

365

Fascinating

FACTS

about

ISRAEL



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CLARENCE WAGNER

First printing: October 2006

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ISBN-13: 978-0-89221-667-3

ISBN-10: 0-89221-667-0

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 99-069281

Previously published under the title *365 Fascinating Facts about the Holy Land*.

All Scripture is from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

**Printed in the United States of America.**

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**New Leaf Press**

*A Division of New Leaf Publishing Group*

This book is dedicated to my family  
and my faithful ministry staff  
who support and sojourn with me in the land of Israel  
as I pursue God's high calling  
to reunite the Church  
with God's destiny for Israel and the Jewish people.



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## INTRODUCTION

God has blessed me with the privilege of living in Israel — my home for over 30 years.

As I travel the world speaking about Israel, I often hear many of the same questions over and over again. Whether it is in South Africa or Canada, Australia or Brazil, the UK or the USA, one thing that Christians want to have is a summary of the key Scriptures about Israel, Jerusalem, the Jewish people, Bible prophecy, and how they all relate to the Church. God has much to say about His covenant people and His land, Israel, as well as how His church should relate to both.

That is the subject of this book. You will find it an easy-to-use reference with one key fact for every day of the year, or you can read them all at once. This is a very relevant and important biblical subject, given the prophetic day in which we live when all eyes are on Israel as we await the soon coming of the Lord.

The land of Israel is the only place on earth which God says He owns. Of course, we know the whole world is His, yet this one parcel of land on the earth has a unique relationship to Him. About Israel, He says, “The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants” (Lev. 25:23).

God gave His land to Abraham and his descendants (the Jewish people) in an unconditional covenant. God said: “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:7–8).

The Jewish people were a chosen people for three purposes: to worship God in this land and show the world the blessing of serving the one true God of the universe; to receive, record, and transmit the Word of God (through them we have our Bible); and finally, to be the human channel for the Messiah, from whom we have our salvation. These people are so special to God that He called them “my people” (Exod. 3:7, 10:3).

By the blood of Christ, the church of Jesus Christ receives its atonement and salvation, plus an additional bonus. The blood of Christ makes us a part of the covenants God made with the Jewish people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, concerning the land of Israel and the promises He made to them. Ephesians 2:12–13 says, “Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.”

In a day when the whole world is focusing on the Middle East and the modern state of Israel, exactly what does the Bible say about God’s parcel of land, and who has a right to it?

When we come to the modern-day Israel-Palestine issue, people often ask the question, “Just what right do Israel and the Jewish people have to this land?” Arguments

are continually brought forth concerning the rights of the Palestinians and the rights of the Israelis that seem logical to the people who present them. But a basic question still remains in my mind as I listen to the many conflicting viewpoints concerning this parcel of land: “Who has the ultimate authority to determine rights concerning this special piece of real estate?”

The biblical answer to this question is that God alone determines the “rights” that any of us have. Something is right or wrong because of divine decree, not human feeling or human reason. The existence of God previous to the creation of the universe and mankind gives Him the right to determine our “rights.” Morality exists because God exists. Authority exists because God exists, and Almighty God has already determined the rights of the Jewish people to Israel, the land God owns and has deeded over to them. It is the responsibility of the Church to understand God’s Word on this subject and uphold it.

As Christians, we are not to be swayed “to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14; KJV). This is true for all scriptural teaching, including what God has to say about the land of Israel, the people He chose to possess it, and why. Let us look together at 365 *Fascinating Facts about Israel*.



## THE LOCATION OF THE LAND

1



The land of the Bible has been called by many names: Canaan, the Land of Milk and Honey, the Promised Land, Israel, Judah, Idumea, and Palestine. From the Scriptures, we also know the names of its regions, either as the tribal areas given by God to the 12 tribes of Israel (Josh. 13–21), or by its geographical names, e.g., Judea, Samaria, Galilee, the Shephelah (the coastal plains), the Arava, the Negev, etc. Today, the modern state of Israel possesses much of these regions, yet only a portion of the larger ancient land promised by God.

In the Bible, we find other more descriptive or poetic names given to this same land: Beulah (Isa. 62:4), the holy land (Zech. 2:12), Immanuel’s land (Isa. 8:8), Jeshurun (Deut. 33:26; Isa. 44:2), land of the Hebrews (Gen. 40:15), country of the Jews (Acts 10:39), pleasant land (Dan. 8:9; Zech 7:14; KJV), goodly mountain (Deut. 3:25; KJV), and the Lord’s land (Hos. 9:3).<sup>1</sup>

God chose this specific land for himself for a purpose. God owns the land. The land of Israel is the only place on earth, which God says He owns in terms of property ownership, that can be transferred. Of course, we know the whole world is His, as the Psalmist says, “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Ps. 24:1).

