



LAND
— OF THE —
BIBLE
T O U R S

Tour Information

Newsletter #3

Deepen your knowledge of Jesus and the Bible

Shalom fellow traveler,

It will not be long before your feet will touch down on the soil of the land of the Bible. I am sure the anticipation is building and you are eager to get on tour. We live in an age, where traveling great distances no longer proves a challenge like it did in Bible times, requiring months of sailing in often treacherous conditions. With a transportation system that requires little more than a basic understanding of road signs and airline gates, our world gives little attention to the importance of geography. But think about the times when you visit a place you've never been before. It's all strange.

The unfamiliar landmarks, the sudden turns, and the unexpected potholes are hinderances to your progress. It's the same with Bible study.

Those of us who seek to understand the meaning of the Bible, strongly believe in interpreting a passage in its context. But context is more than words. When one reads the Bible, it becomes clear how geography is the stage on which the redemptive narrative takes place.



On the road to Jericho at Wadi Qelt

God chose a land to reveal Himself to People

The land God chose was not arbitrary, for He designed even the land itself to develop the spiritual lives of His people. The land was never intended to be just a place to live. The land of the Israel became a lesson for the people of God and for us teaching us how to walk by faith and trust in God. One of God's stated purposes in bringing the Hebrews from Egypt was to give them a land that fostered faith:

*For the **land**, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the **land** of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the **land**, whither ye go to possess it, is a **land** of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A **land** which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your **land** in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. (Deuteronomy 11:10-15).*

The land's dependency on rain for water and its location as a land bridge between world powers forced the Hebrews to trust God or starve. They would either influence the world or be influenced by it. The Holy Land served as God's testing ground of faith. It was here, in this land where both personal and national existence were threatened, that Israel's leaders and people were called upon to learn the true meaning of security and well-being, of trust in the Lord their God. God used the land of the Bible to mold the lives of His people in the biblical narrative, and God uses it to shape the lives of people today.

When you travel through this ancient land of the Scriptures, the geography will permanently mark your life and change the way you understand the Bible. Places and names, which you used to pass over in your Bible reading, will now immediately bring to mind a site's history, its geographical pros and cons, its scenery, and even its smells.

Having knowledge of a passage's geography gives you a head start as you attempt to understand why events took place - sometimes repeatedly - in certain locations. A knowledge of biblical geography serves as an additional way to retain the truth of a passage. Remembering what a location looks like enables you to picture the action, to remember the event, to imagine its occurrence in a way that helps you remember. Also, many events took place in the same location, which also helps to tie the Bible together better.

Walking in the land of Israel has provided me with a deeper appreciation of God as Lord of world history and of seemingly minor details - both of which bring comfort to my life. Those who understand and experience biblical geography enjoy:

- Sharper comprehension of the Bible
- Clearer direction to its application
- Greater confidence in the Bible as God's Word

The more you understand the land of the Bible, the more you will understand the Bible itself.



Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee

Some General Facts on Israel

Population

The State of Israel has a population that stands at just over 9.5 million residents as at December 2022. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 9.593 million people live in the country. Of those, 7.069 million (74%) are Jewish, 2.026 million (21%) are Arab and 498,000 (5%) are neither. This 5% includes persons of Jewish ancestry deemed non-Jewish by religious law and persons of non-Jewish ancestry who are family members of Jewish immigrants (neither of which are registered at the Ministry of Interior as Jews), Christian non-Arabs, Muslim non-Arabs and all other residents who have neither an ethnic nor religious classification. The government agency has predicted the population to reach 10 million by the end of 2024, around 15 million by 2048, and 20 million by the end of 2065.

Location

Israel is situated in the Middle East along the eastern coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. The country is bordered by Syria, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Egypt, and the West Bank. Surrounding Israel are many Muslim nations marked in green on the map below.



Geography

Long and narrow in shape, Israel is about 290 miles (470 km) in length and 85 miles (135 km) in width at its widest point. The land of Israel is about the same size as the state of New Jersey.



Agriculture

Agriculture in Israel is a highly developed industry. Israel is able to grow a wide range of crops including wheat, corn, sorghum, barley, dates, and notes due to advanced methods of technology despite the fact that the geography of Israel is not naturally conducive to agriculture. More than half of the land area is desert, and the climate and lack of water resources do not favor farming. Only 20% of the land area is naturally suitable for growing crops.



