



VIEW NORTH: THE MOUNTAINS OF LOWER GALILEE. THE BEIT HAKEREM VALLEY RUNS BETWEEN THE TWO HIGHEST RANGES (TOP CENTER) AND IS THE VALLEY THAT SEPARATES UPPER AND LOWER GALILEE.

BELOW (VIEW NORTHEAST): THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM MT. CARMEL, LOOKING ACROSS THE WESTERN END OF THE JEZREEL VALLEY TOWARD LOWER GALILEE. THE VALLEY CARRIED THE ROAD FROM THE PORT OF ACCO TO BEIT SHEAN.





VIEW NORTHWEST: THE BEIT NETOFA VALLEY LOOKING TOWARD THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA. CANA OF GALILEE WAS EAST AND BELOW MT. ATSMON. THE ARAB TOWN OF KEFAR MANDA IS ON ITS SOUTHERN SLOPE (TOP LEFT).

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LOWER GALILEE

Yohanan Aharoni described Lower Galilee as “an intermediate zone made up of low mountain ranges with shallow, broad expanses between them.”¹ It differs from Upper Galilee in the elevation of its mountains and the openness of its valleys. Moving north from the hills of Nazareth, Edward Robinson described “long ridges running from east to west, [rising] one higher than another, until the mountains of Safed over top them all.”² The valleys between the mountains connect the coast to the Jordan Valley, where the roads through Lower Galilee converge on the Plain of Gennesaret at the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee (see chapter 7, “Sea of Galilee”). Beyond the Jordan lie the regions of Gilead and Bashan and the Syrian capital of Damascus, which is only 40 miles (64 km) away. What Aharoni wrote about Palestine—“the history of any land and people is influenced to a considerable degree by their geographical environment”—is particularly true of Lower Galilee.³

LIFE IN LOWER GALILEE

Bible geographer Denis Baly provided the following description of life in Galilee:

When we are told that Jesus went about all Galilee, it is Lower Galilee and the shores of the lake that are meant, and it is therefore against this background that we must picture him. As he went from village to village across the cultivated hills, he would have skirted the fertile basins, rich with grain or in the winter deep in mud, taking perhaps a little over an hour to walk the full length of the largest of



VIEW SOUTH: SAFED (LOWER LEFT) AND WHAT BABY DESCRIBED AS THE “CULTIVATED HILLS” AND “FERTILE BASINS” OF LOWER GALILEE. ALSO VISIBLE ARE MT. TABOR (TOP LEFT) AND THE NAZARETH MOUNTAINS (TOP CENTER).

them. . . . Sometimes he would have used the great trade routes and encountered companies of soldiers and the lumbering caravans which carried the grain of Hauran or the rich fruits of Damascus. [He was] never very far from the busy commerce and the restless coming and going of the Roman world.⁴

THE NAME GALILEE

The name comes from the Hebrew *galil* [גליל], which means “circle.” Thus, “Galilee of the nations” (*Galil ha-Goyim* [גליל הגויים]; Isa. 9:1) might also be translated as “in the district (or region) of the Gentiles.” This translation reflects the reality that Galilee often comprised a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles for three reasons: First, in different periods, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans surrounded Galilee. Roads through Lower Galilee connected essential branches of the Via Maris, bringing foreign merchants, armies, and other travelers into the region (see “Travel and Communication” on page 89).

Second, the tribes whose territory coincided closely with Lower Galilee never succeeded in driving out the Canaanites, who “dwelt among them” (see Judg. 1:30–33).

And third, the population of Galilee became more Gentile after Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BC), king of Assyria, spoiled the country and deported its inhabitants in 732 BC, annexing the northern half of the kingdom (Israel) and subjugating the southern half (Judea) as a vassal kingdom.

According to historian Emil Schürer, “the Jews in Galilee and Gilead formed a Diaspora among the Gentiles” until as late as 164 BC, which was the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire (see “Historical Sketch” in *Blessed Pilgrimage*, vol. 2).⁵ To avoid persecution, Simon Maccabeus⁶ brought the Jews of Galilee to Judea. Galilee was not truly Judaized until about 104 BC, after the successful reign of John Hyrcanus (135–104 BC), son of Simon Maccabeus.⁷ “From this time onwards,” wrote George Adam Smith, “it was natural to drop out of [Galilee’s] name the words *of the Gentiles*, which even before this were not always used; but the article was retained, and throughout the New Testament, [Galilee] is known as *The Galilee*.”⁸



VIEW EAST: THE HILLS AND VALLEYS OF LOWER GALILEE BETWEEN THE SEA OF GALILEE (LOWER LEFT) AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA (TOP RIGHT). MODERN CITIES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT ARE IN WHITE.

