

A trip to the Holy Land can be life changing. This revised edition features newly excavated sites, up-to-date photos and maps, a four-week prayer guide and Bible study, and practical information such as packing lists, passport requirements, and tips for post-COVID travelers.

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## CONTENTS

Introduction	11
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### PART 1: PREPARING FOR THE TRIP

Travel Safety Facts	16
Tips for Travelers	17
Weather	24
Packing List	29
Requirements for Obtaining a US Passport	31
Suggestions for the Mobility Impaired	33
Helpful Websites	35
Four-Week Schedules of Bible Reading and Prayer	37
• To Prepare for Israel	37
• To Prepare for Egypt and Jordan	38
• To Prepare for Greece and Turkey	39

### PART 2: THE LAND OF ISRAEL

The Twelve Tribes of Israel	42
Map of the Twelve Tribes	43
The History of Israel	44
The Herods of the Bible	46
Outline of Bible History	47
Acco/Akko/Acre/Ptolemais	49
Aphek/Antipatris	50
Arad	52
Ashkelon	53
Avdat	54
Azekah	55
Bashan/Golan Heights	56
Beersheba	58
Beth-horon	60
Beth-shean/Scythopolis	61
Beth-shemesh	62

Bethany	63
Bethel	64
Bethlehem	66
Bethsaida/Geshur	68
Caesarea	69
Caesarea Philippi	70
Capernaum	71
Carmel (Mount)	73
Chorazin/Korazim	74
Dan	75
Dead Sea	76
Ebal (Mount)	78
Elah Valley	79
Elath/Ezion-geber	80
Emmaus	81
Engedi	82
Galilee (Sea of)	83
Gath/Tell Es-Safi	84
Gergesa/Kursi	85
Gerizim (Mount)	86
Gezer	88
Gibeah	89
Gibeon	90
Gilboa (Mount)	92
Hazor	93
Hebron/Kiriath Arba/Mamre	94
Hermon (Mount)	96
Herodium	97
Hippos	98
Jericho	99
Jerusalem	101
Jezreel	108
Jezreel (Valley of)	109
Joppa/Jaffa/Tel Aviv	111

Jordan River	112
Judean Wilderness	115
Lachish	118
Magdala	119
Mareshah/Guvrin	120
Masada	121
Megiddo	122
Mizpah	124
Moreh (Hill of)	126
Nazareth	127
Olives (Mount of)	128
Paran (Wilderness of)	130
Qumran	131
Ramah	132
Rephaim (Valley of)/Ein Hanya	134
Samaria/Sebaste	135
Sepphoris/Zippori	137
Shechem	138
Shiloh	140
Tabgha	142
Tabor (Mount)	143
Tiberias	144
Timna	145
Zin (Wilderness of)	146

### **PART 3: THE LAND OF EGYPT**

The Gods of Egypt	148
Hieroglyphics	149
I Want My Mummy	149
A Brief History of Egypt through the Time of David and Solomon	150
Aswan	156
Giza	157
Goshen/Cities of the Exodus	158

Karnak/Thebes/Luxor	159
Memphis	160
Saqqara	161
Sinai (Mount)	162
Valley of the Kings/Queens	163

#### **PART 4: THE LAND OF GREECE**

Let's Go Shopping with Paul	166
The Gods of Greece and Rome	167
Greek Gods in the Book of Acts	168
Athens	169
Corinth	170
Crete	172
Patmos	174
Philippi	175

#### **PART 5: THE LAND OF JORDAN**

Amman/Ammon/Ammonites	178
Arnon River	181
Bethany Beyond the Jordan/Plains of Moab	182
Edom/Edomites	183
Jabbok River	186
Jerash/Gerasa	187
Machaerus	188
Medeba/Madaba	189
Moab/Moabites	190
Nabateans	193
Nebo (Mount)	194
Petra	195
Wadi Zered	197

#### **PART 6: THE LAND OF TURKEY**

A Brief Guide to the History of Asia Minor	200
The Seven Churches of Revelation 2–3	202

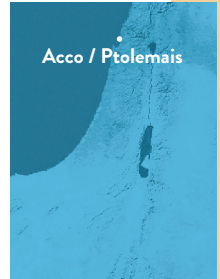
Aphrodisias	203
Colossae	204
Ephesus	205
Hierapolis/Pamukkale	207
Laodicea	208
Pergamum/Bergama	209
Philadelphia/Alaşehir	210
Sardis/Sart	211
Smyrna/Izmir	212
Thyatira/Akhisar	213
Troas/Troy/Çanakkale	214