However, there is one parcel of land on the earth that has a unique relationship to Him. About Israel, He says,

2



“The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants” (Lev. 25:23). In fact, there are numerous references to Israel being “God’s Land.” In Jeremiah, God calls it “my land” (Jer. 2:7).

Through Isaiah, God speaks about defending His land when He says, “I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down” (Isa. 14:25). Even when speaking of a prophetic day to come, God still calls Israel His land. Through Ezekiel, He says, “In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy through you before their eyes” (Ezek. 38:16).

3



God loves His land and cares for it. Read what Moses had to say about God’s love for the Promised Land: “It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end” (Deut. 11:12).

Without telling Abraham where he was going, God called Abraham to a specific place for a specific purpose. In Genesis 12:1–3, we read, “The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’” In short, God had a plan (the salvation of the world), so He chose a particular man (Abraham) and took Him to a specific land (the land of Canaan, later renamed Israel by God).

4



5



So where is this land? The land God gave in an everlasting covenant to Abraham and his descendants was the “whole land of Canaan,” located in the same region where we find the modern state of Israel today. “The Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring, I will give this land’ ” (Gen. 12:6–7). Genesis 17:7–8 states: “I

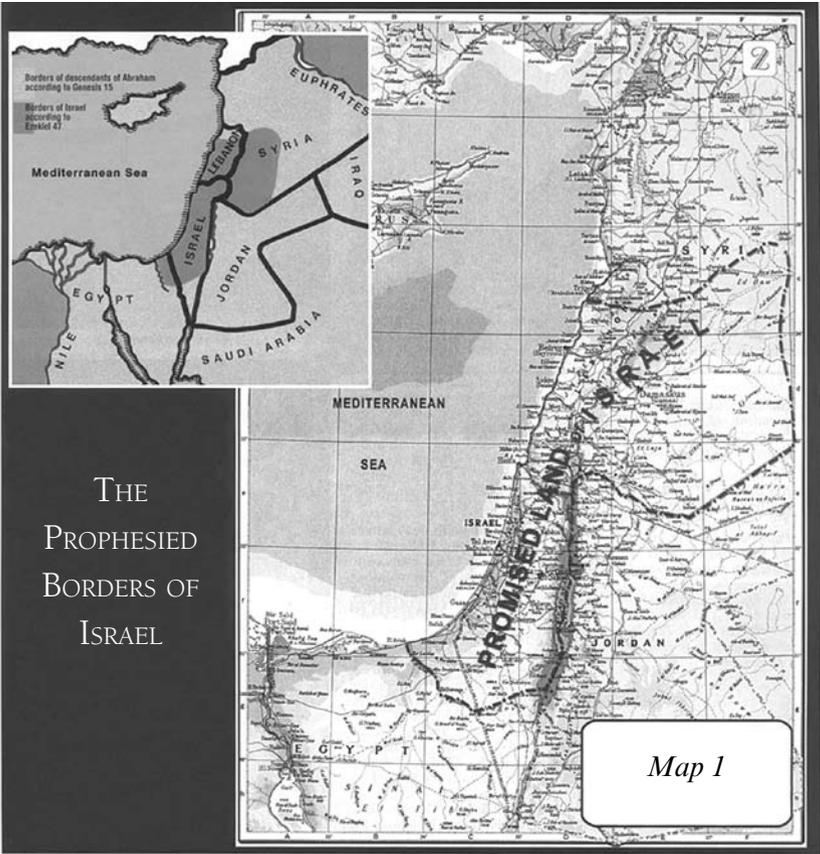
will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

God promised Abraham and his descendants a land much bigger than has ever been conquered by the Israelites of old, even under the great empire of Solomon or the Israelis today. “He [God] also said to him [Abram], ‘I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it’ ” (Gen. 15:7). “On that day,

the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates — the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites’ ” (Gen. 15:18–21; compare Josh. 1:4). A much more detailed description of this territory can be found in Numbers 34:1–12. This region included all of the area in the land of Israel today, plus all of Jordan, Lebanon, and much of Syria.