TRAVEL AND COMMUNICATION

Palestine, a land of diverse geographical features, is sectioned into four parallel zones comprising the coastal plain, the central hill country, the Jordan Rift, and the eastern hill country (Transjordan). Interruptions occur along the coast where Mt. Carmel (see “Mt. Carmel” in *Blessed Pilgrimage*, vol. 4) and the Ladder of Tyre (Rosh HaNikrah) meet the sea as well as north of the mountains of Samaria, where a series of five transverse valleys break through the central Galilean mountain range. First is the Jezreel Valley, which marks the southern limit of Lower Galilee, and then four smaller valleys that begin north of Nazareth (see “Nazareth” on page 127; see “Jezreel Valley” and “Rosh HaNikrah” in *Blessed Pilgrimage*, vols. 2 and 4).

In ancient times, the shortest route between the coast and Damascus ascended from Acco through the Beit Hakerem Valley. From the valley’s eastern end, the road continued past Nahal Amud to the Upper Jordan Valley, where it met the Via Maris. Another road connected Acco with the Lower Jordan Valley through Hannathon, Sepphoris, the Golani Junction (modern name), and Jabneel and went as far south as Yenoam near the fords of the Jordan River. This road was the Darb el-Hawarnah, “the main route connecting Hauran and the northern sectors of Transjordan with the coastal region.” It served as an international caravan route and an alternative to the Via Maris.⁹ Another road branched from the Golani Junction past the Horns of Hattin before descending the pass below Mt. Arbel (“Valley of the Doves”) to the Plain of Gennesaret. For more on these routes, see “Jezreel Valley” in *Blessed Pilgrimage*, vol. 2.

ECONOMY

The Bible’s description of Canaan fits Galilee well, along with its description of the Upper Jordan Valley (see “Upper Jordan Valley” in *Blessed Pilgrimage*, vol. 2):

For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains [i.e., springs] and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;



VIEW WEST: THIS AREA IS 1.8 MILES (3 KILOMETERS) NORTH OF THE ISRAELI TOWN OF MASAD. THE VIEW IS TOWARD THE COAST. THE SEA OF GALILEE IS 3.5 MILES (6 KILOMETERS) EAST OF THIS SPOT.

BELOW (VIEW NORTH): THE ARAB TOWN OF ELIBUN (FOREGROUND) LOOKING TOWARD UPPER GALILEE (TOP), THE BEIT HAKEREM VALLEY AND KARMIEL (CENTER LEFT), AND MAGHAR—A MUSLIM, CHRISTIAN, AND DRUZE CITY (CENTER RIGHT).





VIEW NORTH: THIS REGION IS 1.8 MILES (3 KILOMETERS) NORTH OF THE TOP PHOTO ON PAGE 90. THESE ARE THE VALLEYS AND HILLS OF LOWER GALILEE NORTH OF THE BEIT NETOFA VALLEY (SEE PHOTO ON THE BOTTOM OF PAGE 90).

A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil [i.e., olive trees], and honey;

A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it. (Deut. 8:7–9)

Josephus described the fertility of Galilee similarly:

The soil is universally rich and fruitful, and full of the plantations of trees of all sorts, insomuch that it invites the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation, by its fruitfulness: accordingly, it is all cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle.¹⁰

He also talked about Galilee’s production of wine and oil, which was in demand by the Jews of Syria. After local and domestic demands were satisfied, the people sold the surplus grain, oil, and fruit in markets outside Palestine. Wheat production was concentrated in the Plain of Arbel, the Beit Netofa Valley, Kefar Hittaya, and Huqoq. Grapes, olives, and figs were cultivated in Sepphoris, Netofa, Jotapata, Sogane, and the Beit Hakerem Valley (“House of the Vineyards”), which divided Upper and Lower Galilee. Grain, oil, and wine, which dominated the agriculture of Palestine as indicated by their grouping in the Bible, were plentiful in Galilee.¹¹

God promised the tribes of Israel a prosperous life in the land if they obeyed His commandments and loved and served their neighbors (see Deut. 11:13–15 and chapter 2, “The Land Between”). Unfortunately, unrighteous kings dominate Israelite history—kings who did everything but serve the God of their fathers. Instead, they trusted in the pagan gods worshiped by the Canaanites. Jesus brought light to a nation whose leaders had turned their hearts from God.



