

CELEBRATE 70 YEARS *and* BEYOND!

ANCIENT PROPHECY / MODERN LENS

ISRAEL RISING

THE LAND OF ISRAEL REAWAKENS

DOUG HERSHEY

Photography Elise Theriault



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CITADEL PRESS
Kensington Publishing Corp.
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DEDICATION:

To my amazing children, Elijah, Josiah, Levi, and Rachel. Each of you is a unique treasure to me and you are loved more than you know! May you live to see the completed fulfillment of these promises with your own eyes; may it stir your heart to be a part of this miraculous restoration, and may it change you forever. ~ Abba

CITADEL PRESS BOOKS are published by

Kensington Publishing Corp.
119 West 40th Street
New York, NY 10018

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Design and production by Koechel Peterson and Associates, Minneapolis, Minnesota

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ISBN-13: 978-0-8065-3907-2

ISBN-10: 0-8065-3907-0

First Citadel hardcover printing: April 2018

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress CIP data is available.

First electronic edition: April 2018

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SPECIAL THANKS

All of my crowd funding backers, great and small, my grateful thanks for your excitement, support, and patience after funding this project. Mary and Lee Wolff, Ian Jupp and Jimmy Nimon—your belief in this project idea and initial gifts of “matching funds” for our fundraising campaign made it a huge success. Elise, from the beginning, your hard work, creative eye, and unique perspective captured some of the most stunning photos I’ve ever seen of Israel. It’s great work! Todd Bolen/Bibleplaces.com for permission to use the American Colony black-and-white photo collections. The Eilat Museum/Shmulik Taggar for sharing some of your old Eilat collections, Dan Alon, Gili Yahav and Mayor of Mitzpe Ramon, Roni Marom for sharing the old photos of beginnings of the town. Yochanan Marcellino/City of Peace Media, without your experience and understanding of the book’s prophetic vision for Israel’s 70th anniversary, I would not have gotten so far so fast.

John Peterson & David Koechel of KPA (Koechel Peterson & Associates) for your incredible design work and for running with the vision of *Israel Rising* with Godspeed, Gregory Rohm and Sara Marino at KPA for all their hard work and dedication, Steve Zacharius & Lynn Cully of Kensington Publishing/Citadel Press for your wisdom, leadership, and unwavering belief in the *Israel Rising* project. Denise Silvestro, for your hard work, wisdom, and insight in directing this book at Citadel Press. Sam Noerr, Noerr Creative, for all your creative help in moving *Israel Rising* to the finish line. Sam Interrante, for the awesome headshots. Jordan Marcellino, The Beautiful Land Initiative (BLI), for sharing your sacrificial heart of active participation in the land’s awakening. Chaim Malespin/ Aliyah Return Center, for our red sign adventures, our conversations of fulfilling prophecies, and providing a place for the restoration of the Jewish people in the land. Rabbi Naphtali (“Tuly”) Weisz of Israel365.com for your friendship, overwhelming support, and for being a living example and fulfillment of Ezekiel 36.

Most importantly, to the Lord, Who am I that I live in a day to see Your ancient faithful promises coming to pass in the earth just as You said. Thank you for dropping this vision in my heart, providing the path forward, and allowing me to complete it. May I continue to see your faithfulness to your promises and say, “*For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever*” (Ezra 3:11).

FOREWORD

One of the greatest aspects of living in the State of Israel is the blessing to witness the Bible come to life before your very eyes. Each day my wife and I can't believe we are fortunate to be the first generation of our families to raise our children in the Land of Israel since our people were exiled thousands of years ago.

Having moved to Israel from America a few years ago, we live in a neighborhood of Jewish immigrants from the four corners of the world as described by Isaiah 49. We marvel when our kids play in the streets in fulfillment of Zechariah 8, and we laugh when we hear Hebrew spoken in the shops as foretold by Zephaniah 3. From the beginning until the end of the year, we are so fortunate to participate in these great miracles.

After making Aliyah, I started Israel365 inspired by Deuteronomy 11:12: "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." Here the Bible describes what God does each and every day: He looks upon the Land of Israel! Israel365 became my way to share with others all over the world the physical beauty and the biblical significance of Israel, 365 days a year. I am therefore so grateful to Doug Hershey for presenting *Israel Rising: Ancient Prophecy/Modern Lens*.

Doug Hershey's phenomenal new book, *Israel Rising: Ancient Prophecy/Modern Lens: The Land of Israel Reawakens* presents a dramatic and vivid portrayal of God's incredible blessings upon Israel over the past century. On page after beautiful page, "Ancient prophecy/Modern Lens" bears testimony to God's eternal covenant with the Land and the People of Israel.

While *Israel Rising* contains many inspiring passages from the Torah, when I see the sharp contrast between the old and new images Doug Hershey presents, I am reminded of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, Jerusalem" (Isaiah 52:2). The prophet describes a future day when the former glory of Jerusalem will be revealed. The ancient beauty of the holy city and the Promised Land that were concealed for centuries will shake off their dust and rise again.

Each of us has a part to play in the unfolding of prophecy and the restoration of Israel. I am glad Doug Hershey used his immense creativity to combine Elise's photographs and his literary skills to capture the glorious redemption of Israel. We can all benefit from *Israel Rising* to greater appreciate what God is doing for Israel in our generation, in front of our very eyes.

With blessings from Israel,
RABBI TULY WEISZ, Israel365

INTRODUCTION

One of my favorite drives in Israel is by way of Hwy 90 that follows the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The first time I drove this road in the late 1990s, I was struck by the transformation in the landscape while driving south. Upon leaving the lush and fertile farmland of Galilee, the brown hues of the desert soon began growing more expansive and rocks began changing. Somehow the sun seemed more intense, and in a short amount of time, it became quite evident that I was in a different world. Back then, aside from a few tiny villages and small subsistence farms in the desert, the barren landscape of browns, tans, and beige colors wrestled with one another for what felt like hours. Then suddenly it all changed when I crested a hill near ancient Jericho and I was welcomed by a sea of green and a true oasis in the desert.

Today this same stretch of highway is very different and is now part of a growing miracle. The desert is shrinking due to the explosion of desert farming techniques, revolutionary irrigation systems, and—for the first time in many centuries—a growing population. This same desert drive that used to be brown and dusty is now being overtaken by the life-giving colors of orchards, vineyards, greenhouses, small fields, and thriving communities. It has been an eye-opening opportunity to see this change happen firsthand. While it's great to read about such dramatic changes, it's

something you simply need to see—thus the reason for this book. Perhaps more intriguing is that this change was prophesied over 2600 years ago.

In the late sixth century BC, the biblical prophet Ezekiel spoke a message directly to the physical land of his forefathers. He foretold a day when the desolate barren homeland of his ancestors would put forth branches and produce fruit, that the land would be cultivated and sown with all kinds of crops, that the ruined and forsaken cities would again be rebuilt and inhabited, that man and beast would be multiplied on it, and that the land would come alive as never before. Ezekiel even gave signposts of when and how these miraculous transformations would happen. Since the time that Ezekiel spoke these words, this land has been conquered and reconquered multitudes of times by several world empires. Uncountable numbers of men were slain upon it. The landscape was plundered and made desolate, stripped of its fertility and value. That is until recent generations when some unique changes began to take place.

To help facilitate this dramatic view of history, we will start at the beginning. We will look at what exactly Ezekiel prophesied, including his time frame and the parameters that he set down for the fulfillment of his remarkable words. We will read the historical accounts from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim eyewitnesses who

detail what the land and region looked like and has experienced and endured, spanning several empires in the last 2000 years. Thanks to the invention of the modern camera and pioneering photographers in the late 1800s, we will view the land that they walked and photographed from the 1880s–1940s, and then compare them to new, present-day photos of the same locations that include insightful facts.

