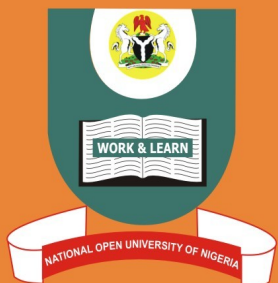


CTH 011: BIBLE GEOGRAPHY



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

**COURSE
GUIDE**

**CTH 011
BIBLE GEOGRAPHY**

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INTRODUCTION

CTH 011: Bible Geography is designed to show how the land of both Old and New Testament Bible, climate, seasons and other components of the geography, including the people and their culture, are reflected or mirrored in the Christian Bible and so help in the better understanding of both the Bible and Geography.

The course is a foundation level course. It is available to all students of Christian Theology, and it is suitable for other students in the humanities and the sciences, especially for the liberal, broad-minded scientist.

The course consists of 15 study units and is structured into three modules of 5 study units each. Although the study area and material is basically foreign, relating to far away Bible land as well as to a book written by multiple authors, over several millennia and completed about two thousand years ago, the material in the course, like the Bible, is fresh and is relevant to all cultures and times.

This course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each study unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for tutor-marked assignments. There are periodic tutorial classes, among others, as shown in the table of contents of this document.

Finally, the course will be of great help to both Bible and Geography students by providing a *bridge* for safe crossing between both. In other words, the theologian will “operate on the ground”, rather than in abstract, while the geographer will develop the much needed spiritual dimension. In both cases knowledge is advanced.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE

The overall aim of the course

Bible Geography is designed and produced to help students grasp the content of the Bible in its geographical, cultural and historical settings. The course also shows how a proper knowledge of the geography of the Bible land helps in better comprehending the content of the Bible.

Accordingly, during the course, you will learn the definitions and connotations of geography, Bible and Bible land. You will also learn the geographical attributes of the Bible land, especially the physical (rocks, soils, vegetation, landforms/landscapes, water, climate, etc.) and human (people, culture, society, religion, etc.) and how these relate to the

content/message of the Bible. Specifically, the course will elaborate the close links between the physical and the spiritual in the way physical and human, including man-made (artificial) objects (names) are used in the Bible to convey profound spiritual truths. In addition, proper understanding of the content of this course will assist you in the understanding of several other courses. Also as a *bridge* between religion (the Bible) and science/social sciences (geography), this course will help students of other courses, especially in the humanities, social sciences and the sciences, in addition to its more specific contribution to better grasping of theological education.

Course Aims

The aim of this course can be summarized as that of leading you to the understanding of:

- i. The geography of the Bible land
- ii. The relationship between, on the one hand, the physical features and, on the other hand, the cultural, socio-political and religious life of the Bible people, whether in the immediate constituency of Palestine or that of the wider area with Bible culture.
- iii. The close link between the physical and the spiritual as found in the Bible.
- iv. The message of the Bible of “what the Bible is saying” as different from “what is in the Bible”.

Course Objectives

To achieve the aim set out above, there is a set of objectives, both general and for each course as well as for the modules thereof. It is advisable that you pay attention to these objectives as they are set out at different stages of the course. They should assist you to assess the extent to which the materials at each stage meet the set objectives.

The following are the overall objectives of the course, or what you are expected to know and do on the successful completion of the course:

- a) Identify some of the various ways in which geography is defined and conceived
- b) Explain the scope, methods and content of geography
- c) Appreciate the nature and characteristic features of the Bible land, particularly in its restricted (Palestine) perspective.

- d) Describe the geography (physical, human, cultural, etc.) of the Bible land
- e) Identify the spiritual connotations, applications and significance of the physical and human landscapes of the Bible land, in both the restricted and expanded scopes.
- f) Appreciate the cultural heritage of the Israelite people as represented by the Bible

Working through This Course

To successfully complete this course, you are required to read and carefully study all the 15 course units, and read the recommended sources. Each course unit, as well as parts thereof, has self - assessment exercise(s). Also at designated points in the course, you are required to complete submit assignments assessment purposes. At the end of the course, there will be a final examination. The total marks will be shared between the assignments and the final examination, as explained below.

Study Units

The following is the outline of the 15 study units of this course, divided into 3 modules of 5 study units each.

Module 1: Introductory Geography and the Geography of the Bible

Unit 1	Definitions, scope and content of geographical knowledge
Unit 2	Branches/types of geographical knowledge
Unit 3	Introduction to the geography of the Bible
Unit 4	The Bible land 1: Definition and delimitation
Unit 5	The Bible land 2: Nature and characteristics

Module 2: The Physical Geography of the Bible land

Unit 1	The land and landscapes of Israel/Bible land
Unit 2	The waters and water bodies of Israel/Bible land
Unit 3	The trees, shrubs and grasses of Israel/Bible land
Unit 4	The animals and birds of Israel/Bible land
Unit 5	The elements, climates and seasons of Israel/Bible land

Module 3: The People and Society Life (Human Geography) of Israel/Bible land (Unit 11 –15)

Unit 1	Nations and Peoples of Israel/Bible land
Unit 2	Religion and religious worship in Israel/Bible land
Unit 3	Home and Family Life in Israel/Bible land
Unit 4	Work and Society in Israel/Bible land
Unit 5	A created earth sacred to God

Assignment File

In this file, you will find all the details of the assignments you must submit to your tutor for marking. The mark you obtain in these assignments will count towards the final mark for this course, in the ratio of 30:70.

Course Materials

Course Guide
 Study Units
 References
 Assessment/Assignment file
 Presentation schedule
 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)
 Final Examination and grading
 Course Marking Scheme
 Course Overview
 How to get the most from this course
 Tutors and tutorials
 Summary

References

Main:

Alexander Pat (Editor) *The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible: Life and times, meaning and message, a Comprehensive Guide*, Lion Publishing Plc, Herts, England

Baly, D (1957), *The Geography of the Bible: A Study in Historical Geography*. Harper & Bros. Publishers. New York. 303pp

Dockey D.S. et al (Eds). *Holman Bible Handbook*. Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, Tn. 894pp

Faniran, A. (2001), *Nature in the Bible: A Commentary on God's Revelation in His Creation*. Sacred – Earth Monograph Series 2: Man & Nature Study Action Centre, Ibadan, 207pp

Faniran, A. (2001), *Man as God's Image*. Sacred – Earth Ministry Monograph Series 1, Man & Nature Study Action Centre, Ibadan 34pp

Faniran, A. (2004), *Tenants on Earth: A Compilation of Sermons on God, Humans and the Earth*. Sacred – Earth Ministry Monograph Series 5, Man & Nature Study Action Centre, Ibadan, 165pp

Stott, John, (1984), *Understanding the Bible*. Scripture Union, Bletchlaj, England, 192pp

Others (Supplementary)

Areola, O & S.I. Okafor (eds), (1998), *50 Years of Geography in Nigeria: The Ibadan Story*, Univ. of Ibadan Press, 474pp

Ayeni, B. and Faniran A. (1990), *Geographical Perspectives on Nigeria's Development*. Nigerian Geographical Association, Dept. of Geography, University of Ibadan, 335pp

Douglas, I., R. Huggett and M. Robinson, (1996), *A Companion Encyclopedia of Geography, The Environment and Humankind*. Rutledge, London, 1021pp

ASSESSMENT

Self Assessment Exercise (SAE)

Your assessment will be based in tutor-marked assignments (TMA), seminars and written examination. You are expected to apply the information, knowledge techniques acquired during the course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutor within the period of the deadline. These assignments will count for 30% of your total mark.

At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final written two-hour examination for the remaining 70% mark for the course.

Tutor Marked Assignments

Assignment questions for the units are compiled in the Assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignment from the information and material contained in your course (study units) material as well as

the references. However, you are advised to consult other relevant sources, including the Internet, to broaden and sharpen your understanding of the course material.

When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with a TMA form, to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given. If, however, you cannot possibly complete your assignment on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is due, to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Final Examination Grading

The two- hour examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing practice exercise and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

Course Marking Scheme

The final course mark will be distributed as follows

Assessment	Mark
Tutor marked assignments	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count at 30% of course marks.
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

Table 1: Course Mark Allocations

Course Overview

Table 2 brings together the units, the weeks to complete them and the accompanying assignments.

