

## Study Trip to Israel Recommended Study Material

### Specific areas of consideration:

I would suggest that travelers would be greatly advantaged to give attention to any/all of the following specific areas of study in preparation for the trip:

- 1) Bible Geography [specifically, the geography, topography and climatology of the land of Israel]
- 2) History of ancient Israel
  - ✓ both the Old Testament and New Testament historical narrative
  - ✓ as to the NT narrative, special emphasis upon the life and ministry of Jesus Christ
  - ✓ with specific attention to places, routes (international and internal), and political boundaries
- 3) History of modern Israel
  - ✓ the history of Zionism
  - ✓ the major wars fought by Israel (Independence in 1948, Six Day War in 1967, Yom Kippur War in 1973)
- 4) Customs and Manners of the Ancient Near East

### Some suggestions as to what might be helpful for each of these areas of study:

- 1) Bible Geography

There are a number of fine Bible Atlases. Actually reading through a Bible atlas is a daunting task, but it would be very much worthwhile. The one Atlas I would most strongly recommend is *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*, by Barry Beitzel.

On the other hand, there are more accessible summaries of the basic elements of Bible Geography. The Wikipedia article on the geography of Israel is brief and helpful ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography\\_of\\_Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Israel)), as is the page at the Jewish Agency website (<http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/Aliyah/About+Israel/General/Geography+of+Israel.htm>). Indeed, it would be profitable to spend a little time on the internet researching various aspects of Israel's history, geography and people, but beware of anti-Israeli propaganda which you will encounter on many of those sites.

Videos dealing with the geography of Israel are available. Most well-known is the "Faith Lessons" Series with Ray Vander Laan, produced by Faith for the Family. They are more devotional than instructive, but there is certainly profit in viewing the land through these videos in preparation for visiting the land in person.

Finally, I have attached a set of notes which are a basic introduction to Bible Geography. (The title is *Geography Notes.pdf*.) The notes are 32 pages long, and are fairly self-explanatory. They are only introductory, but it would probably be helpful to have them printed for those planning on making the trip, encourage them to spend some time studying the notes and making a list of questions they have, and then find a time to answer those questions.

## 2) History of Ancient Israel

OLD TESTAMENT. Most important in this regard is to know well the narrative of OT history – the basic elements of the story recorded in Genesis – Esther. Almost everywhere we go in Israel will relate to one or more of the stories found in that narrative and it will be very helpful if you know almost intuitively where each of those stories fits. We will be careful to help in that regard, but your capacity to understand each site and to remember what you learned will be much enhanced if you have a firm grasp on the basic story-line of biblical history.

I have attached two items that might help in a review of the OT narrative. The one document is a 17 page brief review of OT history which could be simply read through with the intent of cementing that narrative in the reader's mind. (The title is Brief History Notes.pdf.) The other is a six page worksheet that traces the narrative from book to book, but includes a place to indicate what chapters of the Bible tell that portion of the story. It might be a helpful way to refresh that story on your mind. (The title of that latter document is Overview of OT History and the Biblical Narrative.doc.)

NEW TESTAMENT. As to the narrative of the Gospels, travelers are welcome to go to a website where they will find a series of lessons I did on the life of Christ in the Sojourners Class at Grace Community Church. The site is: <http://www.insightedge.com/bookman/>, and the link is "lectures." The 15 lessons cover the life of Christ, and they include a good deal of geographical information that would be very helpful on the trip. (Forgive me for calling my own number here, but I think these would be a help if people had the time to listen.)

Further, there are a number of resources which would be helpful in the effort to gain a solid understanding of the narrative of the Scripture as a whole. One such tool is *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, by Max Anders. It is a good study guide which will help you nail down a basic but careful understanding of the story of the Scriptures as a whole.

## 3) History of Modern Israel

I have listed some books below that would be a help in this regard. Furthermore, there are a number of websites which have very good surveys of the history of the modern state of Israel.

An interesting, instructive and helpful flash presentation can be found at the web-site of Zola Levitt: [http://www.levitt.com/misc/israel\\_history.html](http://www.levitt.com/misc/israel_history.html).

A very brief, but helpful, survey, with links to further information, can be found at: <http://www.science.co.il/Israel-history.asp>.

A thorough but accessible survey of modern Israel, including brief synopses of the wars she has fought, can be found at <http://www.hello-newman.com/Israel/history.html>.

A more extensive treatment can be found at [http://www.zionism-israel.com/zionism\\_history.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/zionism_history.htm).

## 4) Customs and Manners of the ancient Near East

Again, there are many books which are very helpful in this regard; I have listed some of those below. Another source of very helpful information in this regard is films and stories dealing with things Jewish. There is value in watching *Fiddler on the Roof* or reading *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok.

## Suggested books

What follows is a list of books that might be good to get for the church library, suggest travelers select that which is of interest to them and spend some time with that work before the trip.