The majority of the old photos in this book are from the “American Colony: Eric Matson Collection,” as it is one of the best and well-preserved photo collections of the region. We started with over 2200 old photos taken between the 1880s and the 1940s at locations all over Israel, in what was then the Ottoman Empire and later British Mandate Palestine. Those photos were then culled to a couple hundred of the best city and landscape photo shots to be recreated to the best of our ability. Our team attempted to photograph using the exact same angle that the photographers had captured generations before us. Whenever possible, we tried to line up the landscape lines so that they were identical to the original photograph, so as to help orient the viewer to the changes that have taken place since then in the area. At times, due to the growth of cities and vegetation, we simply could not use the exact angle, so the next best possible angle was selected. While there are lots of stunning things to photograph in Israel, we used the old photos from the collection as our primary roadmap. In time, these little treasure hunts to find the exact spot of the original photo became one of the most exciting aspects of this project, since it required the help of curious and willing locals, both Jewish and Arab.

The human aspect quickly became a welcomed, yet unexpected, element of this project. Landscapes simply don’t change on their own, but rather through the efforts of the people caring for it. These encounters, detours and, at times, seemingly “divine appointments” were so compelling that I included some short blog style entries as part of our journey on our way to recreating these historic photographs. As you will see, the people are a prime component of Ezekiel’s prophecy. Whether

knowingly or unknowingly, it’s through their hands that these changes have come about. In the pages ahead, you will see cities that sprang out of nowhere, forgotten ruins now inhabited centuries later, barren mountains now covered with verdant trees, and desolate plains now transformed into fertile farmlands. All made possible by the people who had a heart for the land of their forefathers and felt drawn back to it.

There will be photos of places you may recognize and places you’ve never even heard of. This is intentional. While entire photo books could be created of a particular city such as Jerusalem, which has a rich history and extensive photo archives, we chose to cover the land as a whole. For this reason, much of a location’s deep history will not be covered, and many popular old photo angles will not be used. We want to show our readers locations and angles that few have ever seen. Throughout the land, the transformations are truly stunning; something that needs to be seen to be believed.

In today’s world of Middle Eastern politics involving land disputes and religious tensions, my aim is not a political statement or a religious declaration. Rather, let’s consider the facts that suggest that something miraculously tangible is currently unfolding in our day that was foretold over two millennia ago and view the photos that seem to prove it. While there are many “then/now” photo books that could be published about any city or country in the world, none of those places’ revival was foretold by an ancient prophet with such exact detail. That fact alone should compel us to look deeper.

Let’s take an honest look at this ancient prophecy, consider the 2000 years of eyewitness accounts that verify what the old photos depict, compare them using our modern photo lens of today, then come to our own conclusions. By the end, my hope is that the reader would ask perhaps the most important question: “How and why is this happening?”

Welcome to the unfolding journey of *Israel Rising: Ancient Prophecy/Modern Lens*.

~Doug Hershey



THE ANCIENT PROPHECY:

Ezekiel Chapter 36

My journey began with this ancient passage. While I had read it before, it really didn't attract my attention until I began recognizing portions of the Jordan Valley changing firsthand, within a short fifteen-year time period. I began to wonder, "Could this really be connected to what Ezekiel was talking about?" I had to go back and take a closer look.

The prophet Ezekiel was part of the Jewish population of Jerusalem that was taken captive and relocated during the Babylonian conquest in 597 BC as described in the Bible. After several years of living in Babylon, he began receiving prophetic messages from God and addressed them to the Jewish exiles. Here is a portion of one of those prophecies.

"Son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, 'Mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. ²This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The enemy said of you, 'Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession.'³ Therefore prophesy and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because they ravaged and crushed you from every side so that you became the possession of the rest of the

nations and the object of people's malicious talk and slander,⁴ therefore, mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign LORD: This is what the Sovereign LORD says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, to the desolate ruins and the deserted towns that have been plundered and ridiculed by the rest of the nations around you—⁵ this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my burning zeal I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, for with glee and with malice in their hearts they made my land their own possession so that they might plunder its pastureland.'⁶ Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I speak in my jealous wrath because you have suffered the scorn of the nations. ⁷ Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I swear with uplifted hand that the nations around you will also suffer scorn.

⁸ *"But you, mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. ⁹I am concerned for you and will look*

THE HISTORY OF THE LAND

After spending some time clarifying some parameters in Ezekiel’s prophecy, I moved on to the history of the region. I wanted to know “Is there any time in history that this could have been fulfilled?”

It has been over 2600 years since the time that Ezekiel spoke these words to the land of Israel. If we take an objective look at this ancient prophecy, we must consider if there is any other time in history that this could have come to pass. Let’s review the many

historical and eyewitness accounts of the land from Ezekiel’s time until now. To follow Ezekiel’s prophetic parameters, our timeline will give special attention to the land, agriculture, and times of Israeli/Jewish sovereignty. We will also note the invention of the modern camera in this process. At that point, we can begin to see for ourselves the same land that has been chronicled throughout the centuries by eyewitnesses and decide whether or not their accounts were accurate.

YEAR	PERIOD	LAND NAME	EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF THE LAND
<i>Under Foreign Rule</i>			
597–539 BCE	Time of Ezekiel; Babylon	Judea	
537–332 BCE	Return of Exiles; Second Temple	Judea	Ezra, Nehemiah
332–140 BCE	Greek Conquest	Judah	1 Macabees 1:29–39
<i>Jewish Independence</i>			
140–63 BCE	Hasmonean Kingdom	Judah	1 Macabees 14:5–12
<i>Under Foreign Rule</i>			
63–37 BCE	Roman Rule	Judah	
38–6 BCE	Roman Rule/Herod	Judah	
7BEC–AD 70	Roman Rule/Procurators	Judah	Flavius Josephus
71–306	Roman Rule/Expulsion	Palestine	Dio Cassius
307–614	Byzantine Empire	Palestine	Helena; Paula
615–638	Persian Empire	Palestine	Patriarch of Jerusalem
639–1099	Multiple Moslem/Arab Rule	Palestine	Carl Voss; Baladhuri; Muqaddasi
1100–1291	Crusader Rule	Palestine	William of Tyre
1292–1516	Mameluks Rule	Palestine	Webbe; De Haas
1517–1917	Ottoman Empire	Palestine	various
1918–1948	British Mandate	Palestine	various
<i>Jewish Independence</i>			
1948–Present	Israeli	Israel	

6TH CENTURY BC

In approximately 597 BC, the Babylonians conquered Judea and carried away many of the residents of Jerusalem and surrounding cities as captives to the Babylonian empire. It is believed that after Ezekiel had been living for several years in Babylon that God began speaking to him through visions and experiences.

5TH CENTURY BC

In the book of Nehemiah, the prophet first visits Jerusalem after seventy years of exile, with the permission of the Persian king Artaxerxes I. He described the city as lying “in ruins and its gates [having] been destroyed by fire.” Nehemiah said, “You see the bad situation we are in: Jerusalem is desolate and its gates have been destroyed by fire” (Nehemiah 2:3, 17). This stirred many Jews to return to the land and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, while the city was still under Persian control.

3RD CENTURY BC (Greek conquest and rule)

After the Babylonian rule of the region came the Greeks, who sought to establish Greek culture and religious influence in Jerusalem. This was accomplished through their deceitful conquest.

“...the king sent the Mysian commander to the cities of Judah, and he came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He spoke to them deceitfully in peaceful terms, and they believed him. Then he attacked the city suddenly, in a great onslaught, and destroyed many of the people in Israel. He plundered the city and set fire to it, demolished its houses and its surrounding walls. And they took captive the women and children, and seized the animals...”

