

**INFORMATION SHEET - PALESTINE AT THE TIME OF JESUS****Geography**

Located in the SW area of the Fertile Crescent, Palestine (now known as Israel) is scarcely 240km long, stretching from Lake Huleh in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. At its broadest point the country is only 80-95km wide. In the time of Jesus, *Syria Iudaea* of the Romans was divided into three provinces, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. There is a remarkable contrast between the regions of Galilee and Judea. Lower Galilee is one of the most fertile parts of Israel. The countryside of gently sloping hills allows rich vegetation and varied crops to grow on the land. Indeed the beauty of the environment more than likely influenced Jesus' teachings. By contrast Judea has rugged terrain, and the dry rocky soil proved difficult to cultivate. Samaritan hills are not very high, seldom reaching the height of over 800 metres.

**Physical features**

The main physical divisions (or terrain) of the country feature the coastal plain; central hill area; rift valley and desert. The River Jordan follows the Rift valley for over 100km until it reaches the Dead Sea.

**Climate**

In northern Galilee more than 900mm of rain falls every year. In the south of Judea, near the desert, less than 100mm rain falls. The average rainfall for the rest of Palestine is approximately 400mm of rain every year. In Judea, scorching summer winds blow from the desert in the south-west. In winter time, cool winds blow into Judea, Samaria and Galilee from the Mediterranean Sea.

**Crops**

Many Palestinians worked in the fields, growing mainly wheat and barley. Tilling the soil of Judea was difficult, as the ground was hard and very stony. Rich soil and good farming was possible on the great plain of Galilee, very close to Jesus' home town of Nazareth. The most important fruit crops were grapes, olives and figs. Olive trees and grape vines grew on the sunny hillsides. Grapes were used to make wine, and olives to make oil. Farmers also grew other fruit such as melons, dates, pomegranates and nuts. Vegetables such as onions, cucumbers, lentils, beans, garlic and herbs were also grown.

**Animals**

Shepherding was probably one of the oldest occupations in the land. Farmers kept animals such as sheep, goats, oxen and asses; the sheep were often herded together with the goats. Sheep were kept to give wool for making clothes, and were sometimes killed for their meat. Sheep's milk was drunk by the poorest people. Other birds and animals found in the area are deer, camels, foxes, eagles, vultures, doves, owls and quails.

## FACT FILE - PALESTINE AT THE TIME OF JESUS

### Geography

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### Physical Features

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### Climate

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### Crops

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### Animals

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