Table 2: Course Organizer

Unit	Title of work/Study Unit	Weeks Activity	End of Unit Assessment
Module 1	Course Guide	1	
1	Definitions, scope and content of geographical knowledge	1	Assignment 1
2	Branches/types of geographical knowledge	2	2
3	Introduction to the geography of the Bible	3	3
4	The Bible land 1: a definition and delimitation	4	4
5	The Bible land 2: Nature/Characteristics	5	5
Module 2	The land and landscapes of Israel/Bible land	6	6
Unit			
1			
2	The waters and water bodies of Israel/Bible land	7	7
3	The plants and shrubs of Israel/Bible land	8	8
4	The animals and birds of Israel/Bible land	9	9
5	The elements, climates and seasons of Israel/Bible land	10	10
Module 3	Nations and Peoples of Israel/Bible land and the Bible	11	11
Unit			
1			
2	Religion and religious worship in Israel/Bible land and the Bible	12	12
3	Home and Family Life in Israel/Bible land and the Bible	13	13
4	Work and Society in Israel/Bible land and the Bible	14	14
5	A created earth sacred to God	15	15
16	Revision	16	
17	Examination	17	

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the advantages of distance learning, that you can read and work through specifically designed study materials *at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best*. You should see them (study unit materials) as reading lectures, instead of listening to them in the classroom. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units also tell you when to read your text materials or recommended books. You are provided exercises to do at appropriate points just as a lecturer might give you class exercises.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the stated objectives. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chance of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your recommended books, other reading material or from the residual knowledge of your tutor.

If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor or visit the study centre, nearest to you for assistance. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need help, therefore, don't hesitate to call and ask him to provide it.

The following is a practical strategy for working through the course:

Read this Course Guide thoroughly, several times to ensure that the message gets really across to you.

- i. Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course Overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Important information, e.g. details of your tutorials and the date of the first day of the Semester, is available at the study centre. You need to gather together all this information in one place, such as your diary or a wall calendar. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates for each unit.
- ii. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties

with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.

- iii. Turn to unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit
- iv. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the overview at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one or more of your recommended books on your desk at the same time.
- v. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the units you will be instructed as to what to read from your set book(s).
- vi. Keep in touch with the study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.
- vii. Well before the relevant due dates (about 4 weeks before due dates), check on the Assignment at the study centre and take note of your next required Assignment. Keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignments carefully and as they fall due. Do not allow backlog. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.
- viii. Again, on the exercises/assignment, you will discover that these are placed both within (under each major section) and at the end of the unit. Some of the sectional exercises are also used as TMA at the end. You are free to undertake the assignment either section by section or together at the end. The assignments are, however graded per unit at not section by section.
- ix. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials again and again and/or consult your tutor.
- x. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then go on to the next unit. Proceed, unit by unit, through the course and try to plan your study such that you keep yourself on schedule.
- xi. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also written on the assignment.

Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.

- xii. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail or by a visit to the study centre, if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary. Contact your tutor if:

- i. You do not understand any part of the study units or the assignment(s) readings.
- ii. You have difficulty with any exercise.
- iii. You have a question or problem with an assignment with your tutor's comments, on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and ask questions, which are answered instantly. You can also raise any problem encountered in the course of your study at the tutorials. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating actively in the discussions.

We wish you success in the programme.

**MAIN
COURSE**

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MODULE 1 INTRODUCTORY GEOGRAPHY AND GEOGRAPHY OF THE BIBLE

INTRODUCTION

This module, as observed above, introduces you to the course and its title. It contains some vital information on the two “disciplines” brought together, namely, geography and the Holy Bible, by defining and describing some salient attributes/characteristics of each. The aim is to prepare you for what you will be exposed to in the rest of the course, where specific aspects/components, again of geography and the Bible are discussed. Basically, this module presents the basic geography of Bible land, as used in the course.

- Unit 1: Definitions, scope and content of geographical knowledge
- Unit 2: Branches/types of geographical knowledge
- Unit 3: The geography of the Bible
- Unit 4: The Bibleland 1: Definition and delimitation
- Unit 5: The Bibleland 2: Nature and character

UNIT 1 DEFINITIONS, SCOPE AND CONTENT OF GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Definitions
 - 3.1.1 Dictionary
 - 3.1.2 References
 - 3.1.3 Operational
 - 3.2 Scope of geography
 - 3.3 Content of geography
 - 3.4 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Bible Geography is a brand new course as far as Nigeria is concerned. Even globally, it is not common. It is neither in any geography

programme that I know, nor in that of seminaries/Bible colleges, in Nigeria, the closest to it being Archaeology, which, although bears some resemblance to geography, is not exactly the same as this course.

The reasons for this situation are legion, but the most important ones relate to the perception and conceptualization of both geography and theology. This is the way Denis Baly (1957), the author of one of our referenced sources, put it:

There are clearly two problems in any work of this kind... The second problem is that expressed by a friend of mine, who read part of the manuscript (of Baly's book), and who commented bluntly, "Theologians are not interested in geology, and geographers do not want theology in a geography book." There is much truth in what he said. Yet on the one hand, it is impossible to understand what has been called the "personality" of a country without some knowledge of the structure and mechanism of the climate, and, on the other hand, to attempt to study the Bible as if it were merely a work of secular history, is to do violence to its nature (p xii).

Baly went on:

The moment one sets out to examine "the Land and the Bible", it is important to take account of two facts: that the "Land", like any other land is a complex and powerful thing, strongly influencing the lives and thinking of its people, and for this reason, worthy of a thorough study in its own right, and that the "Book," from the beginning to the end of it, presupposes the existence of one God who is both active and effective and , ... is always "the subject of the sentence. Therefore, a study of the "Land" which is merely superficial and rejects the discipline of examining how the environment is built and a study of the "Book" which does not take seriously the nature of the biblical argument, are both of them ... studies without integrity (p. xii).

(see John Stott's *Understanding the Bible* pp.24 – 27 for further comments on this topic)

Talking about geography and the Bible, I can vividly recollect also the comments by colleagues of mine on the publication and presentation of the first two in the Sacred – Earth Ministry Monograph series (contained in your references). The summary of these comments is the "naming" of a "new" geography as "Christianity (or Christian) Geography." From all

indication, the “new” name, like the word “Christian” when it was first used for followers of Jesus Christ (Ac. 11:26), was a derisive/sarcastic way of describing a “pretender” Pastor, a geographer turned priest, but without attending a seminary. The question to ask, therefore, which has remained largely unsatisfactorily, answered, is “what is geography and what is the nature of its scope and content that seems to deny the relevance of geography?” These are the issues we are going to try to trash out in as simple a way as possible in this part of the course. We will try to define geography as well as the scope and content of the discipline. In other words, what are the major concerns of geographers? What is the nature of the subject matter of geography, especially that which predisposes it to be seen by most practitioners, as stated above as antithesis to or different from theology and vice versa. Fortunately, however, as shown by the title of this course, times have changed, and geography is now seen more in the sense of “what geographers do”, thus making it admissible of virtually any other topic or discipline, including theology. These issues will lead us to considering the objectives of this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Define “geography”
- ii. Describe the scope of geography/geographical knowledge with reference to the present course
- iii. Enumerate the contents of geographical knowledge, vis-à-vis Bible Geography.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Definitions

There are several sources for obtaining the definition of a technical word, such as geography, or technical phrase such as geographical knowledge. Among these are dictionaries/encyclopedias and textbooks. Even dictionaries are of various types. Apart from the level (basic and advanced), there are the ordinary and technical-cum scientific types. We give a few examples

3.1.1 Dictionary Definitions

There are numberless dictionaries you can consult for the meaning of the word “geography” and by implication the phrase “geographical knowledge.”:

- a) A.S. Hornsby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*:

Geography is the science of the earth's surface, physical features, divisions, climates, products, population, etc.