“They shed innocent blood around the sanctuary; they defiled the sanctuary. Because of them the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled away, she became the abode of strangers. She became a stranger to

her own offspring, and her children forsook her. Her sanctuary became desolate as a wilderness...”
(1st Macabees 1:29–39)

This led to the rise of the Macabean revolt, led by Judas Macabee, who eventually defeated and expelled the Greek armies and their influence. This victory brought about the Temple rededication that is still celebrated today as the feast of Hanukkah. This victory ushered in an eighty-year period of Jewish independence in the land.

2ND CENTURY BC (Hasmonean rule – Jewish Independence)

Years after Judas’ death, his brother, Simon Macabees, established the ruling dynasty in the land of Judea. From the account in 1 Macabees 14:4–12, the people and the land prospered under Jewish sovereignty.

“The land was at rest all the days of Simon, who sought the good of his nation. His rule delighted his people and his glory all his days. As his crowning glory he took Joppa for a port and made it a gateway to the isles of the sea. He enlarged the borders of his nation and gained control of the countrys...”

“The people cultivated their land in peace; the land yielded its produce, the trees of the field their fruit. Old men sat in the squares, all talking about the good times, while the young men put on the glorious raiment of war. He supplied the cities with food and equipped them with means of defense, till his glorious name reached the ends of the earth. He brought peace to the land, and Israel was filled with great joy. Every one sat under his vine and fig tree, with no one to disturb them.”

Throughout my research for quotes of eyewitness accounts of the land, this was the only example of recognizable prosperity that I could find in the last 2600 years. Ironically, it is under Jewish sovereignty.

1ST CENTURY AD (Roman Empire)

Jewish rule did not last long before the Romans entered. Tensions were high for many years with violence and pockets of revolt springing up. This boiled over in AD 70 when the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem and eventually destroyed the Temple. This is an eyewitness account of what happened to the land during the siege:

“And now the Romans, although they were greatly distressed in getting together their materials, raised their banks in one and twenty days, after they had cut down all the trees that were in the country that adjoined to the city, and that for ninety furlongs [11 miles; 17.7 km] round about [Jerusalem], as I have already related. And truly the very view itself of the country was a melancholy thing; for those places which were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens were now become a desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down: nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change: for the war had laid all the signs of beauty quite waste: nor if any one that had known the place before, had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again; but though he were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it notwithstanding.” (Josephus, 75 C.E.)

2ND CENTURY (Roman Empire)

After the Temple's destruction, revolts continued to spring up, which led to a crushing Roman response. The following is a Roman historian's account of what happened to Judah during the Bar Kochba revolt in AD 134.

“Of their forts the fifty strongest were razed to the ground. Nine hundred and eighty-five of their best-known villages were destroyed. ...

“Thus the whole of Judea became desert, as indeed had been foretold to the Jews before the war. For the tomb of Solomon, whom these folk celebrate in their sacred rites, fell of its own accord into fragments, and wolves and hyenas, many in number, roamed howling through their cities.” (Cassius Dio, 4)

It was common for the Roman Empire to change the names of conquered land, as we will see in some of our photo descriptions. As a result of this long, costly, and frustrating conflict, Emperor Hadrian changed the name of the region to Syria Palaestina, naming the land after ancient Israel's archenemies, the Philistines, in an attempt to remove any Jewish identity or link to the land. From this time until 1948, the region was often referred to as “Palestine.”

The next 1800 years were a progression of wars and desolation that were truly devastating to the land. For more historical eyewitness accounts of Jews, Christians, and Muslims from multiple empires who recorded what they saw and experienced in this region, please find Reference #1 in the back of this book. For our purposes, we will jump ahead to the mid-1800s to two major events that have shaped much of our view of the land in this time: the invention of the modern camera and Mark Twain's travel journals through this land in 1867 that were recorded in his book *The Innocents Abroad*.

CAMERA OBSCURA

Around 1820, the invention of the modern camera—or “camera obscura”—changed the world forever. While the concept of light passing through a small hole and projecting an inverted image of the scene in front of the camera had

been around for centuries, it was now made into something more mobile and “user friendly.” Thanks to just a few of the adventurous pioneers listed here, we have some of the first ever photos of the Holy Land starting in the mid-1800s.



- Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey studied painting in Paris. He was keenly interested in the architecture of the Middle East, and he toured Italy and the countries of the eastern Mediterranean between 1841 and 1844, producing over 900 daguerreotypes of architectural views, landscapes, and portraits. He is credited with taking the first ever photos of Jerusalem in 1844, seen below (www.smithsonianmag.com; “See the first photographs ever taken of Jerusalem” by Rose Eveleth, Jan 23, 2014).



- In 1855 Francis Frith sold his holdings in a successful grocery store and cutlery business, and started a photography studio. By 1856 he felt sufficiently competent to take the cumbersome equipment required on his first tour of Egypt and Palestine in 1856–7, where the heat and strong light drove him to develop the negatives in tombs, temples, and caves. His pictures of the Sphinx, the pyramids, and other scenes from Egypt and the Holy Land made him a legend. (Todd Gustavson, *Camera: A History of Photography*, Sterling Publishing Co, 2009, p. 38; www.francisfrith.com/us/pages/frith-biography)

- By the late 1800s, several photographers connected to the American Colony in Jerusalem were also combing the region, capturing local portraits, culture, biblical locations, and accompanying western expeditions. The photo collections of the American Colony represent some of the best photo collections available from that time period and consist of the majority of the photo recreations used in this book.



Egyptian views; The pyramids of Gizeh.
Photographer [Lewis Larsson]
near top of Great Pyramid;
Date: 1900–1905



Jamil Albina with a film dryer
at the American Colony;
Date: 1898–1930



Perhaps most importantly, the invention of the “camera obscura” validates the chronicles of almost 2000 years of eyewitness accounts of the region. We are able to see the effects of the oppressive Ottoman Empire that ruled for another seventy years after the first photos of Jerusalem were taken. It also gives a stark visual into the region and era that Mark Twain experienced and wrote of in his travel journal covering his 1867 tour of the Holy Land. By the time Mark Twain arrived, some of these adventure photographers had been capturing photographs of the region for twenty years.



MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain visited the Holy Land in 1867 and published his impressions in *The Innocents Abroad*. His writings have impacted millions of people since then and are some of the most well-known comments about the region from that era. He described a desolate country, devoid of both vegetation and human population throughout his journey as he rode from Damascus to Jerusalem, then on to Jaffa on the coast. The following are excerpts of what he saw along the way, then later recorded in the wit that he was known for.

While riding in what is now the northern edge Israel:

Here were evidences of cultivation—a rare sight in this country—an acre or two of rich soil studded with last season’s dead corn-stalks of the thickness of your thumb and very wide apart. But in such a land it was a thrilling spectacle. Close to it was a stream, and on its banks a great herd of curious-looking Syrian goats and sheep were gratefully eating gravel. I do not state this as a petrified fact—I only suppose they were eating gravel, because there did not appear to be anything else for them to eat.

There is not a solitary village throughout its whole extent—not for thirty miles in either direction. There are two or three small clusters of Bedouin tents, but

not a single permanent habitation. One may ride ten miles, hereabouts, and not see ten human beings.

