

74 Sea of Galilee

Names (also known as)

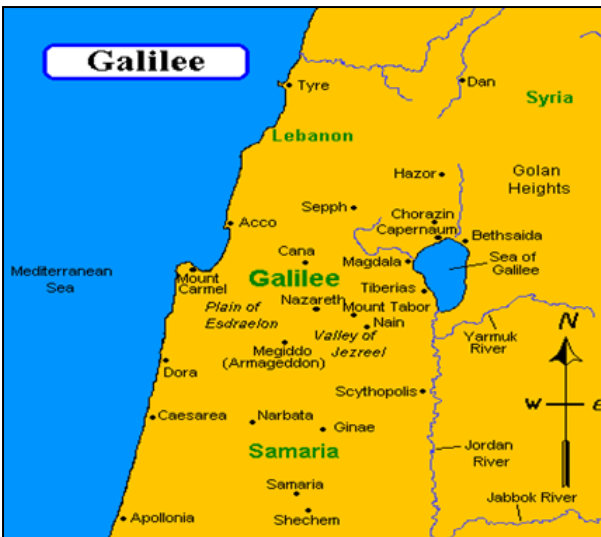
Bahr Tubariya, Ginnosar, Lake of Galilee, Lake of Gennesaret, Lake of Gennesar, Sea of Chinnereth, Sea of Chinneroth, Sea of Kinnereth, Sea of Tiberias, Lake of Tiberias, Waters of Gennesaret, Yam Kinneret.

Etymology

Modern Hebrew: Kinneret from OT Hebrew Tanakh “sea of Kinneret” (Num. 34:11).

Galilee in the Hebrew comes from the name *galil* which means a district. Strong’s - “a circle”.

Location/Description



The Plain of Gennesaret spreads out below the Arbel cliffs. It is located in northeast Israel between the Golan Heights and the Galilee Region.

The Sea of Galilee is fed by the Jordan River flowing from Mt Hermon, and rainfall and springs on the northern side. More properly designated a lake; the Kinneret (OT and its modern name) is 13 miles long (21 km) and 8 miles (13 km) wide. At its deepest point the lake is only 150 feet (46 metres) deep.

It is the largest fresh water lake in Israel. It is also the lowest fresh water lake on the earth (689 feet or 210 metres below sea level).

Three types of fish sought by fishermen include: sardines, barbels and musht (“Peter’s fish”).

A storm in 1992 sent waves 10 ft high into the shores of Tiberias.



Scriptural references

Old Testament

Num. 34:11; Deut. 3:17; Josh. 13:27; 19:35; Isa. 9:1

New Testament

Matt. 4:15,18; 15:29; Mark 1:16; 7:31; Luke 5:1; John 6:1; 7:52; 21:1

Famous characters

Lord Jesus Christ

Peter, Andrew

Brief history

For many years non-Jews lived in the region of Galilee. From the 8th Century BC Galilee belonged to Israel’s enemies. The area did not come under Israelite control until 100 years before Jesus’ birth.

Galilee became a Roman administrative unit in 57 BC. The regional capital was first Sepphoris, about 3.5 miles (5.6 km) northwest of Nazareth where Jesus was resident. Later the capital was Tiberias founded by Herod’s son Antipas (4 BC-39 AD).

In Hellenistic and Roman times Galilee was surrounded by Greek cities. Ptolemais, Tyre and Sidon lay on the Mediterranean coast; Caesarea Philippi (where Peter’s confession took place - Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27) was situated in the north; nine of the ten-city confederation, or Decapolis was west of the

Jordan. It is described as “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Isa. 9:1; Matt. 4:15).

It was a densely populated and lush area of Israel.



Galilee incorporates the territories of Issachar, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali apportioned under Joshua.

This is the region in which Jesus lived, worked and preached, and found 11 of his closest disciples.

Galilee is divided into two parts, of which the northern part, upper Galilee, is the higher. It is dominated by the Meron Mountains; these run for 6.2 miles (10 km) from the north to south and reach heights of over 3,000 feet (1,000 metres). This part of Israel used to be thick with trees in the time of the O.T. At its southern end Galilee joins the valley of Jezreel. One extinct volcano exists in the lower Galilee, near the sea of Galilee and the lava is now hard black basalt used for making grinding wheels for olive presses.

Mt Tabor is an isolated hill in lower Galilee and is the site of Deborah’s and Barak’s victory over Sisera’s army. Most of the Lord’s ministry was focused in the region of Galilee.

Capernaum is located on the shores of the sea and this is where Peter lived and where Jesus healed Peter’s mother in law (Mark 1:31).



During the ministry of Jesus a number of cities surrounding the Sea of Galilee figured prominently – Tiberias - John 6:23; Dalmanutha (Magdala?) – Mark 8:8-10; Capernaum - Mark 1:32; John 2:12; Bethsaida

– John 1:44; Matt. 4:18; Country of the Gadarenes – Matt. 8:28.



The spiritual significance of Galilee

Yahweh through Isaiah and Matthew indicated that the work of His son would centre around the Sea of Galilee. This region was despised by Judea and the religious classes of the Jews because of its identity with Gentiles – “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) was the common sentiment. The Pharisees intoned “out of Galilee ariseth no prophet” (John 7:52). Even worse was the assertive question - “Shall Christ come out of Galilee?” (John 7:41).

God always intended that Christ would redeem both Jew and Gentile, for he came to confirm the promises made to Abraham whose changed name memorialises Yahweh’s purpose in him – “I have made thee a father of a multitude of nations”.

It was here in Galilee that Christ received a far better response to his teaching than anywhere else. “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” he could say of a Roman centurion from Galilee. The 4,000 mainly Gentiles left 7 small lunch bags of crumbs against 12 hand baskets left by the 5,000 predominantly Jews of the first feeding sign. The Gentiles proved ‘hungrier’ than the Jews for the bread from heaven.

Sources:

Aaron T. Wolf, *Hydropolitics along the Jordan River*, United Nations University Press, 1995

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Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance

The Bible Atlas – pgs. 72,73 - John Rogerson

Harper Atlas of the Bible - pgs. 162-165

(Compilers – Ian Macfarlane/Jim Cowie)