- b) W. Little, H.W. Fowler and J. Coulson, 1968 *The Oxford Universal Dictionary Illustrated*;

The science that describes the earth's surface, its form and physical features, its natural and political divisions, its climates, productions, etc.

Apart from common English usage dictionaries, there are technical dictionaries such as those of geography, geology, science, social science, etc. I present you with one only of these, but you will benefit tremendously from looking up as many others as possible. The one I present is:

- c) *Dictionary of Geological Terms* by the American Geological Institute:

The science that treats of the surface of the earth, including its form and development, the phenomena that take place thereon, and the plants, animals and people that inhabit it, considered in relation to the earth's surface ...

Self Assessment Exercise 1

- 1) Assemble at least four words that are common to or contained in the three definitions above.
- 2) Check at least two other dictionaries, one from each of common and technical usage and copy into your note books, to make 5 definitions in all that you have learnt so far.

3.1.2 Encyclopedia Definitions

An encyclopedia, if you have ever seen one, is a work that contains information on many if not all branches of knowledge, usually, as in dictionaries, arranged alphabetically. Again, as also true of dictionaries, encyclopedias also contain exhaustive information on specific or branch of knowledge such as geography, geology, etc. Let us, again, look at a three examples:

- i. *Chambers Encyclopedia* by International Learning Systems Corporation Ltd, London, 1969; Vol VI:

... the science of the earth ... the systematized knowledge of our globe ...

- ii. *The World Book Encyclopedia* by Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, Chicago, 1975:

*... the field of knowledge that studies the earth as man's home. Geographers are interested in where people, plants and animal live, and where rivers, lakes, mountains, cities and other natural and manmade geographic features are found. They study why these features are there, and how they are interrelated. The word **geography** comes from the Greek word **geographia**, which means **earth description**.*

- iii. *Companion Encyclopedia of Geography: the Environment and Humankind*, ed. I. Douglas, R. Huggett and M. Robinson:

The distinctiveness of the geographical discipline has always lain in the extent to which it accommodates a concern for the physical as well as the human environment and in its early vision of an integrated and holistic world: a habitat; a place of organic life.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Mention at least one thing that is common to both and one thing that separates the three definitions given in this section.

3.1.3 References

- B. Ayeni and A. Faniran, *Geographical Perspectives in Nigeria's Development*.

Self Assessment Exercise 3

- 1) Get a copy of the reference, copy the others stated on p. 292, and at least one other given in the rest of the chapter. (Of course there are many more contained in the other contributions to the book)
- 2) Consider Hagget's definition in relation to your course, especially the aspect of the Bible land.

3.1.4 Operational Definition

For the purposes of this course, Bible Geography is defined as the broad synoptic view of the relationships (spatial, ecological, symbiotic) between and among, on the one hand, the physical and human attributes of Israel/Bible land and, on the other hand, the content of the “Book”, i.e. the Holy Bible.

Self Assessment Exercise 4

Find out from a good dictionary, the meaning of the key words/phrases in the above definition, namely, “synoptic view,” “relationships,” “ecological,” “symbiotic,” “physical attributes” “human attributes.” In the case of the last two, list two attributes that you know in each case for Nigeria.

3.2 Scope of Geography

The scope of a discipline refers to the range of activities, issues, observations, topics, etc., of interest to the practitioners of the discipline. In the case of geography, and as shown in the definitions above, the range is quite wide, indeed, ill defined: in fact, as stated above one popular definition is:

Geography is what geographers study/do,

meaning that virtually everything that occurs/exists on the earth’s surface has a geographical component.

The present course is an example of the “fluidity” that marks geographical knowledge. It means that if we have “Bible Geography” we can always map out geography in virtually all other enterprises/worlds of human life. For this course, the scope is as defined but not limited to it. There is always room for expansion, more so when this, as observed above, is a relatively new area of study and is certain to grow with time.

Self Assessment Exercise 5

List the topics to be covered in this course (see Course Guide) and consider whether, in the light of the definitions above, any one does not really belong.

3.3 Content of Geography

The word “content” is used in at least two senses here. First, it is used to express what is contained in the discipline as its practitioners conceive it. In this sense it is akin to the idea expressed as “scope” above. Secondly, it refers to the substance or essential meaning of the geographical information/knowledge. This is where the issue of the “core” or “message” of the geography referred to above comes in. Another way of describing this is in terms of the utilitarian values of geography or the ways geographical knowledge benefits humankind: that is to say: “geography in the service of humankind”.

A component of this (utilitarian) value is being emphasized in this course, namely, how a good knowledge of the geography of Israel/Bible land can help, and indeed has helped, better understanding of the message of the Bible, and vice versa. This is anchored on the close (symbiotic) relationship between, on the one hand, the physical and human (including spiritual) components of the land, of a people and, on the other hand, their cultural heritage generally and religion in particular. This is the real point of this course, as shown elsewhere in this course book.

In short, the content of geography is that of relationship and interrelationships between humans and their environment and all the components involved in such relationships constitute the content of geography.

Self Assessment Exercise 6

1. Go over the definitions of geography in 3.1 above and identify (mark out, write out) those that you consider best or that most closely address the content of geography in the sense of its substance or essential meaning.
2. Get on the internet to access more definitions/descriptions of geography.

3.4 Discussion

You will discover that the three topics discussed in this unit are closely related. The definitions, in addition to giving the meaning of the word, also refers to the scope or coverage area as well as the content or essence of the discipline. Yet it is very important to capture the message under each, all of which are vital to the gasping of the course content. They form a foundation over which the superstructure is built, and, as the Psalmist says:

If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?
(Ps. 11:3)

4.0 CONCLUSION

Geography is a science, which, with other disciplines, is out to “unwrap” the “mysteries” of the earth, with particular reference to earth’s surface phenomena. The list of these phenomena (the earth and all that is in it, Ps. 24:1) is limitless, classified as they have been into physical and human phenomena, including human – made features. The goal of geographical knowledge is to unravel the nature as well as the links and interlinks between and among these phenomena.

5.0 SUMMARY

The survey of the definitions, scope and content of geography presented in this unit are meant to help you have an idea of what geography is so that you can follow the discussions that follow. Of course, we shall have more to say about this discipline of geography as the course progresses. For example, in the next unit we shall describe some examples of the branches/types of geography, to further increase your grasp of the course.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Certificate

1. Compare and contrast the two sets of definitions above – dictionaries and encyclopedias. Mention at least one thing that is common to both and one thing that separates them.
2. List the topics to be covered in this course (see course guide) and consider whether, in the light of the definitions, above, any one does not really belong.

Diploma

1. Compare and contrast any two definitions of geography you have learnt in this unit.
2. Discuss the operational definition of “Bible Geography”

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

B. Ayeni and A. Faniran, (eds.) 1990, *Geographical Perspectives on Nigeria's Development*: chap 22, by L.K. Jeje.

Dictionaries, Encyclopedias

Internet

UNIT 2 BRANCHES/TYPES OF GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 History of geographic thought
 - 3.2 Devolution of geography
 - 3.2.1 Location
 - 3.2.2 What Places are like
 - 3.2.3 The Changing Face of the Earth
 - 3.2.4 Space Relation
 - 3.2.5 Branches/Divisions of Geography
 - 3.3 Place of Bible Geography
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We ended the last unit with a note that the discussions of definitions, scope and content of geography preempt or presuppose what to expect in the present unit on branches, types or divisions of geographical knowledge. This is particularly so of definitions and other discussions, which enumerate some of the features or phenomena of the earth's surface of interest to the geographer. However, as you will discover in this unit, there is not one fool-proof way of dividing geography into its component parts or divisions. Therefore, what I am presenting to you in this unit are the popular divisions applicable in Nigeria, especially Nigerian universities, using the example of the country's premier university, the University of Ibadan. Nevertheless, to the extent that most other universities have taken after the Ibadan system, with minor differences here and there, you will discover that the Ibadan system is quite representative of most other universities, including those outside Nigeria. I will be surprised if what you have in this unit is significantly different from that of your own university, the National Open University of Nigeria.