It is seven in the morning, and as we are in the country, the grass ought to be sparkling with dew, the flowers enriching the air with their fragrance, and the birds singing in the trees. But alas, there is no dew here, nor flowers, nor birds, nor trees. There is a plain and an unshaded lake, and beyond them some barren mountains. (Chapter 46)

His first impressions of the Galilee region:

It is solitude, for birds and squirrels on the shore and fishes in the water are all the creatures that are near to make it otherwise, but it is not the sort of solitude to make one dreary. Come to Galilee for that. If these unpeopled deserts, these rusty mounds of barrenness, that never, never, never do shake the glare from their harsh outlines, and fade and faint into vague perspective... (Chapter 48)

While riding south from the Galilee, through the biblical heartland towards Jerusalem:

The further we went the hotter the sun got, and the more rocky and bare, repulsive and dreary the landscape became. There could not have been more fragments of stone strewn broadcast over this part of the world, if every ten square feet of the land had been

occupied by a separate and distinct stonemason's establishment for an age. There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country. No landscape exists that is more tiresome to the eye than that which bounds the approaches to Jerusalem. The only difference between the roads and the surrounding country, perhaps, is that there are rather more rocks in the roads than in the surrounding country. (Chapter 52)

Trying to describe what he saw upon arriving in Jerusalem:

A fast walker could go outside the walls of Jerusalem and walk entirely around the city in an hour. I do not know how else to make one understand how small it is. The appearance of the city is peculiar. It is as knobby with countless little domes as a prison door is with bolt-heads. (Chapter 53)

After visiting the Dead Sea:

The desert and the barren hills gleam painfully in the sun, around the Dead Sea, and there is no pleasant thing or living creature upon it or about its borders to cheer the eye. It is a scorching, arid, repulsive solitude. A silence broods over the scene that is depressing to the spirits. It makes one think of funerals and death. (Chapter 55)

By the time Mark Twain had reached Jaffa, he was exhausted by his travels, seemingly stunned by what he saw and ready for the journey to end as he boarded his ship. As he recorded his parting thoughts in a way only Mark Twain could, he let his readers know exactly what his overall thoughts were of the Holy Land:

Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery, I think Palestine must be the prince. The hills are barren, they are dull of color, they are unpicturesque in shape. The valleys are unsightly deserts fringed with a feeble vegetation that has an expression about it of being sorrowful and despondent. The Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee sleep in the midst of a vast stretch of hill and plain wherein the eye rests upon no pleasant tint, no striking object, no soft picture dreaming in a purple haze or mottled with the shadows of the clouds. Every outline is harsh, every feature is distinct, there is no perspective—distance works no enchantment here. It is a hopeless, dreary, heart-broken land.

Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies. Where Sodom and Gomorrah reared their domes and towers, that solemn sea now floods the plain, in whose bitter waters no living thing exists—over whose waveless surface the blistering air hangs motionless and dead—about whose borders nothing grows but weeds, and scattering tufts of cane, and that treacherous fruit that promises refreshment to parching lips, but turns to ashes at the touch. Nazareth is forlorn; about that ford of Jordan where the hosts of Israel entered the Promised Land with songs of rejoicing, one finds only a squalid camp of fantastic Bedouins of the desert; Jericho the accursed, lies a moldering ruin, to-day, even as Joshua's miracle left it more than three thousand years ago; Bethlehem and Bethany, in their poverty and their humiliation, have nothing about them now to remind one that they once knew the high honor of the Saviour's presence; the hallowed spot where the shepherds watched their flocks by night, and where the angels sang Peace on earth, good will to men, is untenanted by any living creature, and unblest by any feature that is pleasant to the eye. Renowned Jerusalem itself, the stateliest name in history, has lost all its ancient grandeur, and is become a pauper village; the riches of Solomon are no longer there to compel the admiration of visiting Oriental queens; the wonderful temple which was the pride and the glory of Israel, is gone, and the Ottoman crescent is lifted above the spot where, on that most memorable day in the annals of the world, they reared the Holy Cross. The noted Sea of Galilee, where Roman fleets once rode at anchor and the disciples of the Saviour sailed in their ships, was long ago deserted by the devotees of war and commerce, and its borders are a silent wilderness; Capernaum is a shapeless ruin; Magdala is the home of beggared Arabs; Bethsaida and Chorazin have vanished from the earth, and the "desert places" round about them where thousands of men once listened to the Saviour's voice and ate the miraculous bread, sleep in the hush of a solitude that is inhabited only by birds of prey and skulking foxes.

Palestine is desolate and unlovely. And why should it be otherwise? Can the curse of the Deity beautify a land?

Palestine is no more of this work-day world. It is sacred to poetry and tradition—it is dream-land. (chapter 56)

THE MODERN LENS

THE PHOTOS

I love the old black-and-white photos from the Holy Land. I could wander aimlessly through Jerusalem's old city, visiting the photo shops that are off the beaten path, just to flip through all the old photo collections. I often have a sense of awe when I discover a new angle of the land that I haven't seen before and marvel at how much has changed in a short 70–100 years.

Most of the black-and-white photos in this book, including the title descriptions and photo dates, are from “The American Colony: Eric Mattson Collection,” unless otherwise noted. The American Colony has done the world a true service by cataloging, restoring, and digitizing their collection. It's one of the best preserved and extensive collections available from the 1880–1950. All of our modern photos were captured and edited during the summer and fall of 2016, by Elise Monique Photography. During these six weeks of photo shoots, I often felt like an excited and giddy child on a treasure hunt to find the exact spot where these old photos were originally taken. The searches were a lot of fun with unexpected people, adventures, and stories to go with them. You'll find these stories scattered throughout the book under the heading “Personal Encounters and beside the photos that created the setting for each “personal encounter.”

As stated earlier, whenever possible, the exact angle and location of the original photographs were sought out to recreate our modern-day photos. In several locations, due to the dramatic growth of the population, cities, and agriculture, this was often impossible, so we settled with as close as we could get. Ironically, these unexpected and momentary frustrations due to our inability to recreate photos from only eighty years ago simply demonstrated the goal of this project—to visually show this land's dramatic and accelerated changes in such a short amount of time, compared with the much longer periods of desolation during many of the years since Ezekiel foretold these changes 2600 years ago. I hope you enjoy the locations and photo comparisons as much as I enjoyed seeking them out.



GALILEE AND GOLAN



By the end of the 18th century, the great forests of the Galilee and the Carmel mountain range were denude of trees; swamps and deserts encroached on agricultural land. Palestine was truly a poor, neglected, no-man's land with no important cities."

(Clarence Wagner, "365 Fascinating facts about Israel," #311, C-2006)

Migdal (believed to be the ancient town of Magdala until 2009, when archeology proved otherwise) is found on the northwest side of the lake. Modern Tiberias can be seen on the distant ridge in the 2016 photo.

*Magdala (Migdal)
from the North;
Date: 1910–1920*



PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS: *The Land Is Calling*

On a ridiculously hot and humid day in May, I found a little café on the north side of Lake Kinneret to escape the heat. The manager, Ori, had just made some amazing cherry jam using cherries from the Arab farmer across the road. There are many places throughout Israel where Arabs and Jews not only work together, but are friends and help one another out. This is just one of the many examples that no one seems to hear about.

