



VIEW EAST: CLOSEUP OF THE YARDENIT BAPTISMAL AREA, WHERE THE JORDAN RIVER EXITS THE SEA OF GALILEE. LARGE AND SMALL CHRISTIAN GROUPS COME HERE TO PERFORM BAPTISMS IN THE JORDAN RIVER.

BELOW (VIEW SOUTH): THE JORDAN RIVER WITH DENSE VEGETATION NOT FAR FROM YARDENIT. THIS PHOTO PROVIDES A BETTER FEEL FOR HOW THE JORDAN RIVER MAY HAVE LOOKED ANCIENTLY (SEE TOP PHOTO ON PAGE 22).





VIEW EAST: BAPTISMAL AREA (LOWER LEFT WITH PEOPLE) OF YARDENIT, THE JORDAN RIVER (CENTER), THE SOUTHERN END OF THE SEA OF GALILEE, AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS (TOP), LOOKING DOWN ON THE LAKE'S EASTERN SHORE.

YARDENIT BAPTISMAL SITE

There were no buildings when I baptized my oldest son here some fifty years ago. I believe there was one railing that led down into the water. Oh, how things have changed. Yardenit has turned into big business, with summer and winter hours and 12 baptismal pools. You even have to wear their white clothing, which you rent or purchase. We used to drive up near the shore, park our cars, and enjoy a quiet service.

I remember hosting a family from Jordan whose father worked at the US Embassy in the early 1980s. They came to Israel to baptize their twin boys in the Jordan River. We went down the river from Yardenit, which was more accessible then. The father, who held the priesthood and whose branch president authorized him to perform the baptisms, led each boy into the water. Two white doves landed on the shore next to us when he finished baptizing them. True story. Contemplating the baptism of Jesus and the sign of the dove on that occasion made this day even more memorable because of how it turned out. After all these years, I can still picture that unforgettable scene.

Baptism is an essential ordinance rich in symbolic significance, representing the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By it, we express a desire “to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people.” It is a covenant with God “to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . . even until death” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

Jesus taught Nicodemus that “except a man be born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” showing that baptism is essential to salvation (John 3:3–5). Through it, we bind ourselves to Christ in a unique way, giving us access to His power, which we will need more and more in the coming days.