Accordingly, I am inviting you to join me as I run through the most common types/divisions of geographical knowledge in the world today. But, before that, it will be necessary to point out that, as you will expect, the situation has not always been as it is presently and is not likely to

remain so for too long after. After all, we live in an ever – changing, very dynamic, world and any living subject, of which geography is one, will have to change with time, if it is to continue to serve the people; if it is to live up to its essence or content.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of this unit include:

- i. Discuss the history of geography thought
- ii. Describe the devolution of geography into branches or specializations
- iii. Describe on the focal message/content of geography as a scientific discipline
- iv. Discuss the contemporary situation of geographical knowledge/discipline
- v. Comment on how Bible Geography fits/fails to fit into the picture of things, vis-à-vis contemporary geography

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Brief History of Geographic Thought

Geography, as a way of studying the earth's surface, dates back to the ancient Greeks, among whom the subject was held in high esteem, as not only worthy of attention of philosophers, but also of great practical importance to the affairs of humans, including human living generally, military affairs, governance and business. At that time, knowledge was an integrated whole and geographical knowledge formed a major component of that knowledge.

Like many other disciplines, the development of geographical thought and knowledge featured such phases as ancient, renaissance, early modern and modern.

During the ancient/early days, geographical knowledge was contained in the works of poets and mystics and, therefore, was largely, in the words of W.D. Thornbury, a foremost early 20th century geomorphologist, “fanciful and ludicrous.” A.A. Miller, in the *Chambers Encyclopedia*, actually described the geography of ancient times as *fanciful and lacking in logical consistency*. For example, the ancient Egyptians deemed that the sky was a solid ceiling supported above the earth by four pillars, corresponding to the four cardinal points.

- a) The Homeric poems are famed for containing many echos of the geographical lore gathered by pre-Greek seafearers, which are

woven into the story of *Odysseus*, a mixture of fact and fable. *Homer* was, therefore, regarded, in some circles, as “the father of geography”, even though most geographers regard *Herodotus* (c. 450 BC) as the real father of the discipline.

- b) *Ptolemy*, who lived during the renaissance period, precisely at the beginning of the 15th century, provided another landmark in the development of the geographic thought. His (*Ptolemy*’s) geography, with the accompanying maps, began a new era for geography. In particular, globes and maps were constructed with a network of latitude and longitude, which enables the accurate location and presentation of the ever-increasing geographical information.
- c) The systematic Portuguese voyages of discovery directed by *Prince Henry the Navigator*, as well as later ones, constituted another set of landmarks in the development of geography and geographical knowledge. Another discovery, during the renaissance, which helped geography and geographical knowledge, was the telescope, by *Galileo*, while *Edward Wright* pioneered the attaching of telescopic sights to surveying instruments, another big boost to the expanding geographical horizon.
- d) The expansion of overseas colonies, overseas trade and of the volume of naval and merchant shipping notably in England, the Netherlands and France, in the 17th and 18th centuries, further ensured both popular and official interest in geography. The result is an explosion of geographical knowledge and the debut of specializations, discussed more fully in the next section. Specifically, regional geography and systematic, especially physical, geography were already taking shape.
- e) The founders of modern geography are usually considered to be *Alexander Humboldt* (1769 – 1859) and *Karl Ritter* (1779 – 1859); the former a great scientist and traveler, the latter an historian who systematized and minutely scrutinized available recorded geographical observations. Other important names in the development of modern geography included: H.J. Mackinder and A.J. Herbertson
- f) The Second World War consolidated the position of geography and geographers, whose contributions to strategy in war and to reconstruction in peace was much appreciated.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. The next time you go to a library (especially University Library) ask for a copy of a book on the history of geography and attempt to fill up gaps left in the above presentation. Examples are:

E.H. Bunbury 1883. *History of Ancient Geography* (2 vols.)

C.R. Beazley, 1901. *Dawn of Modern Geography* (3 vols.)

R.E. Dickinson and O.J.R. Howarth, 1924, *History of Geograpy*

G. Taylor (Ed.) 1957, *Geography in the 20th Century*

2. Compile a list of foremost geographers named above and write at least one important contribution made by each of them.

3.2 Devolution of Geography

A discussion of the devolution of geography into branches, divisions or specializations necessarily brings up that of what some geographers describe as “the main ideas or concerns of geography.” Four such ideas/concerns are:

- 1) Location of features, places and people
- 2) What various parts of the earth are like and how they differ from each other
- 3) How the various geographic features came to be where they are, and
- 4) The space relations of the features, areas and people to one another.

3.2.1 Location: A major task of geography is to tell where places are and to interpret the advantages and otherwise of their locations; one way geographers do this, i.e. location, is through maps.

3.2.2 What places are like: Most people desire more information about places than their locations give. They want to know, in addition:

The nature of the surrounding (natural and human influence),

How people have used the land (sites),

What house type the people live in,

What the nature of the available infrastructure is like, e.g. roads, and water supply is

What the inhabitants are like, and

The extent the place is similar to or different from other places and so on.

3.2.3 The changing face of the earth: Changes are made to places by:

Humans, (through slum clearance, settlement, agriculture, mining, etc.) and

Nature, (by rock weathering, erosion, deposition, climate, among other forces, including the catastrophic types such as earthquakes, volcanoes and tornadoes).

3.2.4 Space relation: While astronomers study the space relations of stars and other heavenly bodies, geographers study the space relations of earth's, places and features, like:

Rivers and settlements,

Landscape and settlement pattern,

Water and human welfare,

Natural resources and development potential, and

Human activities and environmental pollution/degradation

3.2.5 Branches/Divisions of Geography

As geographical knowledge witnessed continuous expansion/explosion the discipline devolved/divided into specialisms, grouped under one or the other of:

Physical geography (PG),
Human geography (HG),
Regional geography (RG), and
Geographic thoughts and methods (GTM).

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Obtain a copy of the prospectus of any Department of Geography and read the course descriptions and determine which branch of geography they fall into.

2. Compare the above list with that of the NOUN, if any.
3. See if you can fit your own course (Bible Geography) into any one or more of the topics, in 3.2.5 above. .

Self Assessment Exercise 3

Obtain a book or any other written material, including the internet, which discusses the importance of geographical knowledge, and copy into your notebook, what the source has to say on any two of the following:

- a) Knowledge about the earth
- b) Intellectual development of adherents
- c) Good, intelligent and responsible citizenship
- d) Aid to intelligent travel
- e) Cooperation (interrelationship) with other fields of knowledge.

(An encyclopedia of Geography should assist you on this assignment)

3.3 The Place of Bible Geography

The question to ask, as preempted above, is: where do Bible Geography comes into all these? It could be in the area of “cooperation with other fields of knowledge”, namely, Bible Knowledge As a matter of fact, it is more than this. Rather, it goes to the “heart” of geography itself, namely, human – nature interaction. The

... main purpose is to show how the land (geography) of Israel became an inseparable part of the very essence of the Jewish people and to explain the significance of this relationship to all who accept the Bible as part of their cultural heritage (Nature in the Bible, p. 2).

In other words, Bible Geography, like Medical Geography, stands squarely at the interface between the land and the people of the Bible land and so can be regarded as belonging to human geography, but with a significant difference. This is the fact that in this case, the emphasis is on the proper understanding of Biblical message via close attention to the spiritual (symbolic) connotation of the specific natural and other physical objects of Israel/Bible land in particular and the entire world in general, especially these who use the Bible as a guide to life and living.

Self Assessment Exercise 4

Discuss the quotation above in relation to Nigeria, i.e. how the land (geography) of Nigeria relates to the contemporary Nigeria culture.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is not easy to draw a clear-out conclusion on the material content of this course. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to say that we have attempted to fit our course into the main stream of both geography and theology. Bible Geography is viewed here as one of the ways of looking at the nature-human interaction as well as contributing to intellectual development. As we would see later in the course, one important phenomenon of Biblical knowledge is spiritual enrichment via revelation. In other words, taking this course seriously should tantamount not only to a better understanding of the Bible but also a better understanding of our present (this) world and our future (eternal) home.