It was well after the lunch rush and business was slow enough for Ori to join us. We heard his story about growing up on the north side of the Galilee, but he had



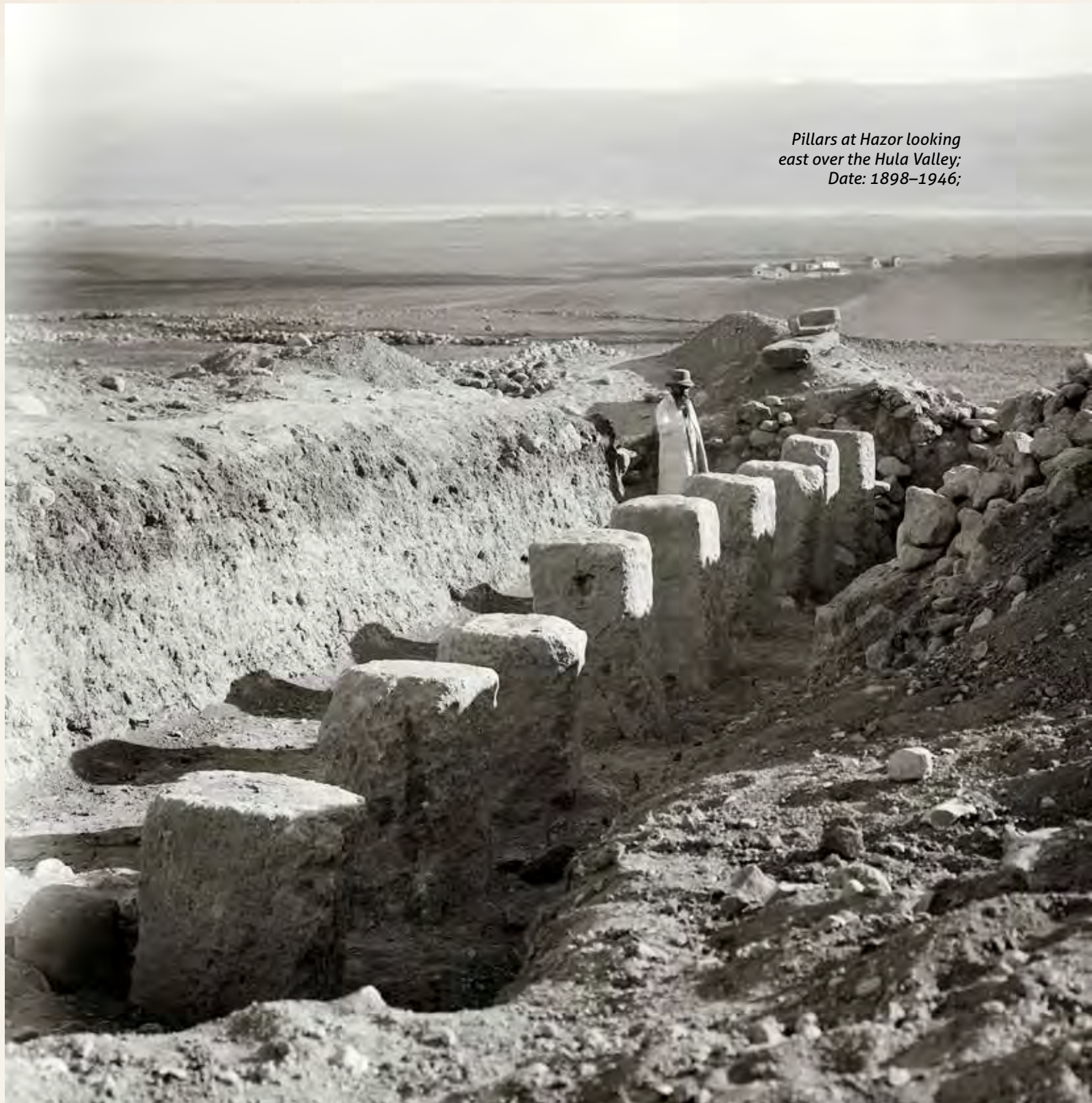
Magdala (Migdal)
from the North;
Date: 2016

also lived in Australia, Thailand, Canada, and elsewhere. Yet, after several years, he recently returned home to Israel to build his home overlooking the sea. Like many Israelis, he travelled and worked overseas, but something within him seems to have pulled him home to this land. When he had the opportunity to take over a café close to his childhood home, he took it. While he didn't seem to be a religious man, I was struck by his sincerity and devotion to the land. Many Jews from around the world, like him, are hearing the same call in their hearts, saying, "It's time to come home to the land."

“...*Magdala is not a beautiful place
...is the home of beggared Arabs...*”

(Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 1867, Chapter 48, 56)

*Pillars at Hazor looking
east over the Hula Valley;
Date: 1898–1946;*



HAZOR

According to Joshua chapter 11, Hazor was the capital city of the Canaanite inhabitants, which was destroyed and burned by Joshua. Later Jeremiah prophesied,

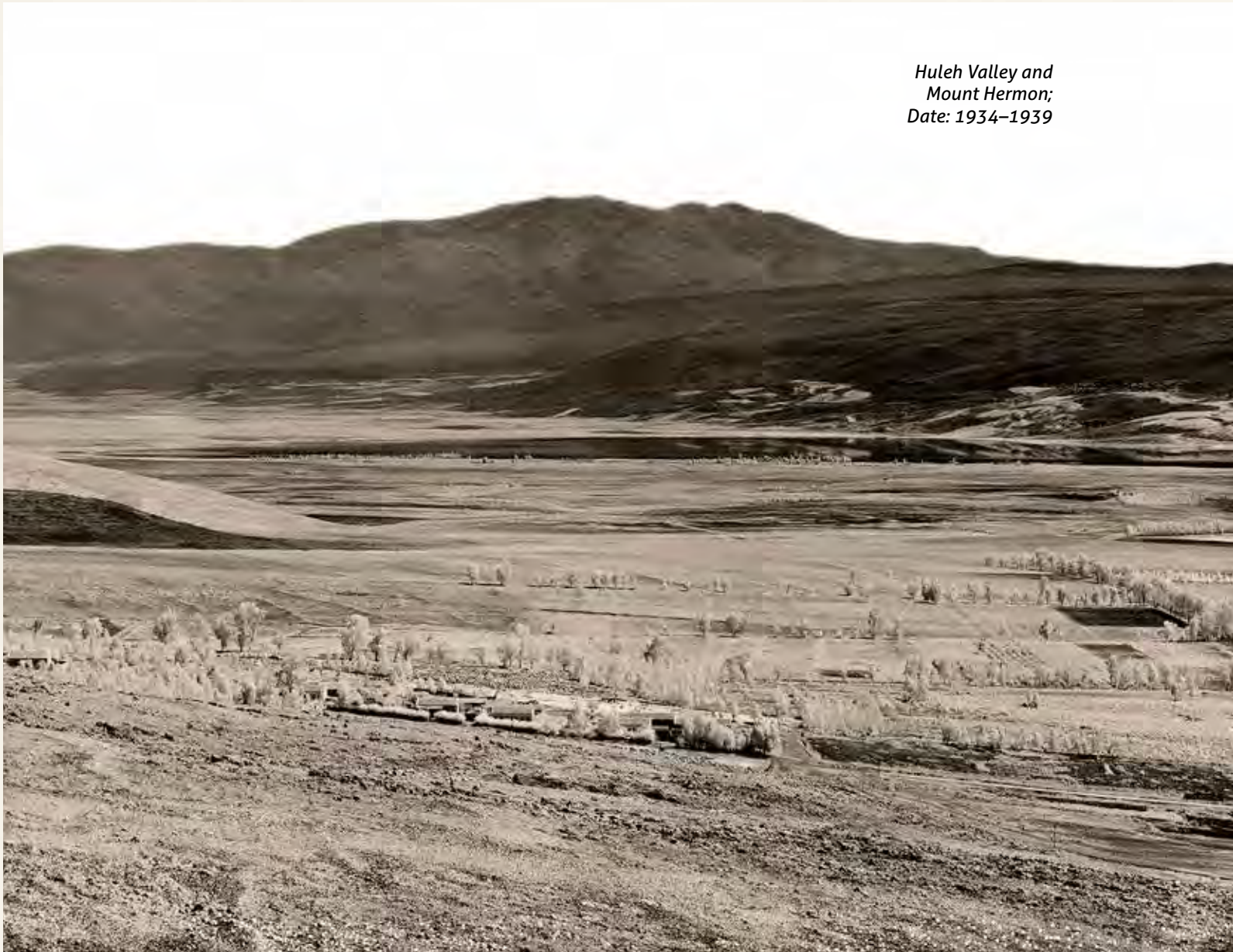
Hazor excavations;
Date: 2016



Hazor will become a haunt of jackals, a desolate place forever. No one will live there; no people will dwell in it.”