VIEW NORTH: THIS VALLEY IS 1.2 MILES (2 KILOMETERS) NORTH OF HUKOK, AND 3 MILES (5 KILOMETERS) WEST OF THE SEA OF GALILEE. JESUS WALKED THESE VALLEYS AS HE WENT ABOUT "ALL GALILEE" PREACHING HIS GOSPEL.

SETTLEMENT

Josephus described the cities and villages of Lower Galilee:

The cities lie here very thick; and the very many villages . . . are everywhere so full of people, by the richness of their soil, that the very least of them contain above fifteen thousand inhabitants."¹²

The figures provided by Josephus seem high (elsewhere, he mentions some two hundred towns and villages, making a total of more than three million inhabitants in Galilee!), but his description of a highly populated region accords with what we know about the Galilee of ancient times. What was true of Galilee, in general, applied more specifically to Lower Galilee because of its rich soils, abundant rainfall, and higher percentage of level ground. Lower Galilee was a favored region for human settlement in Palestine.

JESUS IN GALILEE

In His early Galilean ministry, Jesus attended a wedding in Cana, where He turned water into wine (John 2:1–11; see “Cana of Galilee” on page 105). After the wedding, “[Jesus] went *down* to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days” before they “went *up* to Jerusalem,” for “the Passover was at hand” (John 2:12, emphasis added).

MATTHEW

Matthew described how Jesus approached His second Galilean ministry:

And Jesus went about *all* Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

And his fame went throughout *all* Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

And there followed him *great multitudes of people* from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan. (Matt. 4:23–25, emphasis added)

Denis Baly suggested that “all Galilee” meant Lower Galilee and the shores of the Sea of Galilee. I wonder, however, since our record of Jesus’s ministry is small and not complete. At the end of his gospel covering the ministry of Jesus, His doctrines and miracles, and his personal experiences as one of Jesus’s chief apostles, John wrote:

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. (John 21:25)

Jesus was not limited to travel along the main lines of communication that connected the valleys of Lower Galilee with the Upper Jordan Valley and beyond. He ministered wherever the people were, which must have included the populated areas of Upper Galilee, the Upper Jordan Valley, and Bashan.

MARK

Mark’s account of Jesus’s ministry in Galilee contains other interesting details:

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

And when they had found him, they said unto him, *All men* seek for thee.

And he said unto them, Let us go into the *next towns*, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

And he preached in their synagogues throughout *all* Galilee, and cast out devils. (Mark 1:35–39, emphasis added)

Jesus started His day seeking direction from His Father. He retired to a “solitary place” where He could be alone, away from the people and His disciples. Multitudes sought after Jesus. He met them where they were, walking to one town after another “throughout all Galilee.”

LUKE

Luke’s description amplifies Mark’s account, providing a few different details:

And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to *other cities* also: for therefore *am I sent*.

And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee. (Luke 4:42–44, emphasis added)



VIEW SOUTHWEST: THE BEIT HAKEREM VALLEY (UPPER LEFT TO RIGHT). THE VALLEY SEPARATED LOWER GALILEE (TOP LEFT) AND UPPER GALILEE (FOREGROUND). BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN (UPPER RIGHT), YOU CAN MAKE OUT HAIFA IN THE HAZE.

THE LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL

Jesus crossed Lower Galilee into Upper Galilee before coming “into the coasts [i.e., regions] of Tyre and Sidon” (Matt. 15:21). Except for one story, we are not told what He did in Upper Galilee or how long He stayed. A “woman of Canaan” approached Jesus, pleading that He would save her daughter “grievously vexed with a devil” (for this story with a different emphasis, see “Jesus in Upper Galilee” on page 58). Maybe wanting to test her faith, Jesus “answered her not a word.” When the woman’s loud pleas continued, the disciples asked Jesus to send her away (i.e., silence her by healing the child). Jesus responded, “I am not sent but unto the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt. 15:22–25, emphasis added).

Hearing this, the woman approached Jesus again, but this time as she drew near, she “worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me.” Jesus, apparently wanting to test her further, said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs” (i.e., someone who is not worthy). Not offended but humbled, the woman replied: “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Matt. 15:26–28)

For this incident, Elder McConkie offered the following explanation:

What happened on this occasion, however, was merely a sign and indication of a future day when the gospel would go to the Gentiles in full measure. As pertaining to his mortal ministry, Jesus was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It took special pleading and abundant faith to prevail upon him to so much as heal a Gentile (Matt. 15:21-28). After the chosen seed were given the first opportunity to hear the gospel, it would go to the Gentiles through the ministry of the apostles, soon to be chosen.¹³



VIEW WEST: I TOOK THIS PHOTO STANDING NEAR THE SUMMIT OF MT. HAZON. THE CLOUDS BLOCKED A PHOTO OF THE BEIT HAKEREM VALLEY (UPPER RIGHT) ALL DAY, WHICH WAS THE OBJECTIVE OF CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN.

