

# Unpacking the Book

## Lesson 1: The Land of the Bible

### I. Geographical Overview

#### A. Introduction

##### 1. Names of the Land:

Canaan: meaning “red-purple” signifying the importance of wool as an export

Israel: from God’s naming of Jacob (Gen. 32:28) It means “to struggle, to strive.”

Palestine: derived from the word “Philistine” – first used by a Greek Historian, Herodotus in the 5<sup>th</sup> century

Holy Land: a common name used down through the ages by Christians (Zech. 2:12)

##### 2. Israel is at the crossroads of three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe

“The history of any land and people is influenced to a considerable degree by their geographical environment. This includes not only the natural features such as climate, soil, topography, etc., but also the geopolitical relationships with neighboring areas. This is especially true for Palestine, a small and relatively poor country, which derives its main importance from its unique centralized location at a juncture of continents and a crossroads for the nations.” (The Land of the Book, p.19)

##### 3. Description of the land

350 miles long, 70 miles wide

About the size of New Jersey

“From Dan to Beersheba...” (1 Sam. 3:20)

#### B. Geographic regions

##### 1. Coastal Plain – strip of land adjoining the Mediterranean Sea on the West: 70 miles long, 24 miles at its widest

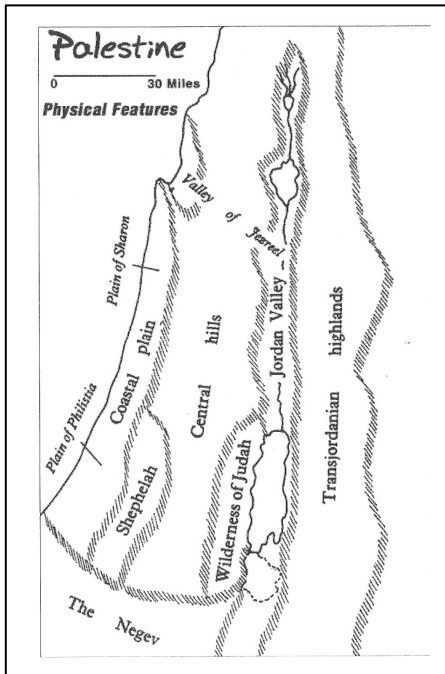
The “Via Maris” – most important trade route from Egypt to the fertile crescent.

The Plain of Acco – northern most area including the Carmel Range. Was controlled by the Phoenicians. Contains modern day Haifa.

The Plain of Sharon – contains no natural harbors (Herod built Caesarea) and has poor soil. Israel usually maintained control. Contains modern day Tel Aviv.



Dan  
to  
Beersheba



The Philistine Plain – has fertile farmland with five major Philistine cities (1 Sam. 6:17-18)

2. Central Highlands – contains the Jezreel Valley (Megiddo)

Galilee – “upper” – mountainous with isolated people  
 “lower” – hilly with many villages

Samaria – also known as the hills of Ephraim, very populated and fertile

Judea – hill country to the west, barren to the east

Negev – least populated area, few people. Beersheva is known as the capital of Negev.

3. The Rift Valley – the deepest depression or fault in the earth’s surface. Goes from Syria into Africa. Contains four regions: The Huleh Valley (mostly a swamp area), the Jordan Valley (70 miles of fertile farmland), the Dead Sea (50 miles x 11 miles, lowest point on earth at 1300 feet below sea level) and Arabah (from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea – includes the Port of Eilat)

C. “There are at least 170 references to the land God gave to the offspring of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” ([www.differentspirit.org](http://www.differentspirit.org)) Note the various descriptions of the land given to Israel (Deut. 19:8)

1. Ex. 3:8 “A good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...”
2. Gen. 15:18-21 “From the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonitis, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.
3. Ex. 23:31 I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and from the desert to the Euphrates River
4. Numbers 34:1-5 “The LORD said to Moses, “Command the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter Canaan, the land that will be allotted to you as an inheritance is to have these boundaries: ““Your southern side will include some of the Desert of Zin along the border of Edom. Your southern boundary will start in the east from the southern end of the Dead Sea, cross south of Scorpion Pass, continue on to Zin and go south of Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and over to Azmon, where it will turn, join the Wadi of Egypt and end at the Mediterranean Sea.”
5. Eze. 47:13-20 Israel has not yet been occupied this land. Compare Eze. 36:28 with Rev. 21:3