## **PART 7: MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS**

Geographical Regions of the Holy Land	217
The Elevation of the Holy Land	218
Major Cities of the Holy Land	219–220
Distances in Miles	221
The Sea of Galilee	222
The Dead Sea	223
The Kingdoms of David and Saul	224
The Divided Monarchy	225
The Kingdom of Herod the Great	226
The Districts of the New Testament	227
Old Testament Jerusalem	228
New Testament Jerusalem	229
Jerusalem Today	230
The Seven Churches of Asia	231
Bible Weights and Measures	232–233
The Tabernacle	234
Solomon's Temple	236
Herod's Temple	238
Credits	240

## ACCO / AKKO / ACRE / PTOLEMAIS

Acco was a seaport within the land boundary promised to the tribe of Asher. However, Asher failed to conquer the area, and it remained under the control of the Phoenicians.



**Period of the Judges** *Judges 1:31–32*—“Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco.”

**Intertestamental Era** The name of the city was changed to *Ptolemais* shortly after Alexander the Great’s conquest. The city continued to be called *Ptolemais* during the Hellenistic and Roman/Byzantine periods.

**Apostolic Age** *Acts 21:7–8*—At the end of his third missionary journey Paul stopped off in Ptolemais during his journey to Jerusalem.


**Crusader Period** The Crusaders captured the city of Acre in 1104 and made it their chief port for the newly established Kingdom of Jerusalem. The city surrendered to Saladin in 1187 following his victory over the Crusaders at the battle at the Horns of Hattin. The city was recaptured by the Crusaders in 1191 but fell to the Mamluks in 1291.

**Turkish Era** In 1799 Napoleon tried unsuccessfully to capture the city.



Ruins of the Crusader castle guarding the ancient port of Acco/Akko

## APHEK / ANTIPATRIS



Aphek / Antipatris

At least three cities or towns were named Aphek in the Bible. One was located east of the Sea of Galilee and played a role in Israel's conflict with the Arameans during the Divided Kingdom. (See Hippos.) A second was located near the Mediterranean and was one of the cities allotted to the tribe of Asher. The third town with this name was located at the headwaters of the Yarkon River to the east of modern Tel Aviv and came into prominence during Israel's early battles with the Philistines. The Yarkon River blocked north/south traffic along the coast, forcing travel to the east. Aphek controlled the passageway between the headwaters of the Yarkon and the hill country to the east.

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**Period of Conquest** *Joshua 12:18; 13:4*—Joshua defeated the king of Aphek, though the region of the Amorites in which the city was located still remained to be conquered.

*Joshua 19:30*—Joshua allocated the town of Aphek in northern Israel, near the Mediterranean, to the tribe of Asher.

**Period of the Judges** *1 Samuel 4:1*—The Philistines gathered at Aphek to fight against Israel. During the two skirmishes the Philistines defeated Israel, killed Eli's two sons, and captured the ark of the covenant.

**United Kingdom** *1 Samuel 29:1*—The Philistines gathered at Aphek to march against King Saul. David and his men were barred from serving as mercenaries with the Philistine armies and sent home.

**Divided Kingdom** *1 Kings 20:26–30*—King Ahab of Israel defeated Ben-hadad and the Arameans at the Aphek located to the east of the Sea of Galilee.

*2 Kings 13:17*—Elisha predicted that King Jehoash of Israel would defeat the Arameans at Aphek east of the Sea of Galilee.





*Ruins of the Crusader castle at the site of ancient Aphek/Antipatris*

**Intertestamental Era** Herod the Great rebuilt the city of Aphek at the Yarkon River and renamed it Antipatris after his father Antipater.

**Apostolic Age** *Acts 23:23–24, 31–32*—Paul was sent by night from Jerusalem to Antipatris when the Roman commander received word of a plot on Paul’s life. The next morning the cavalry took Paul from Antipatris to Caesarea.

**Crusader Period** The Crusaders built a castle at the site.

**Turkish Era** Suleiman the Magnificent built a Turkish fort to guard the same area. The remains of the Turkish fort are still visible today.