5.0 SUMMARY

I have attempted in this unit to expose you to:

- The evolution of geography and geographic thought and knowledge
- The major types/branches/divisions of geographical knowledge
- The focal message or core of geography
- The place of Bible Geography in the educational curriculum

In doing this, it is expected that you would have been exposed more to the assignment of or rationale for this course.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Certificate

1. Compile a list of foremost geographers named above in this unit and write at least one important contribution made by each.
2. Justify in your own words, the inclusion of Bible Geography in your programme, based on what you have learnt in this unit.

Diploma

1. Justify the inclusion of bible Geography in you programme

2. What will you say is the core or holistic roots of geography and how this relates to the Bible?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

The World Book Encyclopedia. Vol 8, pp. 90-98. field Enterprises Educational Corporation, Chicago.

Chambers Encyclopedia vol. VI, pp 213-218, International Learning Systems Corporation Ltd, London

O. Areola and S.I. Okafor, **50 Years of Geography in Nigeria**, Ibadan Univ. Press

Faculty of the Social Science, University of Ibadan Prospectus, 2002-2003

A. Faniran, 2001, *Nature in the Bible*, Man and Nature Study Action Centre, Ibadan

A. Faniran, 2001, *Leaders in Nigerian Geography*. Dept. of Geography, Univ. of Ibadan

UNIT 3 THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE BIBLE

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Bible in retrospect
 - 3.1.1 Name
 - 3.1.2 Content
 - 3.1.3 Characteristics
 - 3.2 Medieval geography: Palestine as the centre of the world
 - 3.3 The Bible and the age of the earth/universe
 - 3.4 The Bible and creation story
 - 3.5 The Great flood
 - 3.6 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

I concluded unit 2 of this course with a case of some sort for and on behalf of our course: *Bible Geography*. According to Denis Baly, the author of one of the textbooks for this course, there are at least two problems that may confront a study of this nature, namely: They:

- The temporal dimension of the Biblical period
- The apparent “conflict,” or is it “incongruence,” between geography and theology (see unit 1 above)

You need not worry about any one of these problems raised by Baly, since the course content has obviated both problems. The Bible is taken as a book “for all times”, same as geography. The area of interest in this course, also referred to as Israel/Bible land, is essentially Palestine, as understood in the modern times, while some neighbouring countries are included, but not to the same detail.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Discuss what the Bible says about the earth

- ii. Discuss what the Bible says about creation
- iii. Analyse the Great Flood as narrated in the Bible

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Bible in Retrospect

3.1.1 Name

English – speaking Christians use three major titles to refer to their holy book: – Bible or the Holy Bible.

- The Scripture or Holy Scripture and the
- Word or the Word of God

They also refer to its two major parts as:

- The Old Testament (OT) and
- The New Testament (NT)

The word *Bible* is from Greek *biblia*, meaning *books* or *scrolls*

The word *Scripture* is from Latin *Scriptura*, meaning *writing*

Word is a translation of the Hebrew *dabar* and Greek *logos*

3.1.2 Content

The two major parts of the Bible are the OT (39 books) and the NT (27 books), making 66 books in all

Most of OT was written in Hebrew

The OT is the Holy Scriptures of Jewish people who divided it into 3 sections, viz: The *Law*, the *Prophets* and the *Writing*, while Christians divides the books to *law*, *history*, *wisdom* and *prophecy*

The NT was written in Greek, with Aramaic words scattered throughout, e.g. *Abba* (Mk. 14:36); *Talitha koum* (Mk. 5:41), *Maranatha* (1 Cor. 16: 22) and *Golgotha* (Matt. 27:33)

The Bible also contains several kinds of literature, sometimes called “literary genres”, namely: *histories*, *parables*, *songs*, *proverbs*, *genealogies*, *laws*, *gospels*, *letter*, *apocalypses*, *ethical techniques*,

narratives, hymns, doctrines, thank-you notes, prophecies, confessions of faith, sermons and many more.

3.1.3 Characteristics

The Bible is characterized by both variety and unity.

- ◆ A variety Book:
 - The diverse original languages
 - The diverse books and kinds of literature
 - The long time span - >1000 years – of writing
 - Several dozen “authors” in different societies, geographical locations and diverse purposes.
- ◆ A unified Book
 - The core message is about God/Jesus Christ
 - Although written in the ancient times, addresses people of all ages, i.e. always current, always contemporaneous, always relevant
 - A simple but profound Book. It has message for children and philosophers at the same time
 - The Bible is the most widely read, most widely studied book in the world.
 - It is both a human and a divine book. It is written by humans, (not dropped out of heaven on “golden plates”); under the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16).
 - It is the unique, indispensable Resource Book of Christians and the Church
 - It is a light for our paths (Ps. 119:105); tastes like honey in the mouth (Ps. 119: 103) and a weapon in the fight for a strong faith (Eph. 6:7)
 - Provides Christians with a world view; a set of moral values and an occasion to experience God
 - Binds Christians together as a family (of God)
 - Tells Christians the meaning of their lives
 - Every Christian can say with the Psalmist: “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all the days (Ps. 119:97)

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Mention at least 5 kinds of literature found in the Bible
2. Mark with a x which of the above points about the Bible in 3.1.3 above, which you are knowing for the first time. Work out the percentage.

3.2 Medieval Geography and Palestine as the “center” of the world

Early Bible students stressed the “central” location perspective of Palestine as the centre of God’s activities on earth, in the midst of His people.

The idea of a land prepared by God to receive His people, and which qualifies as the “centre” of the universe, has its equivalence in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2) and Egypt/Goshen (Gen. 39:45), in the physical sense, and the Ministry of John the Baptist (Lk. 3), in the spiritual sense.

The “Medieval” (ancient) view of Palestine is the divine view and therefore, the correct view, which is to be taken seriously, especially in the spiritual sense. The heavenly Jerusalem, like other places where God’s people are settled and live, is the “centre”(nadir) of the world, the point from where God’s light shines to the rest of the world, the focal point of God’s kingdom.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Read the above paragraphs and summarize the message contained therein, with particular reference to Palestine/Bibleland being the “centre” of the world.
2. Based on Baly’s statement, mention three reasons to justify Palestine as the center of the world. John Stott, in his *Understanding the Bible*, has a succinct discussion of this topic which will benefit you a lot.

3.3 The Bible And The Age Of The Earth/Universe

The Bible does not only present its “home front” as the centre of the world, it also provides information on the age of particular events of the earth’s surface. This is particularly so of the “chronology” in Genesis 5, among others.

Besides, the Psalmist, among others, wrote as follows

*My frame was not hidden from thee,
When I was being made secret,
Intricately brought in the depth of the earth (Ps. 139:15)*

Theologians have, however, erred in the area of dating, especially those who put the creation story back to only 4004BC. This created so much problem for geographers generally and landform geographers/geologists and soil scientists in particular, since it is impossible to reasonably explain the phenomena of their interest within the stipulated (4004 BC) age of the earth. The result was the use of false paradigms and explanatory frameworks such as catastrophism.

According to this paradigm, and following on the myopic understanding/interpretation of the “let-there-be” and “there-was” orders in Genesis 1, the catastrophists compromised the natural, observable processes and instead promoted, unnecessarily, the supernatural. God so good, the empirical view supplanted the false theoretical view and landform geography (geomorphology) flourished/flowered/blossomed.

The Bible is not to be read and understood in literal terms; rather, it uses some sort of “coded” language, which points to fundamental truths. As stated above, the Biblical message is for both children as for adults, for both the simple minded and the philosopher, for both the simple believer and the academic theologian.

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Comment on the statement “in the beginning God”, vis-à-vis the theologians’ approach to working out the age of the earth.
2. What does science now say about the age of the earth? How old are the oldest rocks of the earth’s surface, according to scientists?

3.4 The Bible And Creation Story

A major message of the Bible is that God is the creator (Gen. 1:1) and sole owner (Ps. 24:1) of the earth.

The detail and significance of this version of the origins of earthly (and heavenly) things have been widely discussed in literature.

The creation story is very well known to Christians generally and Bible students in particular. For those not too familiar with it, read chapters 1-4 of *Tenants on Earth*, among others. Chapter 4, in particular discusses the creation story alongside its “adversary,” the theory of the organic evolution.