## II. The Beginning

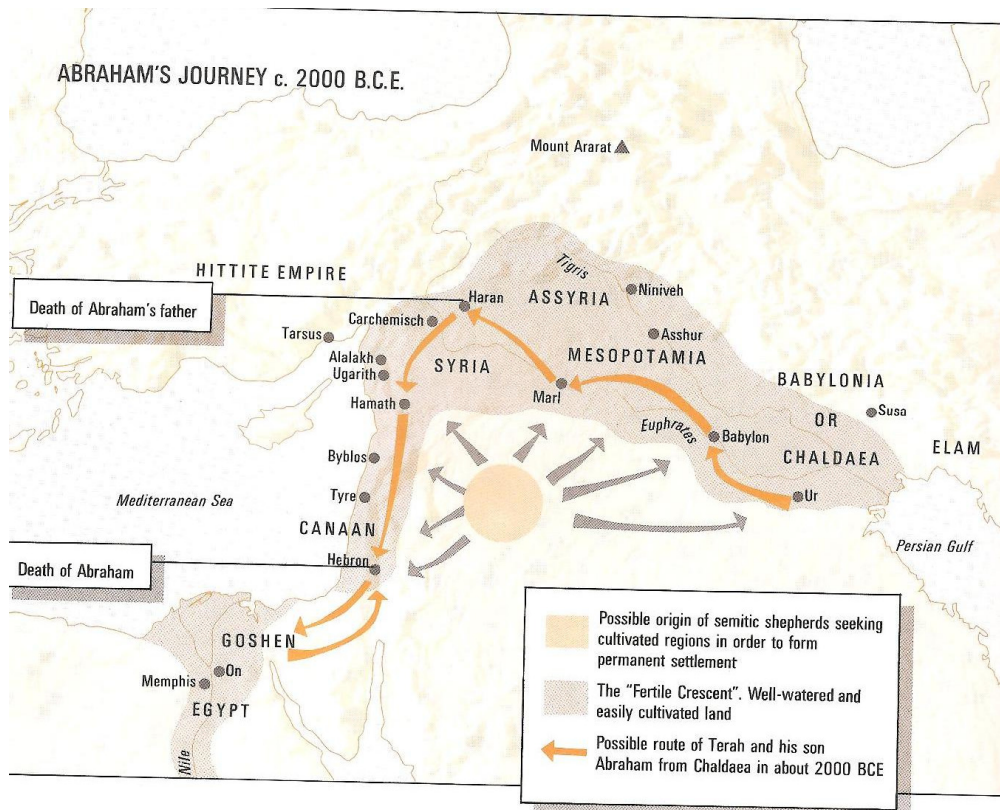
- A. The history of Israel begins with God's covenant with Abraham in approximately 2000 B.C. See Gen. 12:2 "I will make you a great nation." (Gen. 17:4-8)



- B. Why Abraham? Why Israel?

Were they the largest, strongest, most righteous nation? No! See Deut. 7:6-8 and 9:4-6. God chose these people because of His unconditional covenant with Abraham. He intended to use Israel as His means to love and bless all nations (Gen. 12:1-3). God's relationship with Israel is a picture of His love for His people. It's unearned and by grace (Eph. 2:8-9)

Abraham left Ur (ancient city on the Euphrates River), paused in Haran (Gen. 11:31), ultimately settled into Canaan (Gen. 12:6 and following).







### III. So What!?!

God clearly invaded human history when He chose Israel and recorded their extended “story.” In like manner, He is “invading” our lives and seeking a special relationship with us. Like Abraham, we all have a choice to make:

1 Kings 18:21 “Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.”

Josh. 24:15 “But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think the physical location of Israel is significant? (Crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe) Why?
2. Remind each other why God chose Israel. Look at Gen. 12:1-3.
3. Why do you think God went to all the trouble to record all the myriad of details about Israel in the Bible?