

INTRODUCTION

My wife and I just returned in June, 2023, from a tour of Israel with members of our church. It was life-changing. Walking where Jesus walked, seeing where miracles of the Bible actually happened, such a time is hard to describe without tears of joy. We were so thankful for our team leaders, Pastors Charles and Logan, who kept us grounded in the Biblical narratives. Our tour guide, Eres, a Christian Israeli who has led tours for more than thirty years, was such a blessing. Also, we could not have had such wonderful experiences without MorningStar Tours which prepared us for the trip, before, during and after.

There are many misconceptions of Israel which are resolved when one steps into the land of the Bible. The American writer, Mark Twain, gained insights during his visit to Israel in 1867, *I can see easily enough that if I wish to profit by this tour and come to a correct understanding of the matters of interest connected with it, I must studiously and faithfully unlearn a great many things I have somehow absorbed concerning Palestine [Israel] . . . I have got everything in Palestine on too large a scale . . . The word Palestine always brought to my mind a vague suggestion of a country as large as the United States. I do not know why, but such was the case. I suppose it was because I could not conceive of a small country having so large a history.*

Glimpses of the Holy Land is a new tab on the *Crimson Ministries* website. It is hoped that through weekly lessons on the biblical history of Israel, tied to its geography with current pictures, you might get a clearer glimpse of the “large history” of Israel. The history of Israel is not only large but of greatest import since its history is still unfolding with every human being taking part in it. The following bullet points were collected during our travels. I hope they will give added insight as you join us in *Glimpses of the Holy Land*.

The Land

- More than 240 million trees were planted in Israel since Jews started to return to their homeland. There are fruit trees, carob, olive, pomegranate, oak, pistachio, and acacia in the south.
- Olives were mainly used in New Testament times to provide light. Harvest is in October and continues until the final crop turns black in January. All colors are grown on the same tree. The longer they remain on the tree, the darker they become.
- Cherry tomatoes are an Israeli invention.
- The Hula Valley was a swamp and in the 1950s they started planting Eucalyptus trees which eliminated the swamp. By the 1980s, the Jordan River was getting polluted so they flooded part of the land again which filtered the water entering the Jordan River.
- A kibbutz is the name for a collective farm. The Russians hoped these communal societies would lead toward Communism.
- Israel is on a bird migration route between Africa and Europe. One billion birds fly overland.
- The eastern border of Israel is at a very low elevation. It is a rift valley between tectonic plates. The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea are on the fault line. The recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria were caused by movements in the those tectonic plates.
- There are quick changes of weather on the Sea of Galilee due to the low elevation, mountain peaks with valleys surround the lake. Cooler air from the Mediterranean to the west meets the hot air coming from the eastern desert lands, causing frequent storms.

The People

- Israel became an independent country in 1948.
- It is 290 miles from north to south and 85 miles from east to west at its widest point. It is 8,000 square miles.
- There are 10 million people in Israel, 7 million are Jewish, 2 million are Muslims/Arabs, and of the 1 million others, Russians predominate.
- All Jewish males and females are required to serve in the military for 2 years. After that, they become reservists.
- Muslim citizens are not required to serve in the military. Also, Ultra Orthodox Jews do not serve in the military. They do not have jobs but continuously study Jewish law to maintain spiritual purity.

Conflicts

- Between 1943-46, Jewish immigrants entered the country through the region of Dan which is on near the borders of Lebanon and Syria.
- In 1960, Eli Cohen, a Jew raised in Egypt, immigrated to Israel. He became an Israeli spy in Syria and infiltrated Syrian intelligence to the highest level, becoming the Deputy Minister of Defense. He encouraged them to plant Eucalyptus trees around all Syrian military installations to give shade and refreshment for the troops. Cohen was found to be a traitor and executed in 1965.
- During the Six Day War in 1967, Israeli military knew the location of every installation and destroyed them.
- The Lebanese border was mostly quiet until 1970 when a terrorist group called Hezbollah became active, taking orders from Iran. Tensions continue with ballistic threats that continue today.
- The Yom Kippur War took place in 1973 and threatened Israel's existence. Israel was victorious in less than one month. Israel no longer allows a holiday to keep them from keeping vigilant.