(Jeremiah 49:33)

*Huleh Valley and
Mount Hermon;
Date: 1934–1939*



HULA BASIN

The Hula valley is about thirty minutes north of the Sea of Galilee in Northern Israel. Since the Roman conquest in the first century, this one fertile and thickly populated region became a malarial infested swampy marsh. Today, due to the work of Jewish pioneers this vast valley has become some of the most fertile farmland in all of Israel, full of fields, orchards, groves, vineyards, and growing communities.

Hula Valley, Mount Hermon
and the town of Rosh Pina;
Date: 2016



In Roman times and before, this region was fertile and thickly populated, but it had become a dismal swamp and a focus of malarial infection to the country at large. Sediments from the uplands to the north had progressively filled in the northern end of Lake Huleh, thus creating a marsh that was overgrown with papyrus. The marshes have now been drained by widening and deepening the mouth of the lake to bring down its water level and by a system of drainage canals. The Huleh Reclamation Authority estimates that this little Garden of Eden will support a population of 100,000 in an intensive agricultural economy, cultivating vegetables, grapes, fruits, peanuts, grains, sugar cane, rice—even fish (in ponds impounded on the old lake bed).”

(“The Reclamation of a Man-Made Desert,” Scientific American, April, 1960)



*Huleh lake reserve;
Date: 1910–1920*



*Huleh lake reserve;
Date: 2016*



*Nazareth from the East,
bridle path in foreground;
Date: 1898–1946*

NAZARETH

Nazareth was the childhood home of Jesus. At that time, this small town had an estimated 400 people; today it boasts over 75,000.

The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

(Matthew 21:11)



Nazareth from the East;
Date: 2016



*17th century “...an inconsiderable village [Nazareth]
...nothing here but a vast and spacious ruin.”*

(Henry Maundrell, *The Journal of Henry Maundrell from Aleppo to Jerusalem*,
1697, Bohn’s edition (London, 1848), respectively pp. 477, 428, 450)



*Nazareth from the east;
Date: 1894*



*Jezreel Valley from
the Nazareth hills;
Date: 1898-1946*



*Nazareth from the east;
Date: 2016*



*Jezreel Valley from
the Nazareth hills;
Date: 2016*



*The Jezreel Valley from Nazareth;
Date: 1910–1920*



*The Jezreel Valley from Nazareth;
Date: 2016*



*Subeibeh, Nimrod's Fortress;
Date: 1910-1920*

NIMROD'S FORTRESS

While not mentioned in the Bible, this castle dates back to crusader battles of the thirteenth century. The stunning aspect is not the actual castle, but the growth of trees and vegetation since the original photo.



*Subeibeh, Nimrod's Fortress;
Date: 2016*

Central Valley at
the Dung Gate;
Date: 1910–1920



PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS: *Don't Give Up*

Some pictures came easy, others not so much. We wanted to capture this angle (above) taken from on top of the Dung Gate that is inside the archeology park, looking back towards the Kotel (Western Wall Plaza). I spoke to the guy at the park entrance, showed him the photo we wanted to recreate, and told him it would only take me five minutes after jumping a fence and climbing on top of the gate. However, due to the vantage point, there were several security cameras in this restricted area. Seemingly happy to push us off, they sent us to the police station in the Western Wall Plaza. After hearing my “kindest” explanation, the police said they just own the cameras, and told us we had to go talk to the Western Wall Rabbi’s office.



After hearing my “trying to be kind” explanation, the Rabbi’s office said it wasn’t in the actual plaza. It wasn’t their responsibility, so they told us to go back to the archeological park. Soon I found myself back at the same desk talking to the same guy as from the beginning. Seeing my persistence, he softened a little and pointed me in the direction of his manager’s office.

Upon finding the office and giving the manager my “mildly irritated from the runaround” explanation of why I needed access to that specific spot, she replied, *“We do allow that in certain situations for 400 shekels (\$100) an hour.”* “Look.” I said, half exasperated and half pleading, *“I’m not paying 400 shekels. I just need five minutes and your permission to hop the fence and to know that the police won’t come running when I do.”* Much to my surprise, she sat back in her chair, shrugged, and said, “Okay.” Mildly shocked, I confirmed, *“It’s okay?”* She nodded with a partial smile, and I quickly left before anyone could change their minds.

As we hurried back to the Dung Gate, a security guard who had watched this whole process spoke up to give his unsolicited opinion. *“This is going to be a good book,”* he said. Taken aback, I asked him why. *“Lots of people can take pictures, but you know where you need to go and don’t stop until you get there. This is going to be a good book.”*



*Jerusalem train station;
Date: 1898–1914*

*Looking Northwest
from Mount of Olives;
Date: 1910–1920*





*Jerusalem train station,
renovated to shops and cafes;
Date: 2016*



*Looking Northwest
from Mount of Olives;
Date: 2016*



*Dome of the Rock and Western Wall;
Date: 1898–1946
[probably after 1927]*



*Jewish Wailing Place
(Western Wall);
Date: approx. 1894*



*Dome of the Rock and Western Wall;
Date: 2016*



*Jewish Waiting Place
(Western Wall);
Date: 2016*



*Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock);
Date: 1894*



*Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock);
Date: 2016*

CONCLUSION

We have read the prophecy's details. We have scanned history and have noticed a trend of what happens to the land with and without Jewish sovereignty. We have viewed the old photos that give credence to the eyewitness accounts throughout the centuries. Through visual comparisons, we have seen how dramatically the land has changed since Israel became a nation, just as the prophecy foretold. No other people group or national homeland in history can compare to this experience.

These unique circumstances that coincide with Ezekiel 36 lead us to one of two conclusions: (1) This is a wild and compelling coincidence that is an anomaly in human history; or (2) Something supernatural or divine is at work behind the scenes. While this conclusion may be solely the decision of the reader, all these events are clearly linked to the prophecy.

If we look back at the Ezekiel 36 passage, it appears that God said He would take personal responsibility in this process and explained exactly what He would do:

- He will turn towards you (the land and the people). (v. 9)
- He will multiply man and beast on the land. (v. 11)
- He will cause Israel to walk the land and take possession of the land. (v. 12)

- He will not let the insults towards the land continue. (v. 15)
- He will sanctify His name among the nations as a result of this process. (v. 23)
- He will gather Israel from the nations and bring them back to their own land. (v. 24)
- He will give Israel a new heart, a new spirit and bring a cleansing. (vv. 26–27)
- He will not bring a famine on the land. (v. 29)
- He will multiply the fruit of the trees and the increase of the fields. (v. 30)
- He will enable Israel to rebuild and dwell in the cities. (v. 33)
- He encourages Israel to ask Him to do all of this. (v. 37)

For many of these points, we have seen the beginnings of tangible fulfillment in this book. Some points are more difficult to quantify. Yet regardless of where we are at in this process of restoration, one thing is clear—something miraculous is happening, when viewed through the eyes of history. Ezekiel 36 tells us that when these changes start happening, God is the One doing it.

By the end of this prophecy, God clearly explains why He is reviving the land:

They will say, “This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.” Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.” (Ezekiel 36:35–36)

If God’s original everlasting covenant with Abraham, regarding “His chosen people,” is still valid, the land will give testimony to that as well. No other group of people in human history has been planted on a piece of land, forcibly removed; then returned after seventy years to the same piece of land; then forcibly removed again and scattered to the ends of the earth for 2000 years; then return a second time to the exact same piece of real estate as an identifiable people with the same customs, language, and beliefs as their ancient ancestors. And all the while, their homeland ceased to produce *until* their return. If God’s covenant promise to Abraham and Ezekiel’s prophecy are to be believed in a literal way, then through the land’s miraculous transformation, we are beginning to witness one of the greatest demonstrations of God’s faithfulness to His promises in the last several thousand years. The prophecy states that at some point the land’s transformation will be so stunning in the scope of its history that the nations will recognize that only God could have done it. According to the Scriptures, He is calling the nations to Himself, and He’s using the land of Israel to do it. I believe it’s happening right now.

