructs three major routes between Galilee and Judea: an eastern, central, and western path.

Three Pilgrimage Paths from Galilee to Jerusalem:

(1) The central—and shortest—route goes through Samaria. Pilgrims would have passed the cities of Sepphoris, Nazareth, Tirzah, Shechem, Shiloh, and Bethel. Although this route would have taken only three days by foot, many Jews chose to avoid it. They preferred longer routes that were historically safer. The Jewish historian Josephus records a violent quarrel between some Galilean Jews and Samaritans, while the Galileans were traveling through Samaria (*Antiquities*). Passing through this volatile region carried real risks. Yet, García observes that sometimes Jesus and his disciples did indeed travel this path (John 4).



This map shows pilgrimage routes from Galilee to Jerusalem. In the first century C.E., many Jews traveled to the Jerusalem Temple to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths.

(2) Skirting Samaria, the eastern route crosses the Jordan River, passes through the region of Perea, and then crosses back over the Jordan River near Jericho. It would have taken pilgrims five to seven days to traverse it. Cities along this path include Beth Shean, Pella, Sukkoth, and [Jericho](#), as well as smaller villages like Bethpage, and Bethany. Because of the Jewish communities in Perea, this region was safer—and more hospitable—than Samaria for Galilean [pilgrims](#).

The third major route that García outlines is situated closer to the Mediterranean Sea. This western route also avoids Samaria, but this time in favor of the coastal plain. It was the longest way for Galilean pilgrims to reach Jerusalem. Pilgrims going this way would have passed Megiddo, Aphek, Lod, and either Emmaus or Beth Horon.

Learn more about ancient pilgrimage routes—and the paths Jesus walked to reach Jerusalem—in Jeffrey P. García's article "[Jesus and His Pilgrimage Practices](#)," published in the Summer 2021 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

Subscribers: Read the full article "[Jesus and His Pilgrimage Practices](#)" by Jeffrey P. García in the Summer 2021 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

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