

Wall of Prayer



Arad, Israel Streams in the Wilderness

**“See, I am doing a new thing...
I am making a way in the
wilderness and streams in the
desert.” Isaiah 43:19**

On the edge of the Negev, overlooking the ancient ruins of Tel Arad near the Dead Sea, lies the modern city of Arad, a place where streams are now flowing in the wilderness.

This promise in Isaiah 43:19 inspired David Ben-Gurion, who dreamed of making the desert bloom, envisioning streams flowing through the Negev. Today, that vision has become a reality—with life across the Negev flourishing where there was once barrenness.

Arad was founded in 1962 as Israel's first planned city and is now home to almost 30,000 people. Situated just a 30-minute drive from the Dead Sea and around 45 minutes from Beersheva, it is a place of striking beauty and isolation, surrounded by Bedouin communities who continue to tend goats and sheep across the hills.

“I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.” Hosea 2:14

Arad is a place close to my heart, a home away from home, where I love visiting dear friends and enjoying the beauty and stillness of the wilderness. Amongst the quietness, I find myself drawn to wait on the Lord and listen for His voice. The Hebrew word for wilderness, *רִבְדָּם*, is related to *רִבְדָּל*, meaning “to speak.” It is in the wilderness that God draws us close and speaks tenderly to us.

The origin of the name *Arad* (אַרָד) is unclear, but some scholars suggest it may derive from a term meaning either “wild donkey” or “rugged landscape,” both of which align with the area's geography and history.

In Numbers 21, the king of Arad attacked the Israelites as they journeyed through the wilderness. But when they cried out to the Lord, He gave them victory, and the place was named Hormah (הֹרְמָה), meaning “devoted or surrendered to God.” What began as conflict became a place of surrender.

Archaeological discoveries at Tel Arad reveal that this was not only a place of battle, but also of worship. A temple from the time of the kingdom of Judah stood within a fortress above the earlier Canaanite city—an intentional place dedicated to the Lord. Yet this raises an important tension. God had specifically commanded that worship be centered in one place—the place He would choose for His Name to dwell: *“Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. Offer them only at the place the Lord will choose...”* Deuteronomy 12:13–14



That place was ultimately established in Jerusalem, where the temple stood as a symbol of unity, obedience, and covenant faithfulness.

Although the temple at Arad may have reflected a sincere desire to worship God, it stood outside of this instruction. Over time, such local places of worship came to be known as “high places,” leading the people away from wholehearted obedience.



This is why, during the reforms of kings like Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:4) and Josiah (2 Kings 23:8–9), these altars were dismantled, calling people back to worship God in the way He had prescribed.

Scripture reminds us that we are not to add to or take away from what God has commanded (Deuteronomy 4:2), nor to offer what He has not asked for. In Leviticus 10:1–2, Nadab and Abihu offered “unauthorized fire” before the Lord and the result was devastating.

So, while Arad was a place of genuine seeking, it also reminds us that true worship is not only about sincerity, but also about obedience—aligning our hearts with God’s ways, not our own.

When hearts are aligned with Him, even the wilderness begins to blossom. What was once a place of barrenness can become a place of life and encounter.

From its beginnings, Arad has drawn a diverse mix of residents, including many immigrants—particularly from the former Soviet Union—alongside secular and traditional Jewish communities, Bedouins and Arabs.

There are a few small Messianic communities in Arad who gather to worship, study the Word, encourage one another and reach out to their community. At times, believers have faced opposition and persecution.

In recent years, Arad has undergone noticeable demographic change, with a significant growth in its ultra-Orthodox population, especially among the younger generation. This shift has contributed to social and cultural tensions.

In the midst of all the tensions, God is clearly at work. During the recent war with Iran, a rocket struck downtown Arad between four high-rise buildings. Remarkably, no one was killed, though many were injured and thousands displaced. I was privileged to be part of a CFI team that travelled to Arad the following day, helping Russian-speaking families clear debris and temporarily repair shattered windows.

Again and again, we heard miraculous testimonies of lives spared—clear signs of God’s hand on His people in the midst of the attack.

One young boy was asleep when the rocket hit. His father ran into his room, only to find it completely destroyed—and his son gone. In panic, he searched desperately. When first responders arrived, they discovered the boy almost unharmed, sitting on his mattress among the rubble on the ground below. The force of the blast had carried him out of the building, still on his mattress.

In another home, a Russian woman had just sat down to eat by the window. Her son, Sergei, came in to say he was going to bed early before his shift. Instead of sitting at his computer by the window, he got into bed and pulled the blanket over his head against the cold. At that very moment, the rocket hit. Glass shattered across the room—yet the window beside his mother was one of the only ones that did not break. Both were deeply shaken, yet incredibly grateful to be alive—and for the help they received.



Today, many visitors also come to Arad to visit the “Fountain of Tears,” a powerful memorial to Holocaust survivors created by Rick Wienecke. It invites visitors into a conversation between a survivor and Yeshua, drawing together two of the most painful threads of Jewish history. Many who visit are deeply moved by this anointed, sensitive work of art.

Arad, then, reminds us that no place is too wild or too dry for God’s touch. In His tenderness, He leads us into the wilderness, where even the most barren ground can become a spring of life. It is often in the places that feel most exposed or resistant that He meets us—transforming them, as we surrender, into spaces of encounter, renewal, and new life.

Pray:

- **That the wilderness would be a place of divine encounter where God speaks tenderly**
Hosea 2:14 — “I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.”
- **For healing and restoration for those affected by the rocket attack**
Psalm 147:3 — “He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.”
- **For those in various religious communities to encounter the living God in life-changing ways, like Saul on the road to Damascus**
Acts 9:3–5 — “As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’”
- **For the Messianic communities to be strengthened and encouraged**
Colossians 2:2 — “...that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love...”
- **That the “Fountain of Tears” would draw many to encounter the Father’s love**
Jeremiah 31:3 — “I have loved you with an everlasting love...”
- **For reconciliation and healing to flow between residents of different religious backgrounds**
Ephesians 2:14 — “For He Himself is our peace... and has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility.”
- **That all the residents of Arad would experience God’s love, truth, and peace**
John 8:32 — “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