## ARAD



The city of Arad, located in the eastern Negev basin, controlled the road from the hill country of Judah to Edom. A large city, with extensive fortifications, dominated the site in the Early Bronze Age. A smaller Iron Age fortress guarded the road and region at the end of the Judean monarchy. One of the most remarkable discoveries at the site was a complete temple patterned after God's temple in Jerusalem.

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**Period of the Exodus** *Numbers 21:1–3*—The king of Arad attacked the Israelites toward the end of their time in the wilderness. Israel defeated the invaders and destroyed their cities, renaming the region Hormah (“destruction”).

**Period of Conquest** *Judges 1:16*—The descendants of Moses’ father-in-law, the Kenites, moved from Jericho to Arad and settled in the territory of Judah.



*Reconstruction of the cultic temple of Arad*

## ASHKELON

Built on the Mediterranean Sea twelve miles north of Gaza, Ashkelon was one of the five cities of the Philistine Pentapolis (along with Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza). This city was also a great trading center because of its harbor and location along the International Highway.



**Period of Conquest** *Judges 1:18*—After Joshua’s death, Judah captured and controlled Ashkelon but was unable to hold it.

**Period of the Judges** *Judges 14:19*—Samson killed thirty men from Ashkelon and took their clothes to pay the wedding guests who had solved his riddle.

**United Kingdom** *1 Samuel 6:17*—Ashkelon was one of the Philistine cities that paid a guilt offering to God for their part in taking the ark of the covenant.

*2 Samuel 1:20*—David lamented over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, asking that the tragic news not be proclaimed “in the streets of Ashkelon.”

**Divided Kingdom** *Amos 1:8*—Amos denounced Ashkelon and three other Philistine cities for their sin of selling Israelites into slavery.

**Single Kingdom** *Jeremiah 25:20; 47:5–7*—Jeremiah included Ashkelon in his list of cities and nations to be judged by God.

*Zephaniah 2:4–7*—Zephaniah predicted that the Jews would return from captivity to occupy Ashkelon and the other cities of the Philistines.

**Restoration** *Zechariah 9:5*—Zechariah predicted the conquest of Ashkelon and the other cities of the Philistines by Alexander the Great.

## AVDAT



Avdat was founded by the Nabateans in the second century BC and became a major stop along the Spice Route that stretched from the Arabian Peninsula to Gaza. The city, along with the rest of the Nabatean Empire, came under Roman control in AD 106.

Though located in the wilderness, the Nabateans learned how to capture and direct the sparse rainfall in a way that allowed the city to flourish. The ruins are impressive and indicate a sizeable population in an area where few had been able to live before. A large winepress uncovered in the city shows the Nabateans were able to have sufficient water to maintain large vineyards.

The arrival of Christianity to Avdat is reflected in the ruins of two churches. The North Church was built in the fourth century following the conversion of Constantine to Christianity. The second church, the Church of Saint Theodore, was then built in the fifth century.

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**Apostolic Age** *2 Corinthians 11:32–33*—Paul escaped from Damascus by being let down in a basket over the wall during the reign of Aretas, king of the Nabateans.



*Winepress uncovered at Avdat*

## AZEKAH

The city of Azekah guarded the western edge of the Elah Valley. Strategically located on a high hill, the city stood on the border between Israel and the Philistines.



**Period of Conquest** *Joshua 10:10–11*—When Joshua attacked the Canaanite kings who threatened Gibeon, he pursued them “as far as Azekah.”

*Joshua 15:35*—God allotted Azekah to the tribe of Judah.

**United Kingdom** *1 Samuel 17:1*—When David fought Goliath, the battle took place in the Elah Valley. The Philistines camped on the southern side of the valley “between Socoh and Azekah.”

**Divided Kingdom** *2 Chronicles 11:9–10*—King Rehoboam of Judah fortified Azekah as one of his cities of defense.

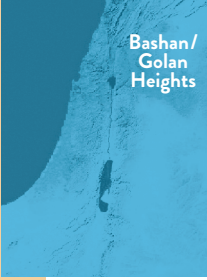
**Single Kingdom** *Jeremiah 34:7*—Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Judah and sent his army against Judah’s cities. Near the end of his invasion, only Lachish, Azekah, and Jerusalem remained unconquered. Eventually they all fell.