It is not simply the land whose revival was foretold, but the people as well. Three times in Ezekiel 36, the idea of a national “cleansing” is connected to the return of the Jewish people to their land and the physical renewal of the land itself. In fact, many times throughout other prophetic scriptures, when the return of the Jewish people to the land is mentioned, so is the arrival of the Messiah, who will bring about a restoration to God. The unveiling of the Messiah in Jerusalem is faithfully expected by both Jews and Christians. At the end of this passage, there is a connection between a cleansing and the land becoming like the Garden of Eden again. The Garden was not simply a beautiful place, but a special place where God dwelled with man, in his sinless state. Verses 24 and 25 state that He will gather the people back from the nations to their own land, and THEN the cleansing comes. If the people are returning now, and the land is physically responding as well, then the Messiah and the cleansing are not far behind.

Regardless of our personal beliefs, history has shown us that what is happening in Israel has never been seen before. I expect in another fifty years we’ll be able to look back at these comparison photos and marvel at how much more the land has blossomed, been recreated, and built up within that time frame. God is faithful to His people, this land, and to all the people and nations that will recognize His hand in these amazing transformations. While I am sure we have not seen its fullness yet, we are watching Ezekiel’s prophecy coming to pass.



*This land that was a wasteland has become like the garden of Eden.
The waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.”*

(Ezekiel 36:35)

REFERENCE

Historical eyewitness accounts of the land from 4th–19th century

4th Century (Byzantine Empire)

As Christianity spread and became the state religion of the Byzantine Empire, the first of the Christian pilgrims began venturing to the “holy land” to see Jerusalem and other sites of Christian significance. The most famous of these were Helena, Paula and Eustochium. Many of their letters record what they found and experienced. In her writings, Paula contrasts the wealth of Rome to the poverty she found in Bethlehem:

“Where are spacious porticoes? Where are gilded ceilings? Where are houses decorated by the sufferings and labours of condemned wretches? Where are halls built by the wealth of private men on the scale of palaces... In the village of Christ ... all is rusticity, and except for psalms, silence... Indeed, we do not think of what we are doing or how we look, but see only that for which we are longing.” (Stewart, A; 1896)

6th Century (Byzantine Empire)

While having its beginnings in the fifth century, Jewish persecution and destruction of property were openly encouraged in the sixth century.

“Jews couldn’t own slaves (making agriculture difficult). They couldn’t build new synagogues... Jews were forbidden to read the torah or any other book in Hebrew ... Justinian encouraged Christians to destroy synagogues, stores, and Jewish houses.” (www.Jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/history/byzantine1.html)

7th Century (Persian Empire/Islamic rule)

After a short Persian conquest of the land, the Islamic invasions began.

“The whole Gaza region up to Cesarea was sacked and devastated in the campaign of 634. Four thousand Jewish, Christian, and Samaritan peasants, who were defending their land were massacred. The villages of the Negev were pillaged... Sophronius [the patriarch of Jerusalem], in his sermon on the Day of the Epiphany 636, bewailed the destruction of the churches and monasteries, the sacked towns, the fields laid waste, the villages burned down by the nomads who were overthrowing the country.” (Bat Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam* (Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996))

Historian Carl Voss explains the effects of Arab conquests in the region that began in the seventh century and continued for the following 1200 years:

“In the twelve and a half centuries between the Arab conquest in the seventh century and the beginnings of the Jewish return in the 1880s, Palestine was laid waste. Its ancient canal and irrigation systems were destroyed and the wondrous fertility of which the Bible spoke vanished into desert and desolation . . . Under the Ottoman empire of the Turks, the policy of defoliation continued; the hillsides were denuded of trees and the valleys robbed of their topsoil.” (Voss, *The Palestine Problem Today, Israel and Its Neighbors* (Beacon Press, 1953), p. 13)

8th Century (Various Arab rule)

Under Islamic rule, Jews and Christians were forced to pay a special infidel (*Dhimmi*—a non-Muslim person or literally “protected person”) tax referred to as the *jizya*. Jewish historian Bat Ye’or explains the financial oppression that took place throughout eighth century Palestine, which devastated the *dhimmi* Jewish and Christian population:

“Overtaxed and tortured by the tax collectors, the villagers fled into hiding or emigrated into towns.” (Bat Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam*)

This flight from heavy taxes led many to leave their homes and fields as detailed by an eight-century monk in 774:

“The men scattered, they became wanderers everywhere; the fields were laid waste, the countryside pillaged; the

people went from one land to another.” (Chronique de Denys de Tell—Mahre, translated from the Syriac by Jean—Baptiste Chabot [Paris, 1895], English translation in: Bat Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam*)

9th Century (Various Arab rule)

“The Greek chronicler Theophanes provides a contemporary description of the chaotic events which transpired after the death of the caliph Harun al-Rashid in 809 C.E. He describes Palestine as the scene of violence, rape, and murder, from which Christian monks fled to Cyprus and Constantinople.” (Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*)

“The Muslim historian Baladhuri (d. 892 C.E.), maintained that 30,000 Samaritans and 20,000 Jews lived in Caesarea alone just prior to the Arab Muslim conquest; afterward, all evidence of them disappears. Archaeological data confirms the lasting devastation wrought by these initial jihad conquests, particularly the widespread destruction of synagogues and churches from the Byzantine era, whose remnants are still being unearthed. The total number of towns was reduced from fifty-eight to seventeen in the red sand hills and swamps of the western coastal plain (i.e., the Sharon).” (Al-Baladhuri, *The Origins of the Islamic State* [Kitah Futuh al-Buldan], translated by Philip K. Hitti [London, Longman, Greens, and Company, 1916], p. 217, Constantelos, *“Greek Christian and Other Accounts of the Moslem Conquests of the Near East,”* pp. 127–28.

10th Century (Various Arab rule)

In 985, over 300 years into Muslim rule in the region, the Arab writer Muqaddasi lamented about the Muslim population in Jerusalem:

“The mosque is empty of worshipers ... The Jews constitute the majority of Jerusalem’s population.” (Muqaddasi, quoted by Erich Kahler who cites this statement from *Knowledge of Crimes*, p.167, in *The Jews Among the Nations* [New York: F. Ungar, 1967], p. 144)

11th Century (Various Arab Rule/ Crusader conquest)

“Muslim Turcoman rule of Palestine for the nearly three decades just prior to the Crusades (1071–1099 C.E.) was characterized by such unrelenting warfare and devastation, that an imminent. End of Days atmosphere was engendered.” (Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*), pp. 412–416)

“A contemporary poem by Solomon ha-Kohen b. Joseph, believed to be a descendant of an illustrious family of Palestinian Jews of priestly descent, writes of his recollection of the previous Turcoman conquest of Jerusalem during the eighth decade of the 11th century. He speaks of destruction and ruin, the burning of harvests, the razing of plantations, the desecration of cemeteries, and acts of violence, slaughter, and plunder.” (Julius Greenstone, in his essay, “The Turcoman Defeat at Cairo,” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. 22, 1906, pp. 144–175, provides a translation of this poem[excerpted, pp. 164–165] by Solomon ha-Kohen b. Joseph.)