One major point, which is central to this course is that if God owns the earth and all that is in it (Ps. 24:1), and wills (gives) it to humans (the children of men (Ps. 115:16), to benefit from, we should be careful how

we relate with our world or the entire created things. *Tenants on Earth* makes a case for “responsible citizenship and environmental evangelism” as our watchword in this relationship. In other words Bible Geography, by introducing God into geography, has provided a way of addressing two core concerns of geography, namely:

- Returning to geography’s holistic roots and
- Echoing a message that geography has the potential to lie at the heart of fundamental problems of habitat change and human impact and ... about the vital issue of planetary management (see Douglas et al’s definition of geography in unit 1).

This issue is addressed more fully in unit 15, among others, in this course.

Finally, the creation story is central to the message of the *Sacred – Earth Ministry*, being advanced by your tutor and his team on the *Man and Nature Study/Action Centre*, an NGO committed to promoting the message of *Man in Harmony with Nature*. This harmony, which has been largely elusive, is currently being promoted via the concept of a creation (the universe) sacred to God and to be approached in awe, reverence, fear, etc. of Him.

Self Assessment Exercise 4

Comment briefly on the view that the story of the Biblical creation of the earth is just one of the “fables” speculating on the origin of the world, first as a Christian and secondly as an atheist.

3.5 The Great Flood

This event is of interest in this course/unit for the following reasons:

- i. It provides another side of the God of creation, namely, God who not only creates but is also capable of destroying
- ii. Like the “let-there-be” interpretation, the story was used, over a long period, by landform geographers, to explain the origin of many features on earth, within the concept/principle of catastrophism or suddenness, as opposed to the more gradual and consistent operation of the natural forces of water, wind, ice, etc., at the earth’s surface.
- iii. The flood story vividly demonstrates the way God deals with His people, in both judgement and mercy. It shows how He saves His own and judges those who disobey Him.

- iv. The flood story provides an opportunity for God to enter into new covenant(s) with His people (Gen. 8 –9).

Self Assessment Exercise 5

1. Write out the term of the covenant(s) God made with Noah after the flood.
2. Describe the role played by Noah in the great flood story.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has shown various ways as contained in the Bible by which God relates with the earth He created, including the people, the sole beneficiaries of God's creation, otherwise called "nature." The choice of only two topics – creation and the flood – has been strongly influenced by the tutor's background in geomorphology. Specifically, the two topics illustrate how easy it is to misunderstand and misinterpret the Bible, even by theologians. Fortunately, God, who is TRUTH, did not allow "fables" to persist. He continues to show His people "His way" as He continually reveals Himself and the secrets of nature to humankind. Praise be His Name.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has discussed some important topics on the geography of the Bible. These include:

- The Bible – its naming, content and characteristics
- The "study area" of the course, namely, Palestine
- The ways people have used the Bible (mostly wrongly) to explain nature, e.g. age of the earth and origin of things
- The correct interpretation of Bible message

It is expected that through the material in this unit, you would have got deeper into the course. At least, you would have known what is meant by Bible land and the close relationships between God and that land and by, implication, the relationship between God and the earth as well as the entire creation.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Certificate

1. Comment on the statement “in the beginning God,” vis-à-vis the theologians approach to working out the age of the earth.
2. Comment briefly on the view that the Biblical creation is just one of the fables speculating on the origin of the world.
3. Write out the terms of the new covenant(s) God made with Noah after the flood.

Diploma

1. Discuss the view that the Biblical creation story is not just one of the fables speculating on the origin of things but rather a statement of divine truth
2. Compare and contrast the terms of the covenants God made with Abraham and Noah.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 THE BIBLE LAND 1: DEFINITION AND DELIMITATION

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Israel
 - 3.1.1 The Israeli nation/territory
 - 3.1.2 The place where Jews sojourned
 - 3.2 The “neighbours” of Israel
 - 3.2.1 Egypt
 - 3.2.2 Canaan
 - 3.2.3 Philistine
 - 3.2.4 Assyria
 - 3.2.5 Babylonia
 - 3.2.6 Persia
 - 3.2.7 Greece
 - 3.2.8 Rome
 - 3.2.9 Other nations
 - 3.3 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

I attempted, in unit 3, to describe the concept as well as aspects of Israel/ Bible land, using the name Palestine. I shall continue this description in this and the next unit, to complete this (introductory) module.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Locate the Isrealites’ territory
- ii. Locate Places
- iii. Identify some neighbours of Isreal

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Israel/Palestine

3.1.1 The Israelite Nation/Territory

The nation/territory of Israel is the land promised by God to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:2; 13:15; 15:7; 17:8; 50:24; Ex. 6:8; Lev. 20:24; Num. 14:8; Deut. 6:10; 3:20; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:1) and eventually occupied by the descendants of the children of Jacob, under Joshua, on their return from Egypt. Joshua, at the point of entry stated:

Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighbouring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – and to their descendants after them (Deut. 1:7-8).

The nation of Israel used to make up most of the region once called *Palestine*, the Holy land of the Bible. To many Jews throughout the world, a Jewish nation in Palestine is the ideal home where they will be free from all persecutions, their safe castle.

The capital city of Israel (today) is Jerusalem; the official language Hebrew; the surface area 20,700km²; the population over 80 percent urban, a substantial proportion (10%) of whom are Arabs, who live in largely farm villages; the literacy level is very close to if not really 100 per cent.

The Israelite nation is constantly in a state of war, so that all Jewish men and unmarried Jewish women serve in the military, on reaching the age of 18 [the age of recruitment into the army, in the Biblical times, was 20 (Num 1:3)].

3.1.2 The Place where Jews Sojourned in the Biblical Times

Abraham is the progenitor of the Jews (and Arabs). He was called out of his father's native town of Ur in ancient Mesopotamia and wandered in many lands before finally settling in a part of the land his ancestors finally occupied (Ac. 7:2-4). He was recorded as having visited Egypt, among other places (Gen. 12:10-20).

Joseph, one of Jacob's 12 children, also went to (was sold into) Egypt where he was made to "prepare" to receive his entire family (of 72) (Gen. 46).

The Israelites lived in Goshen, Egypt, for over 400 years

The people of Israel (Northern Kingdom) were deported to Assyria, after the Assyrian conquest around 722 BC (2Kgs. 17: 18-23). Subsequently, the Northern Kingdom was settled by Assyrians, an abomination to God (2Kgs. 17:24-33) and extreme punishment for God's children

The people of Judah (Southern Kingdom) were also carried into Babylonian captivity, for 70 years (2Kgs. 25)

However, there is limited record of the impact of the Jews in these places, which they regarded as foreign land, compared to what we have in Israel.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Try your hand at drawing a map showing the route taken by Abram from Ur to Beersheba (use a suitable Bible). You can also show Egypt and Assyria on the same map. It will help you have a clearer view of the reality of the Bibleland.
2. List the countries in which the Israelites sojourned during Biblical times.

3.2 Israel's Neighbours

Reference was made above to Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia, as locations where Israelites sojourned for varying lengths of time. However, these do not exhaust the list of peoples and countries Israel interacted with during Biblical times and to which reference is made in the Bible. Some of such countries are discussed briefly in what follows, again to show they are real places on this planet and not in heaven or somewhere else in people's imagination. However, unlike Israel/Palestine, which we discuss later in detail, only brief comments are made here, to help our understanding of the Bible.

3.2.1 Egypt/Egyptians

Egypt is part of the huge Sahara Desert but has the advantage of the River Nile, which gives her life. Every year, tropical rains in East Africa cause the river to flood its banks and to bring down masses of mud,

which it deposits in the delta regions and along its immediate banks, to form rich soil for crops. Goshen, where the Israelites lived for over 400 years, was in the region of the great Delta triangle, entirely formed of the Nile mud. Goshen's location was described by Joseph as "near me," i.e. near the capital city of Memphis, close to the point where the valley widens into the Delta:

*You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me
You, you children and grandchildren, your flocks and
herds, and all you have (Gen. 45:10)*

Goshen is described in the *Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible* as:

*A fertile area of the eastern Nile Delta a good place for
their flocks and herds ... close to Pharaoh's court ... (p. 262)*

The Pharaoh was supreme ruler, and was assisted by great and wise men, including his dream interpreters: dreams mattered to all classes of people, prisoners as well as kings (Gen 40-41)

Both Egyptians and foreigners had to work as labourers on building sites, especially making bricks (Ex. 1, 2)

Unlike Israel, Egypt had many gods, all from nature:

- Re (the sun god)
- Thoth/Khons (moon god)
- Nut (sky goddess)
- Geb (earth god)
- Hapi (Nile/flood god) etc.