### BIBLE ATLASES/GEOGRAPHY TEXTS

(beginning with what I would regard as the most profitable and dependable)

*The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*, Barry Beitzel (thorough, dependable, well illustrated)

*Regions on The Run*, by James M. Monson (available from Biblical Backgrounds, Inc at [www.bibback.com](http://www.bibback.com), a very good survey of the routes and regions basic to an understanding of Bible geography)

The *Geography of the Bible*, by Denis Baly (the “gold standard” of geography texts; cumbersome but readable; especially helpful because Baly not only discusses the features of the various regions, etc., but does excellent job of representing biblical attitude toward those regions as well as the place they play in the ongoing biblical narrative)

*Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*, Carl Rasmussen (dependable, pages 9 – 56 provide a brief but reasonably thorough overview of the subject of Bible geography, pages 69ff is a “Historical Section” which gives geographic information concerning events in the narrative of Scripture)

*Baker’s Concise Bible Atlas*, by J. Carl Laney (dependable, brief but through consideration of successive ages of biblical history – OT, intertestamental, NT and to present era)

*The MacMillan Bible Atlas*, by Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah (brief introduction covers Bible Geography generally, then explains geographic elements of biblical events)

*Eerdman’s Atlas of the Bible, With A-Z Guide to Places*. Out of print, but available through used book sources; brief, accessible, well-presented, but often accepts critical position with regard to the narrative (e.g., takes late date of the exodus).

*The World of the Bible*, by Roberta L. Harris (critical in spirit, but good survey of periods all the way to the modern era; well illustrated helpful discussion of many of the primary sites and events which will prepare the traveler well for visiting those places, considering those events)

*Oxford Bible Atlas*, ed. Herbert G. May (helpful information, well arranged with very good maps, but read with caution as critical theories are consistently embraced)

### OLD TESTAMENT SURVEYS AND HISTORIES

For most travelers, a text on Old Testament history would be a bit of overkill. I think it would be most profitable to know thoroughly the printed survey I have included. On the other hand, for any who might be anxious to imbibe a full text –

*Kingdom of Priests*, by Dr. Eugene Merrill (the best available; thorough, dependable, and arranged so that the reader can follow the narrative itself and skip some of the more technical discussions)

*A Survey of Israel’s History*, by Leon Wood (a standard, very good)

*Old Testament Bible History*, by Alfred Edersheim (a classic and delightful telling of the OT narrative, with helpful insights from Jewish tradition and lore)

### INTERTESTAMENTAL AND NEW TESTAMENT HISTORIES

*Between the Testaments*, by Charles F. Pfeiffer (out of print but accessible; a standard, thorough but not overwhelming, relates history of the intertestamental years to the NT era; dependable)

*New Testament History*, by F. F. Bruce (another standard, much information; traces history from Persia through NT era; very helpful)

*Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archeology as Evidence*, by John Wilkinson (technical, much helpful information)

*The Quest*, by Leen Ritmeyer (a fascinating survey of the what can be known about the Herodian temple, by the world's foremost authority, with marvelous graphics; a bit expensive)

*The Kregel Pictorial Guide to the Temple*, by Robert Backhouse (a picture book with sparse but helpful text; good information, well presented; traces temple from Solomon to Herod)

*Living in the Time of Jesus of Nazareth*, by Peter Connolly (published by Steimatzky in Israel, a picture book with much helpful information on geography, history, customs, and more)

*The Atlas of Biblical Jerusalem*, by Dan Bahat (published by Carta in Jerusalem, a thorough atlas; traces history of Jerusalem from 1<sup>st</sup> Temple period, but gives greatest attention to Herodian Jerusalem)

#### HISTORY OF MODERN ISRAEL

*Bible and Sword*, by Barbara Tuchman (magisterial tale of God's providences which led to the Balfour Declaration, by one of the most important 20<sup>th</sup> century historians; well written; grudgingly acknowledges role of evangelical Christians in bringing about the modern state of Israel)

*Holy War for the Promised Land*, by David Dolan (strong evangelical, news reporter in Israel; compelling tale of the modern history of the land)

*Discovering Israel: A Popular Guide to the Holy Land*, by Jack Finegan (out of print, but worth tracking down; a very thorough, even-handed, helpful study of the history of the modern state)

*From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine*, by Joan Peters (she set out to write a defense of the "Palestinian" cause, became convinced that the concept of a non-Jewish people who inhabited the land "from time immemorial" is entirely bogus; traces the propaganda campaign employed to persuade the world of what can be demonstrated to be a lie)

*A Young Person's History of Israel*, by David Bamberger (a simple but fairly complete and very sympathetic survey of Israel's development as a nation)

#### CUSTOMS AND MANNERS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

*This Is My God*, by Herman Wouk (marvelously well written, an explanation of all things Jewish written by a young man who wanted his friends to understand the strange life he lived in their midst)

*Manners & Customs of Bible Lands*, by Fred H. Wight; *The Way It Was in Bible Times*, by Merrill T. Gilbertson; *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, by James M. Freeman (all of these – and others – are simply surveys of various elements of life – travel, homes, professions, family life, etc.- discussed and related to biblical texts and accounts; reading any of these books can be a bit pedantic, but there is much advantage in being able to think in terms of a biblical culture)