Food

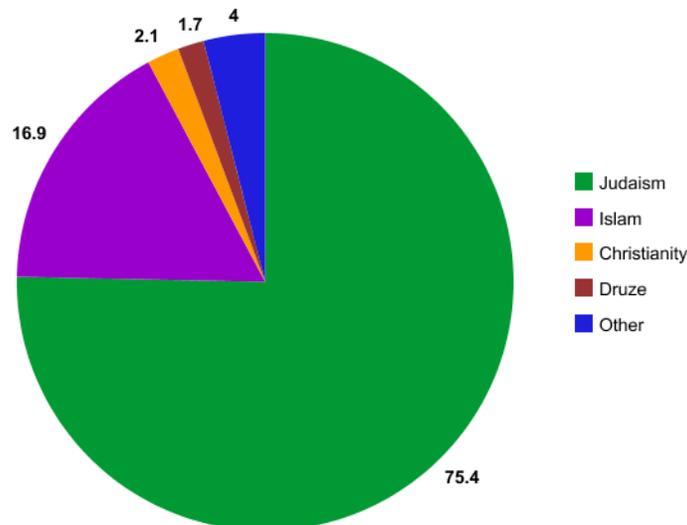
Israeli cuisine usually follows kosher protocols, due to the Jewish culture and religion. As a result, pork, shellfish, eggs, and milk are prohibited. Hummus, tahini, shawarma, pita bread, kebabs, and falafel are some of the most commonly enjoyed foods in Israel.

One Airport in Israel

Israel has one major International Airport named as "Ben Gurion Airport" which is situated in the center of the country, just off the highway connecting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. There are taxi services just outside the airport's main gate, a regular bus service and also direct or connecting trains between the airport and all other cities of Israel.

Religion

The majority of Israeli people practice Judaism, which accounts for 75.4% of the Israeli population. Islam is the second most prevalent religion at 16.9%. Christianity, Druze, and other religions comprise 7.8% of the population.



Interesting Fun Facts

- Israel has two official languages: Hebrew and Arabic
- Golda Meir was the only woman to date to serve as Prime Minister of Israel. As the fourth Prime Minister, there's an interesting similarity with Deborah, who was the fourth judge in Israel in the Old Testament, and also the only woman (Judges 4,5).
- Israel has won five bronze Olympic medals, one silver and one gold.
- The 9 mm Luger submachine gun (Uzi) was designed by Major Uziel Gal in 1950 for Israel Military Industries and was put into full production in 1954. More than 10 million Uzi machine guns have been built since.
- 34 political parties participated in Israel's 2013 elections.
- Israel has more museums per capita than any other country in the world.
- The Dead Sea in Israel is the lowest point on earth, at 1,315 feet below sea level at its lowest point.
- Israel has a total coastline of only 273km, including some 137 official beaches.
- Israel is the only liberal democracy in the Middle East.
- There are kosher McDonald's.
- In many Israeli bus stops, you can find a box for tzedakah (charitable giving).
- 24% of Israel's workforce holds university degrees - ranking third in the industrialized world, after the United States and Holland - and 12% hold advanced degrees.
- Israel has the third highest rate of entrepreneurship - and the highest rate among women and among people over 55 - in the world.
- With more than 3,000 high-tech companies and start-ups, Israel has the highest concentration of hi-tech companies in the world (apart from the Silicon Valley in California).
- Voice mail technology was also developed in Israel.
- Israel has one of the highest percentages in the world of home computers per capita.
- Israeli bank notes have brail on them so the blind can identify them.
- Israel has the fourth largest air force in the world (after the U.S, Russia and China), including an aerial arsenal of over 250 F-16's.
- The first anti-virus software was developed in Israel in 1979.
- Israel's national football team has only ever qualified for the World Cup Finals once, back in 1970.
- Raising/breeding pigs in Israel is illegal for Jews due to a 1962 Israeli law (a number of Arab farmers raise pigs). Only one Jewish organization bucks the trend, Kibbutz Lahav, breeding pigs (over 10,000 of them) which are officially for "research purposes".
- The glue on Israeli stamps is kosher.

*God Bless,
Kurt (Tour Host)*