BELOW (VIEW NORTHWEST): THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN STANDING NEAR THE TOP OF MT. HAZON, WHICH OVERLOOKS THE CITY OF MAGHAR TO THE SOUTH AND THE BEIT HAKEREM VALLEY TO THE NORTH (SEE THE MAP ON PAGE 89).



Another person not of the House of Israel—this time a Roman Centurion—approached Jesus in Capernaum, “beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.” The centurion’s faith needed no testing, for Jesus immediately agreed to “come and heal” the servant (Matt. 8:5–13; see “Jesus’s Ministry in and Around Capernaum” on page 244 for the story’s background and details).

Jesus was called to preach the gospel of the kingdom in *all* the cities of Galilee, where He performed mighty miracles and taught the higher principles of His gospel. Ultimately, of course, His mission was to *all* of God’s children wherever and whenever they lived, as the stories about the “woman of Canaan” and the Roman Centurion show. His mortal ministry mainly took place among the lost sheep of the house of Israel, whom He was attempting to reclaim from their lost and fallen state. Well did Jesus say,

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Matt. 15:8–9)

These are the people Nephi referred to when he explained,

Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God. (2 Ne. 10:3)

Jesus had many followers among the Jews, including His closest disciples. Nephi was writing about those whose hearts were far from their Redeemer and who taught “for doctrines the commandments of men.”

SELECTED LOWER GALILEEE SITES (SEE THE MAP ON PAGE 89)

- **Nazareth:** The village of Jesus’s youth. Here, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:51–52; see “Nazareth” on page 127).
- **Sepphoris:** This city was the administrative capital of Galilee and the residence of Herod Antipas until the founding of Tiberias (see “Sepphoris” on page 119). Josephus called it the “ornament of all Galilee” and the “strongest city in Galilee” after Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great) rebuilt it early in the first century AD. Sepphoris was only 5 miles (8 kilometers) northwest of Nazareth on the road from Acco to Tiberias (see “Tiberias” on page 163 and “Acco/Ptolemais” in *Blessed Pilgrimage*, vol. 4).
- **Cana of Galilee:** The city in which Jesus performed his first public miracle (see John 2:1–11). Most archaeologists associate Cana of Galilee with Khirbet Qana in the Beit Netofa Valley. Cana was probably not Kefar Kanna, the traditional site on the Nazareth-Tiberias road (see “Cana of Galilee” on page 105 and “Kefar Kanna” on page 115).
- **Jotapata:** The city was a Galilean fortress dating from Israelite times. Josephus used it as part of a line of fortifications to defend Galilee in the First Jewish Revolt against Rome in 66 AD. Here, Josephus was taken captive by the Roman general Vespasian. The fortress is only 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) northwest of Cana of Galilee (see “Jotapata (Yodfat)” on page 99).



YOU FIND THE BOUGAINVILLEA FLOWER ALL OVER GALILEE. THEY COME IN RED, ORANGE, PINK, YELLOW, PURPLE, AND WHITE. THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN WEST OF MIGDAL, WHICH IS NEAR THE NORTHWESTERN SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 28.
- 2 Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mt. Sinai and Arabia Petraea* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1841), 336–37.
- 3 For the full quote, see chapter 2, “The Land Between,” on page 10.
- 4 Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 162–63.
- 5 Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. ed., trans. John Macpherson (London: Edinburgh T. & T. Clark Ltd, 1973), 1:142.
- 6 Maccabee was a title given to Judah, son of Mattathias, military leader of the Jewish revolt against Syria in 168 BC. Simon was Judah’s brother, who took over command of the revolt after another brother, Jonathan, was killed in 143 BC.
- 7 Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 1:164, 217.
- 8 George Adam Smith, “Galilee,” in *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (New Zealand: Titus Books, 2014), chap. 20, Kindle.
- 9 Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 61.
- 10 Flavius Josephus, *Seven Books of the Jewish War*, in *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus the Jewish Historian*, trans. William Whiston (London, 1737), 3:3:2, <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus>.
- 11 See Deut. 28:51; 1 Chr. 9:29; 2 Chr. 31:5, 32:28; Jer. 31:12.
- 12 Josephus, *Seven Books of the Jewish War*, 3:3:2.
- 13 Bruce R. McConkie, “Jesus Lays Foundation for Future Gentile Harvest,” in *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 1:134.