

ISRAEL'S WATER SOURCE – FAITH (Rick Yohn)

God supplies The Land of the Bible with five water sources. Although they vary in size, only two of those bodies are fresh water, and the other three are salt water. The fresh bodies are the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. What about the salt-water bodies? They include the Red, the Med, and the Dead. The Red Sea in the southern part of the country, the Mediterranean Sea on the West, and the Dead Sea in the south.

Many countries have the luxury to drink from the vast, deep-flowing rivers that carve a path through their land. But in spite of the narrow Jordan River that flows from the base of Mt. Hermon to the Dead Sea, Israel does not enjoy such rivers. God's water supply for Israel depended on their obedience to God. They either enjoyed an abundance of rain to water the mountains and valleys, or they experienced massive drought (1 Kings 17:1) throughout the land, as a result of their disobedience. Without rain, the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River cannot supply the water needed for human consumption or irrigation.

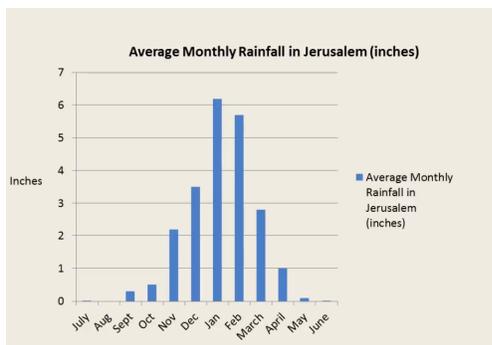


Figure 1 - From Schlegel video 02

When the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites for 430 years, these Hebrews were accustomed to the Nile River which would overflow its boundaries each year and flood the land. But the Lord informed His people that the Land to which He was taking them was not like Egypt. It does not have a significant River like the Nile - *“But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that **drinks rain from heaven**. 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”* (Deuteronomy 11:11-12).

He continued with the following promise: *“So **if** you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today – to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul – **then** I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine, and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied”* (Deuteronomy 11:13-15). This promise was conditional – *“if you do this then I will do that”*. But when Israel returned from captivity in Babylon, they had forgotten God's promise. God wanted their focus to be centered on rebuilding the Temple for worship. Instead, they decided to center their attention on building their own houses.

So God raised up the Prophet Haggai to remind them why they were experiencing an exceptional drought. *“Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you, the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands.”*

(Haggai 1:9-11). I've been in Israel when the rains poured from the skies, and I've been there when we sat on the golden-brown, dry grass during May.



Though a drought causes a lot of problems for the people in the Land typically, there was one time that lack of rain for an extended period resulted in a tremendous blessing. During the drought of 1986, two brothers made one of the most significant discoveries in the history of Israel. They found a boat from the 1st Century that had been hidden for 2,000 years in the mud of the Sea of Galilee. They named it "The Jesus Boat." You can see it in The Yigal Allon Museum in Kibbutz

Ginosar. No one claims that Jesus ever sailed in this boat, but because this boat came from the same period, many refer to it as "The Jesus Boat."

The Sea of Galilee has numerous names. It is known as the Sea of Kinnereth (Numbers 34:11), (Hebrew word for harp); Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1), (Greek name for harp); Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1); and the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1). Many Bible maps do not show the topography of this body of water, but Carl Rasmussen does, and you can see the topographical distinctions in this map.



Rasmussen, Zondervan Atlas of the Bible, 2010

The Sea of Galilee is shy of 700 feet below sea level. The Prophet Isaiah predicted that this would be the area in which Messiah would minister. He penned the following,

*“Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of **Zebulun** and the land of **Naphtali**, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan – The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned”* (Isaiah 9:1-2).



What does that mean? Zebulun and Naphtali were two provinces in the Galilee. The critical city in **Zebulun** was **Nazareth**, the hometown of Jesus.

And the primary town of **Naphtali** was **Capernaum**, where Jesus spent three years in ministry. In that tiny confined area, the "Light of the world" shown on the people, preaching that the Kingdom of God was in their midst. It is in this specific area where Jesus lived among the people of Galilee. They heard His sermons, witnessed His miracles, and observed how He received all who came to Him.

According to Scripture, *"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more"* (Luke 12:48). Since God entrusted this area (Capernaum, Korazin, and Bethsaida) with so much spiritual truth, God expected much from them. These people should have been the first missionaries to go into the world and proclaim what they had seen, heard, and even touched. However, they rejected the One who claimed to be the Light of the world. Therefore, Jesus cursed the three cities for their lack of faith (Matthew 11:20-24). If you were to visit those cities today, you would see the result of the curse.

This location is also the place where Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount (The Mount of Beatitudes - Matthew 5-7). In the Spring, the area blossoms with yellow mustard seed, and banana trees, but in the summer it is covered with brown grass. Therefore, when Jesus spoke about "lilies of the field" in that sermon, they were probably surrounded by lilies and the sounds of birds nearby, which means it was most likely springtime.



Photo by Rick Yohn



Figure 2 – Sea of Galilee from Mt. Arbel - Photo by Rick Yohn

The Sea of Galilee receives its water from the Jordan River which flows into it with the melting snow from Mount Hermon. Therefore, it is quite cold. I know this for a fact because some years ago I decided to swim in the water and believe me, it was freezing but refreshing. And just as it receives the fresh water of the Jordan, so does it share that water with the Land as it flows down to the Dead Sea.

One of the most magnificent views of the Sea of Galilee is from Mt. Arbel. From this vantage point, one could teach on the life of Christ, for you capture the northern part of the Sea where most of His ministry took place. It was the shore of this Lake where Jesus called His first disciples. And it was this very Lake where Jesus walked on water during a sudden, horrific storm. And this is the same body of water where Peter attempted to imitate His Master, but took his eyes off of Jesus by focusing on the height of the waves, and began to sink into the Sea. At the Lord's suggestion, Peter got out of the boat. *"Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'"* (Matthew 14:31). As long as Peter's eyes focused on the Lord, He felt safe. But once he turned his eyes to the problem at hand, he began to sink.



Photo by Rick Yohn

Israel's lack of faith in the promises of God led to a drought. Peter's lack of confidence in the Lord caused him to sink into the depths. Likewise, when we refuse to believe God's promises, we too will experience a spiritual drought in our lives, and we may even begin to sink deeper into our doubts, depression, or sense of loneliness. Only as we keep on placing our confidence in the One who can do exceeding abundantly beyond all we ask or think, will we be able to experience God's showers of blessing and walk throughout life above the problems of life that want to pull us down. In the next blog, we will focus on the Jordan River, which is the primary water source for the entire Land of the Bible.