These gods are grouped into "families," with a chief god and goddess as husband and wife, respectively, and with lesser gods and goddess as their sons and daughters, respectively.

Unlike Israel's God who dealt with His people in history, required obedience to His just laws (1 Sam. 15:22) and had no personal needs, Egyptian gods had to be fed three times a day, i.e. they are *natural* as opposed to the *divine* God of the universe, the God of Israel.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the Bible condemns such gods and people who worship them; it is no surprise also that the Bible detests His people "going back to Egypt," except when absolutely necessary, since "going back to Egypt" means getting into idolatry.

Egypt's greatest legacy to the world is writing – the hieroglyph; just as that of the Israel is the universal God.

3.2.2 Canaan/Canaanites

Canaan's great legacy is the alphabet, preserved in names scratched on cups.

Canaan was at one time part of the Egyptian province which extended to Lebanon, Syria and what later became the land of Israel; the land then extended from the original coastal plain (see below) to the forested hills to included the *Amorites* (Num. 13:29; 35:10; Jos 5:1) and a number of others stated in Deuteronomy 7:1, namely, *Hittites*, *Girgashites*, *Perrizzites*, *Hivites* and *Jebusites*, a real mixture of peoples.

The *Canaanites* had many things closely related to the Israelites, including language and farming practice. But the Canaanite religion was quite different. Thus, while the *Israelites* found it easy to settle in the land, on account of the similarities, they were forbidden to mix and marry with the *Canaanites*. In fact, everything to do with the Canaanite religion was to be destroyed (Deut. 7; 12:1-3). Unfortunately for the Israelites, the attractions of a fertility God (*Baal*) as well as its much less demanding worship, constituted a real problem, leading them (Israelites) to sin against their God and constantly sliding towards disaster.

3.2.3 The Philistines

The *Philistines*, also known as “sea peoples,” lived in 5 cities, to the southwest of Israel: *Ashdod*, *Ashkelon*, *Ekron*, *Gath* and *Gaza*, each ruled by a ‘Lord’.

The *Philistines* were a constant threat to the *Israelites*, especially in the days of the Judges, Samuel, Saul and David, as both peoples fought to *control the same land*.

David, however, put an end to the Philistine threat (2 Sam. 5:25), but without bringing them under Israel. Philistine remained independent) of Israel and even caused occasional disturbances for a long times.

The Bible gives Philistine gods Semitic names: *Dragon*, with temples at Gaza and Ashdod; *Baalzebub*, worshiped at Ekron and Ashtoreth (Astarte)

3.2.4 The Assyrians

Assyrian records point to the Semitic origin of the *Assyrians*, with language closely related to that of the *Babylonians* (see below)

The *Assyrians* are presented in the Bible largely as cruel imperialists. This was shown in the way they treated rebels, by deporting them to other parts of their empire and replacing them with strangers (vide the capture of Samaria (2 Kgs. 17:6, 24; 18:31,32))

At a stage, under emperors Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian Empire covered Egypt, north Arabia, Syria, parts of Turkey and Persia.

The *Assyrians* came into the Bible at the time of the last kings of Israel, during the time of Prophets Amos and Hosea (in Israel) and Isaiah (in Judah). They captured Samaria (the Northern Kingdom) and a large chunk of Judah (46 strong towns); Jerusalem, however, escaped capture, through divine intervention (Is. 7:17-25; 2 Kgs. 15, 27:16:9; 18:8; 19; 20:12; 2 Chr. 33:11-13)

3.2.5 The Babylonians

Babylonian civilization is one of the earliest, being contemporaries with, if not pre-dating, the Egyptian civilization, put at about 3000 BC, long before Abram/Abraham. Babylonian civilization also recorded the oldest known writing – the cuneiform script – in Sumerian language. They are also credited with the invention of vehicles and the beginning of city life.

However, the *Babylonians* (also known as Chaldeans) did not come fully into the Bible story until after the fall of the *Assyrians*, around 612 B.C., particularly during the reign of *Nebuchadnezzar* (605-562) (see the book of Daniel, chapter 1-6). They were later replaced by the *Persians*, who freed the Jews (see the book of Ezra, Nehemiah).

3.2.6 The Persians

The *Persians* first appeared as a nation about 650 BC, under King Cyrus I. They made a dramatic entrance into the Bible story when Cyrus II (the Great) marched into Babylon about 539 BC and decided to:

- i. restore temples and buildings in the empire, including Judea
- ii. send back images of gods collected into Babylon to where they belong
- iii. allow Jews to return to Judah/Jerusalem (538BC), taking along with them the treasures which belonged to the Temple in Jerusalem.
- iv. Grant royal permission to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple.

3.2.7 The Greeks and The Romans

The “golden age” of Greek history was around the 5th century B.C., and it was marked by the presence of remarkable leaders, thinkers, writers, poets, such as *Pericles*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, among others.

Their high point was the Hellenistic age (from *Hellen*, meaning ‘Greek’), when Greek became an international language in trade, education and writing. The Jews were also influenced by it: in the second century B.C., the OT was translated into Greek at Alexandria in Egypt for Greek – speaking Jews. Called the Septuagint, this translation was the version of the OT best known to the first Christians. The NT was naturally written in Greek, being the *lingua franca* of the time.

The NT often refers to non-Jews people as *Greeks* or *Gentiles*. The classic meeting of Christians with Greeks took place in Athens, capital city of Greece, during the ministry of Paul, who successfully confronted the *Stoics* and *Epicurians*, the two reigning parties among the thinkers (philosophers) and winning only *some* of them.

Jesus was born in the time of *Emperor Augustus* (Lk. 2:1), while His teaching, death and resurrection took place under *Emperor Tiberius* (AD 14-37). Paul traveled during the reign of *Emperors Claudius* (AD 41-54) and *Nero* (AD 54-68), the *Caesar* he appealed to at his trial (Ac. 25:11)

The Romans occupied Palestine in the time of Jesus. It is on record that Rome had protected the Jews in the past, probably explaining Paul’s appeal to Rome, which had provided the peace and freedom for the Apostles to travel and spread the gospel.

Greeks and Romans had many things in common, viz:

- Both worshiped many gods
- Their religion had little effect on their life
- Neither belief nor behaviour was really important – a person might believe what he/she wished as long as he/she did what was expected of a good citizen and remained loyal to the state.
- There was no great stress on search for truth, nor was there any powerful body of priests.
- Their gods were distant, paid due honour, but not deeply interested in human affairs.

[Compare these with the Jewish/Christian religion and its strong control on life and living]

- ◆ Based on the above, Judaism and Christianity were allowed in the empire because they were not perceived as disloyal groups. As time went on, however, the introduction of *emperor worship* brought Christianity, in particular, into coalition with the state, leading to serious persecution (vide Apostle John and the Book of Revelation).

3.2.9 Other Nations

Other nations mentioned in the Bible story include those to the North of Israel – *Phoenicians, Aramaeans, Hittites, Hurrians, Carians, Lydians, Phoygians, Urartians* and *Scythians*. The *Phoenicians* were *Canaanites*; the *Aramaeans* were *Syrians*, the next door neighbour and arch-enemy of Israel and Judah; but the rest are mostly obscure people.

East of Israel/Palestine, namely, *Elamites* and *Medes*.

Across the Jordan, namely: *Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Amalekites, Midianites, Dedan* and *Nabataeans*.

South, namely: *Cushites* (*Sudanese*),

The Islands, namely: *Cypriots* and *Cretans*

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Go back to your map under 3.1 and add as many of the nations and peoples under this section as possible.