6





THE  
PROPHESED  
BORDERS OF  
ISRAEL

7



It is clear from the descriptions of the land that God gave to Abraham and his descendants as an everlasting possession that other tribes lived in this land. Nevertheless, since God owns the land, He can decide whom to give it to, so as to accomplish His redemptive purposes on earth. Therefore, when God called Abraham to create a new nation of people to live in “His land,” it was God who started what I call the “musical chair” game of Middle East nations. In other words, by establishing the Israelites in a region of other peoples, and then telling Israel to push these pagan tribes out of the

Promised Land, a continuous cycle of dispossessed peoples, looking for a new land in which to live, was begun.

Thus, even today, the Middle East always seems to be one or two nations short. Often two or more competing groups are trying to claim the same land, e.g., Israel and the Palestinians, Israel and the Syrians, the Kurds, Turkey and Iraq, etc. In Israel's case, claims can be put forth, but they will not prosper unless they line up with God's plan for His land and His people.

Within the larger land area promised to the Children of Abraham, the provincial borders of the tribal land were also described by God to the sons of Jacob, the tribes of Israel. So detailed is the description down to the most minute detail in the Book of Joshua, chapters 13–21, that even today you can take a modern map of Israel and draw these borders along the rivers, valleys, hilltops, and cities, just as it is written. Unlike today's smaller borders of Israel, these tribal areas extended on both the eastern and western side of the Jordan River, and into what today is southern Lebanon and part of southwest Syria (see Map 2).

8

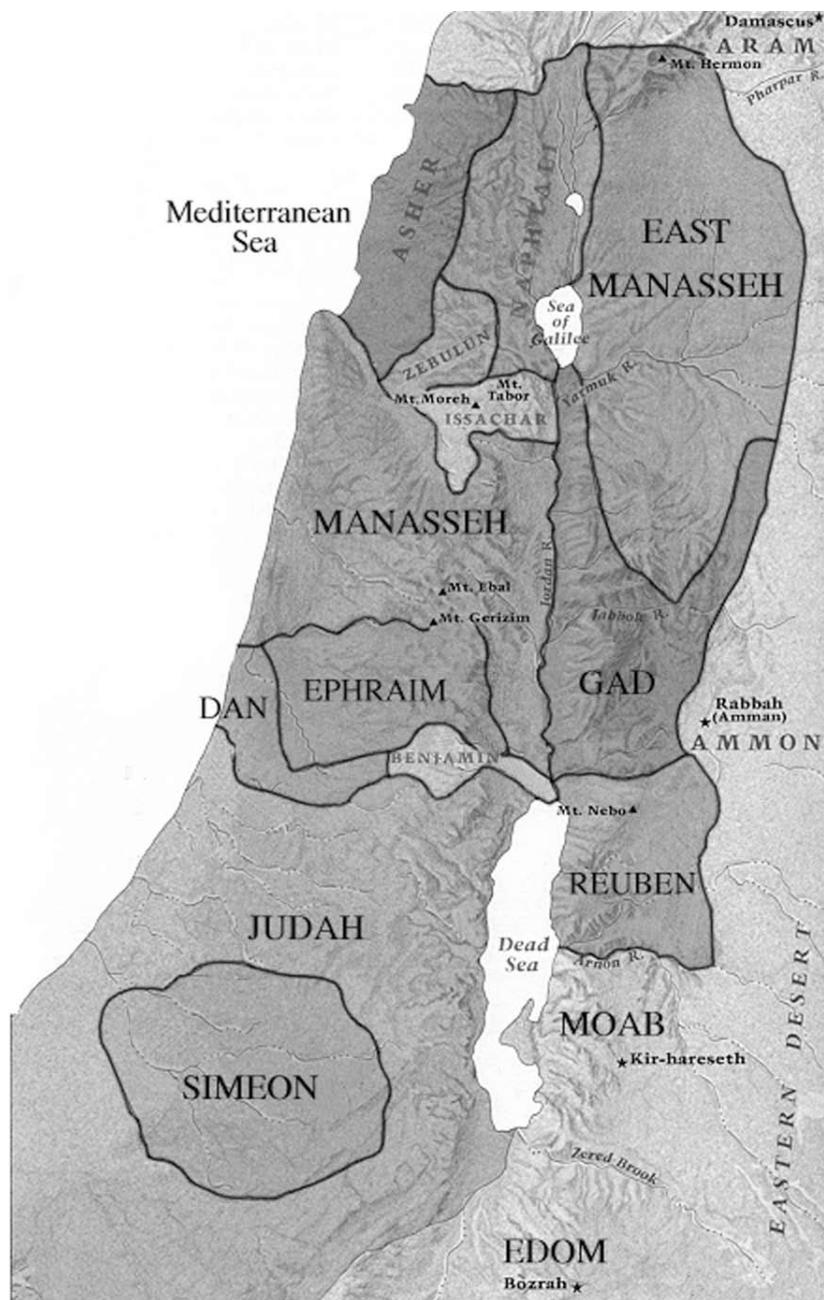


9



Regardless of the size of Israel during different periods in history, the portion of the land consistently inhabited by the Israelites was referred to as being “from Dan to Beersheva.”