**Restoration** *Nehemiah 11:30*—Some of the remnant who returned from captivity in Babylon reinhabited Azekah.



View toward the Elah Valley from the summit of Azekah

## BASHAN / GOLAN HEIGHTS



Bashan was a high plateau east of the Jordan Valley between Mount Hermon and the region of Gilead. This relatively flat plain is dotted with ancient volcanic peaks, and the rich volcanic soil and abundant rainfall made it a fertile area known for its grazing land and large oak trees. One of the cities in the region was Golan, which was assigned to the tribe of Levi as a city of refuge.

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**Period of the Exodus** *Deuteronomy 3:8–11*—Israel defeated Og, king of Bashan, whose kingdom stretched to Mount Hermon.

**Period of Conquest** *Joshua 13:29–30*—The territory of Bashan was assigned to the tribe of Manasseh.

*Joshua 21:27; 1 Chronicles 6:71*—The city of Golan in Bashan was given to the Levite clan of the Gershonites and designated as one of the six cities of refuge in the land of Israel.

**United Kingdom** *Psalms 22:12*—David compared his enemies to the “strong bulls of Bashan.”

**Divided Kingdom** *Isaiah 2:12–13; 33:9*—Isaiah spoke about God’s judgment against the “oaks of Bashan,” which he said would “lose their foliage”.

*Amos 4:1*—Amos compared the rich, well-fed women of Samaria to the “cows of Bashan.”

*Micah 7:14*—Micah promised a time would come when God will restore the flock of Israel to “Bashan and Gilead.”

**Single Kingdom** *Jeremiah 50:19*—Jeremiah announced a day will come when God will bring Israel back to the land to graze on “Carmel and Bashan.”

*Ezekiel 27:6*—Ezekiel pictured the city of Tyre as a mighty ship whose oars were fashioned of “oaks from Bashan.”

**Intertestamental Era** The region became identified with the city of Golan. As the Greek language took hold following the conquest of Alexander the Great, the name of the region was Hellenized to Gaulanitis. Today the area is known as the Golan Heights.



*Bashan and the Golan Heights with Mount Hermon in the distance*

## BEERSHEBA



The city of Beersheba was, practically speaking, the southernmost city of Israel in the Old Testament. When the writers of Scripture wanted to speak of all Israel (from north to south), they would say “from Dan to Beersheba” (Judg. 20:1; 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 4:25). Beersheba controlled the central Negev basin.

**Patriarchal Period** *Genesis 21:14*—When Hagar and Ishmael were forced to leave Abraham’s camp, they wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

*Genesis 21:25–34*—Abraham made an agreement, paid seven ewe lambs, and took an oath with Abimelech to establish ownership over a well Abraham had dug. The place was named Beersheba (“well of the oath” or “well of seven”).

*Genesis 26:26–33*—Isaac also quarreled with Abimelech and took an oath. That same day his servants found water, and Isaac named the place Beersheba (“well of the oath”).

*Genesis 28:10*—Jacob stole the birthright from Esau while the family camped at Beersheba. He then left Beersheba to travel to Haran to find a wife.

*Genesis 46:1–7*—Jacob paused at Beersheba to offer sacrifices before leaving the promised land for Egypt.

**Period of Conquest** *Joshua 15:28; 19:2*—Beersheba was located in the territory given to the tribe of Judah. But God allotted the city to the tribe of Simeon, who had their inheritance scattered among the tribe of Judah.

*1 Samuel 8:1–2*—Samuel’s sons judged Israel in Beersheba.



**Divided Kingdom** *1 Kings 19:1–4*—Elijah stopped at Beersheba as he fled from Jezebel. He left his servant there, but he continued to flee south for another day.

**Single Kingdom** *2 Kings 23:8*—Under King Josiah’s reforms, the high place inside the city of Beersheba was torn down.

**Restoration** *Nehemiah 11:27*—Some of the remnant who returned from captivity in Babylon reinhabited Beersheba.



*Stairway into ancient water system at Beersheba*

## BETH-HORON



Two villages, Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, straddled the ridge that extends from the Aijalon Valley to the hill country just north of Jerusalem. These towns guarded the main road from the Mediterranean coast to Jerusalem.

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**Period of Conquest** *Joshua 10:9–14*—Joshua chased the Canaanites down “the way of the ascent to Beth-horon” when he rescued Gibeon.

*Joshua 16:1–5; 18:13–14*—Beth-horon was on the border between the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim.

*Joshua 21:20–22*—God allotted Beth-horon to the Levites as one of their forty-eight cities of inheritance throughout the land of Israel.