As the Crusader era entered the Holy Land, not much had changed. William of Tyre, a twelfth-century clergyman, described the crusaders’ entry into Jerusalem in the year 1099:

“They went together through the streets with their swords and spears in hand. All them that they met they slew and smote right down, men, women, and children, sparing none... . They slew so many in the streets that there were heaps of dead bodies, and one might not go nor pass but upon them that so lay dead... . There was so much bloodshed that the channels and gutters ran all with blood, and all the streets of the town were covered with dead men.” (William of Tyre, from *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* [Columbia University Press, 1943])

12th Century (Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem)

Almost 100 years later in 1191, the Crusader battles and bloodshed were ongoing. During the conquest of Acre, one author describes the brutal fate of 2,700 Arabs in that city:

“Richard’s men began to carry out his orders to kill them all. This time the children were not saved for the slave market, but were butchered with their fathers and mothers... .The killing completed, Richard’s army started back to the city, while on the top of the hill a few loot-crazed butchers lurched from one body to another with their bloody knives, hastily disemboweling corpses to recover any gold pieces that might have been swallowed for concealment...” (Robinson, *Dungeon, Fire and Sword*, M Evans & Co, 1991)

13th Century (Crusader defeat/ Mamluks conquest)

14th Century (Mamluks Rule)

After the expulsion of the Crusaders and following Mamluks' rule, the land continued to be decimated, and the overwhelming poverty continued:

“Having ejected the Crusaders, the Mamluks wanted to prevent their return. They therefore destroyed the Crusader beachheads—Palestine’s coastal cities. But destruction of the port cities deprived the inland cities of commercial access to the sea and to other international trade routes, causing a depression. . . Economic conditions were poor; Palestine shared with other lands in droughts, famines, earthquakes, epidemics, high taxes, high prices, government corruption, and attacks by Bedouins and bandits.” (<http://www.al-bushra.org/America/ap1.html>)

15th Century (Mamluk Rule)

“The Mamluk tenure throughout Israel (Palestine) and Jerusalem became increasingly oppressive towards Jews and especially Christians as their tenure unfolded. Those who refused to convert to Islam were subject to severe legal and social discrimination and even had to pay special taxes. The Mamluks allowed their communities to morph into lawlessness against Jews and Christians in the form of protests, riots, and anarchy. The Mamluk control over Israel (Palestine) and Jerusalem was ended by the Ottomans in 1517.” (Christians-standing-with-Israel.org/mamluks-map-jerusalem.html)

16th Century (Mamluk Rule/Ottoman Empire)

Despite the conflicts and poverty, pilgrims still came and journaled what they saw and experienced:

[Jerusalem in 1590] “Nothing there is to bescene but a little of the old walls, which is yet Remaying and all the rest is grasse, mosse and Weedes much like to a piece of Rank or moist Grounde.” (Gunner Edward Webbe, *Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement*, p. 86, cited in de Haas, *History* p. 338)

“A house of robbers, murderers, the inhabitants are Saracens [Nazareth]... . It is a lamentable thing to see thus such a town. We saw nothing more stony, full of thorns and desert” (De Haas, *History*, p. 337, citing *Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement*, 1925)

17th Century (Ottoman Empire)

Again, after a change in sovereignty in the land, historian Bernard Lewis reports that not much had changed regarding poverty and the treatment of the land:

“Harsh, exorbitant, and improvident taxation led to a decline in cultivation, which was sometimes permanent. The peasants, neglected and impoverished, were forced into the hands of money-lenders and speculators, and often driven off the land entirely. With the steady decline in bureaucratic efficiency during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. . . the central government ceased to exercise any check or control over agriculture and village affairs, which were left to the unchecked rapacity of the tax-farmers, the leaseholders,

and the bailiffs of court nominees.” (Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* [London, 1961], p. 33)

18th Century (Ottoman Empire)

Starting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, multiple travelers to the region began noticing a dramatic decline in population:

Thomas Shaw wrote that the land in Palestine was *“lacking in people to till its fertile soil.”* (Thomas Shaw, *Travels and Observations Relating to Several Parts of Barbary and the Levant* [London, 1767], p. 331ff)

“... upwards of three thousand two hundred villages were reckoned; but, at present, the collector can scarcely find four hundred. Such of our merchants as have resided there twenty years have themselves seen the greater part of the environs . . . become depopulated. The traveler meets with nothing but houses in ruins, cisterns rendered useless, and fields abandoned. Those who cultivated them have fled...” (Count Constantine F. Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783, 1784, 1785*, London, 1788 Vol. 2, p. 147)

“By the end of the 18th century, much of the land was owned by absentee landlords and leased to impoverished tenant farmers. The land was poorly cultivated and a widely neglected expanse of eroded hills, sandy deserts, and malarial marshes encroached on what was left of agricultural land. Taxation was crippling, with even its few trees being taxed. (Clarence Wagner, 365 *Fascinating Facts About Israel*, #311C- 2006)

As we’ll see in the early photos and records in the eighteenth century, the population in the region was not growing, but declining under Ottoman taxation. In 1857, the British Consul in Palestine reported:

“The country is in a considerable degree empty of inhabitants and therefore its greatest need is that of a body of population . . . ” (James Finn to the Earl of Clarendon, Jerusalem, September 15, 1857, F.O. 78/1294 (Pol. No. 36)

“In the 1860s, it was reported that ‘depopulation is even now advancing.’” (J. B. Forsyth, *A Few Months in the East*, Quebec, 1861), p. 188)

“Jerusalem consisted of ‘a large number of houses . . . in a dilapidated and ruinous state,’ and ‘the masses really seem to be without any regular employment.’ The ‘masses’ of Jerusalem were estimated at less than 15,000 inhabitants, of whom more than half the population were Jews.” (No. 238, “Report of the Commerce of Jerusalem During the Year 1863,” F.O. 195/808, May 1864)

In 1866, W. M. Thomson writes: *“How melancholy is this utter desolation. Not a house, not a trace of inhabitants, not even shepherds, to relieve the dull monotony . . . Much of the country through which we have been rambling for a week appears never to have been inhabited, or even cultivated; and there are other parts, you say, still more barren.”* (W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, London: T. Nelsons & Sons, 1866; and Thompson, *Southern Palestine and Jerusalem* [New York: Harper 1880])

Colonel C. R. Conder, who made frequent visits to Palestine, commented in the book *Heth and Moab* on the

continuing population decline within the nine- or ten-year interim between his visits:

“The Peasantry who are the backbone of the population, have diminished most sadly in numbers and wealth.” (Colonel C.R. Conder, *Heth and Moab*, London, 1883 pp. 380, 376.)

David Landes summarized the causes of the rapid decline of the number of inhabitants: *“As a result of centuries of Turkish neglect and misrule, following on the earlier ravages of successive conquerors, the land had been given over to sand, marsh, the anopheles mosquito, clan feuds, and Bedouin marauders. A population of several millions had shrunk to less than one tenth that number—perhaps a quarter of a million around 1800, and 300,000 at mid-century.”* (David Landes, “P,” *Commentary*, February, 1976, pp. 48–49)

In 1881, the British cartographer Arthur Penrhyn Stanley surveyed the bleak landscape and wrote:

“In Judea it is hardly an exaggeration to say that for miles and miles there was no appearance of life or habitation.” (Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, London: John Murray, 1881, p. 118)

“No national union and no national spirit has prevailed there. The motley impoverished tribes which have occupied it have held it as mere tenants at will, temporary landowners, evidently waiting for those entitled to the permanent possession of the soil.” (Sir John William Dawson, 1888, *Modern Science in Bible Lands* [New York, 1890], pp. 449–450)

“I traveled through sad Galilee in the spring, and I found it silent. . . . As elsewhere, as everywhere in Palestine, city and palaces have returned to the dust. This melancholy of abandonment weighs on all the Holy Land.” (French writer, Pierre Loti, *La Galilee*, Paris, 1895), pp. 37–41)