Dan is the tribal area at the northern end of the Hulah Valley north of the Sea of Galilee at the foot of Mount Hermon and the sources of the Jordan River. Beersheva is a southern city in the Negev Desert where Abraham lived for some time, having made a treaty with Abimelech (Gen. 21:22–32). It is on the edge of the driest part of the desert farther south,



Map 2

and marked the end of the easily inhabitable land in the days of the Bible. Between these two points is a mere 140 miles (225 km). Compared with the rich Nile Delta in Egypt or the fertile fields of Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the land of Israel is relatively poor and small. The size of Israel, for much of the biblical period and even now, is the size of the state of New Jersey in the USA, yet this little land has figured prominently in the affairs of the world, and its own stormy history provides much evidence for its vital significance and importance.<sup>2</sup>

Today, when we look at a map, we are taught in school to view the world with all the countries lined up north to south, where a right direction would be east and a left direction would be west.

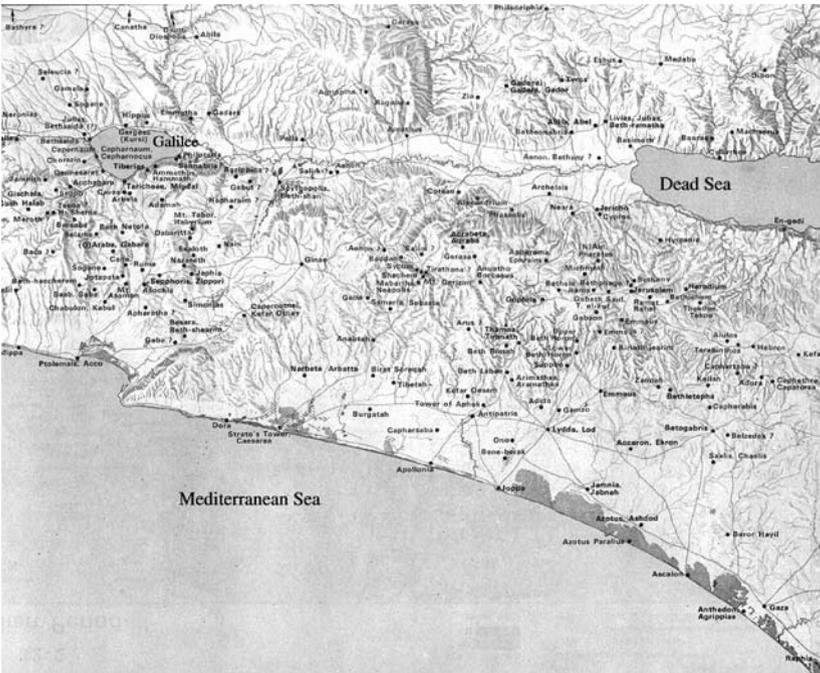
This is not the case in the Bible. God and the Bible's orientation toward the land of the Bible (Israel) is as though He were viewing it from heaven, from over the Mediterranean Sea looking east. The directions in the Bible of going left and right correspond with north and south, not west and east (see Map 3). Yemen, for example, a country at the southern tip of the Saudi Arabian peninsula, is a name that means, in Hebrew, "right." It is the farthest country to the right, or south, of Israel.

To illustrate this point, let's look at Genesis: "The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring for ever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you' " (Gen. 13:14–17).

10



In verse 14, the directions of north, south, east, and west are written in Hebrew, as follows: *tzafona*, *negbah*, *kedemah*, and *yamah*. What do they mean literally? *Tzafona* means “toward the north;” *negbah* means “toward the Negev,” which is the southernmost region of Israel; *kedemah* means “forward,” (e.g., an Israeli army officer will say to his troops, *kedemah*, and then lead them forward to the front lines); and *yamah* means “toward the sea,” i.e., the Mediterranean Sea. From this, you can see God looked east across the land, as *kedemah* (forward) is translated east, *yamah* (toward the sea) is west, and *negbah* (a region to His right) is translated south.



Map 3