**United Kingdom** *1 Samuel 13:17–18*—The Philistines sent raiding parties along the road at Beth-horon when they threatened Israel during the days of King Saul.

*1 Kings 9:17; 2 Chronicles 8:5*—Solomon fortified Beth-horon to protect the main road to Jerusalem.

**Divided Kingdom** *2 Chronicles 25:13*—Troops of Amaziah, king of Judah, rioted and raided cities of Judah from Beth-horon to Samaria when they were sent home from battle.



View from Upper Beth-horon toward the Aijalon Valley

## BETH-SHEAN / SCYTHOPOLIS

Beth-shean (spelled Beth-shan in Samuel) is located at the strategic juncture of the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys. Like Jericho, Beth-Shean was almost continuously occupied throughout history. During the intertestamental period, the city was renamed Scythopolis. Today, archaeologists are uncovering the extensive ruins of Roman/Byzantine Scythopolis.



**Period of Conquest** *Joshua 17:11, 16; Judges 1:27*—God allotted Beth-shean to the tribe of Manasseh, but they were unable to drive out the Canaanites because “all the Canaanites who live in the valley land have iron chariots, both those who are in Beth-shean and its towns and those who are in the Valley of Jezreel” (Josh. 17:16).

**United Kingdom** *1 Samuel 31:10–12*—After defeating Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa, the Philistines hung their bodies on the walls of Beth-Shean.

*1 Kings 4:12*—Solomon placed Beth-shean, Megiddo, and Jezreel under the governorship of Baana, son of Ahilud.

**Life of Christ** Scythopolis was one of the chief cities of the Decapolis—a league of ten cities sharing Greek culture and government.



*Roman theater at Beth-shean/Scythopolis*

## BETH-SHEMESH



Beth-shemesh

Beth-shemesh (“house of the sun”) sits at the eastern end of the Sorek Valley. This city, assigned to the Levites, marked the historical border between Israel and the Philistines.

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**Period of Conquest** *Joshua 15:10*—Beth-shemesh was on the border between the tribes of Judah and Dan.

*Joshua 21:16*—God allotted Beth-shemesh to the Levites as one of their forty-eight cities of inheritance throughout the land of Israel.

**Period of the Judges** *Judges 13–16*—Samson was a Danite who lived in the Sorek Valley near Beth-shemesh. Zorah, Eshtaol, and Timnah are all near Beth-shemesh.

*1 Samuel 6:7–21*—When the Philistines returned the ark of the covenant to the Israelites, it went by cart to Beth-shemesh. Some Israelites were killed when they looked inside the ark, so the people of Beth-shemesh refused to let the ark stay in their town.

**Divided Kingdom** *2 Kings 14:11–14; 2 Chronicles 25:21–24*—King Amaziah of Judah was defeated and captured by King Jehoash of Israel at Beth-shemesh. The army of Israel then went to Jerusalem and tore down sections of the city wall.

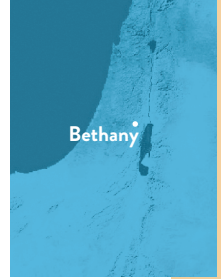
*2 Chronicles 28:16–18*—The Philistines captured Beth-shemesh during the reign of King Ahaz. Ahaz appealed to the Assyrians for help in recapturing this city.



View down the Sorek Valley from Beth-shemesh

## BETHANY

Bethany was a small village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus often spent the night in Bethany during His visits to Jerusalem.



**Life of Christ** *John 11:1*—Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived in Bethany.

*Matthew 21:17; Mark 11:11; Luke 10:38–42*—Jesus stayed in Bethany when He visited Jerusalem. Here, Mary sat at Jesus’ feet while Martha was serving.

*John 11:1–44*—Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany. Today, the city’s Arabic name is El-Azariyeh, preserving the town’s connection to Lazarus.

*Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8*—In the house of Simon the leper, Mary anointed Jesus with expensive perfume.

*Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:29–40*—Between Bethany and Bethphage, Jesus asked two of His disciples to get a donkey and a colt for His triumphal entry.

*Matthew 21:18–22; Mark 11:12–14*—Jesus cursed a fruitless fig tree here, and it withered.

*Luke 24:50–53*—Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives near Bethany.



Entrance to traditional tomb of Lazarus at Bethany

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