3.3 Discussion

This unit is rather marathonic, giving the number of nations and peoples mentioned and described. This was all in an effort to, as mentioned at the beginning of this module, “have our feet on the ground.” That is to say that all the nations and peoples mentioned in the Bible are geographically real entities. All of them existed during Biblical times while many of them still exist today, albeit under new names and, sometimes, locations. In the event that you cannot remember any of them while reading your Bible, refer to your map(s), or/and maps included in some Bibles. I found those maps included in the NIV Study Bible sufficiently clear and helpful.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Now that we have succeeded in enumerating and describing the nations and peoples of the Bible/Bible land, we can now go on to discuss in greater detail, the core region, namely, Palestine. This is what we shall go on to do in the next unit.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have compiled and described the nations and peoples of

- (a) Israel/Palestine
- (b) The places where Jews sojourned in Biblical times
- (c) Israel's neighbours

all with a view to show you that they are on this earth and prepare you for the more detailed description of Palestine in the next unit.

6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Certificate

1. Try your hand at drawing a map showing the route taken by Abram from Ur to Beersheba (use a suitable Bible). You can also show Egypt and Assyria on the same map. It will help you have a clearer view of the reality of the Bible land.
2. Go back to your map under 3.1 and add as many of the nations and peoples under this section as possible.

Diploma

1. Draw an annotated map of the Ancient World showing the location of all the nations and peoples mentioned in this unit.
2. Distinguish between Palestine and Israel in the Old Testament era.
3. Attempt a definition of the territories known as Palestine during the Old Testament times.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Baly, D. 1957, *Geography of the Bible*, chap.1

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UNIT 5 THE BIBLE LAND 2: NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS

CONTENT

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main content
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 - 3.5 Galilee of the Gentiles
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 - 3.8 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

As you saw under the definitions of geography, there is more to the geography of a place than the definitions and delimitations undertaken in the last unit. Also, as you saw in the discussion of types/divisions of geography, geographers approach their subject matter from different perspectives, one of which is the regional perspective. According to this approach, the nature and character of a unit area, especially countries, are described in such a way as to show how the different individual and groups of attributes interrelate to give the area a personality. The French call such unit areas *pays*, which the people also identify with. This is what we shall attempt to do here for the Bible land which, for this course, refers to what we earlier called Palestine or the Promised Land.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

To do this, we shall briefly present, using simplified descriptions, the major “natural regions” of our area of interest as shown in Fig 5.1. The following regions are described. By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. The Coastlands and associated Plains, including the rich valley

- ii. The Hill Country of Judah
- iii. Galilee
- iv. Land East of the Jordan
- v. The Wilderness and the Dryland

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introduction

The geographer, as shown in many places above, is concerned, among other things, with the contemporary situation of the surface of the earth in relation to the forces that have worked and are still working on it. This often leads him/her to study rocks and rock minerals, soils, landforms, climate, vegetation, settlement, human activities, to mention a few.

Although the conditions of these elements change with time, the rate of change varies. While many mountains and valleys appear to remain permanent features during a person's lifetime, human features such as settlements, infrastructure, etc., change more rapidly.

According to the Bible, however, all these features, whether permanent and otherwise, are God's doing for His glory and purpose. Now let us see how these manifest in the various parts of the Bible land.

3.2 The Coastlands

These consist of the Plain of Asher, north of Carmel; the Coasts of Dor, immediately west of Carmel; the Plain of Sharon; the Plain of Philistia; The Shephelah, or foothills of Judea and the Central valley – Ezdraelon and Jezreel (Fig. 5.1)

The Plain of Asher extends from Mt Carmel to the northern boundary of modern Israel and consists of two parts divided by a line running inland from Accho. The plain did not play prominent role in the Bible as it is doubtful if it ever belonged to the Jews. Indeed, Judges 1:31-32 suggests that the tribe of Asher did not control any town in the territory assigned them by Joshua (Josh. 9:28). Also, in Judges 5:17, the tribe of Asher were blamed for sitting still in face of the Sisera's army, even though they were known to have aided Gideon's victory (Jud. 6:35). It was left for the marshy land of the Kidron valley to bog down Sisera's heavy chariots in the mud: the same mud, however, favoured the higher-

armed Israelites (Jud. 4:15), a clear demonstration of the power of God over His creation.

The Coasts of Dor was originally considered as part of Asher, but later taken over by Manasseh (Josh. 17:11). Also, the area was left outside the territory of Herod the Great, in NT times, while only one town in the region is mentioned in the Bible – the small harbour of Dor. However, it formed one of the 12 districts for which King Solomon appointed officers (1 Kgs. 4:11), and remained in the Northern Kingdom (Israel) after the division, passing to the Assyrians at the conquest of Israel in 722 BC.

The Plain of Sharon is essentially marshland and constituted perhaps the only section of the coast which the Israelites effectively possessed. The OT mentions 2 towns there - Socoh and Gilgal - but only once in each case, as part of list and not because anything important took place in them (1Kgs. 4:10; Josh. 12:23). Other mentions of location in this region are found in Ezra 2:33 and Nehemiah 7:37, among others.

There has been a curious and persistent misunderstanding concerning the attitude of Israelites towards the Plain of Sharon, of which there are only 6 mentions in the Bible: 1 Chr. 5:16; 27:29; Song 2:1; Is. 35:2;33:9; 65:10. The references combine with modern knowledge to confirm the valuable citrus groves of the region. In Isaiah 33:9 and 35:2. Sharon is classed with Carmel and Lebanon as regions of extreme luxuriance and contrasted with the barren deserts of Arabah. Isaiah speaks of the “majesty of Sharon” in the sense that portends pride or extravagance, in the sense of showing the prodigality of our God (Is. 35:2)

Similarly, as the phrase “a rose of Sharon” (Songs 2:1) indicates not so much natural beauty but something lovely amid much that is ugly:

*I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley
As the Lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters
As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved
among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great
delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste (Songs 2:1-3),*

thus presenting the picture of a delicate flower in the midst of a rather terrifying jungle. A similar picture is found in Isaiah 65:10, where Sharon is paralleled with the *Valley of Trouble* (Achor), as two typically inhospitable places: the forest marshes of the one are to be turned into place where sheep may safely graze, and the barren slopes of the other, above Jericho, are to carry sufficient grass for cattle, with divine intervention.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Assemble the Bible references on this region (both cited here as well as others you can find) and from them comment on the way God sees the plain of Sharon as distinct from the way humans see the place in Biblical times.

3.3 The Land of the Philistines

We described the Philistines in the last unit as neighbours of the Israelites. Their region lies south of the plain of Sharon, described immediately above. It is a high plain, in contrast to the low plain of the coast; it has two sections, namely, the Shephelah or lowland and the Plain of Philistia.

The Shephelah is enclosed between the *Philistine Plain* and the mountain (plateau). The name (Shephelah) means humble, or to make low, and so, in the OT has definite geographical significance (see Deut. 1:7; Josh. 9:1; 10:40; 11:2, 16; 12:18; 15:33; Judg. 1:9; 1 Kgs. 10:27; 1 Chr. 27:28, 2Chr. 1:15, 9:27; 26:10; 28:18; Jer. 17:26; 32:44' 33:13; Obad. 19; Zach. 7:7).

As a “transitional” zone between Israel and Philistia (between the plain and the plateau (Judean Plateau), the Shephelah was a battle ground, changing hands at different times: at times the Philistines “devour Israel with open mouth,” and at times Ephraim and Judah “swooped down upon the shoulder of Philistines in the west” (Is. 9:12; 11:14). In fact, the strategic location of this region continues to make itself felt till today. In post - Bible times, Richard 1 of England occupied the Shephelah in an attempt to capture Jerusalem during the **crusades**. Similarly, the State of Israel has Shephelah under her control but not (until 1967) the Jerusalem region. It is on record that the narrow strip of land between Judah and the Shephelah was often studded by a line of fortified towns – Ajalon, Asnah, Eshtol (Jud. 13:25), Zenoah, Tappuach, Adullam (1 Sam 22:1-2), Keilah (I Sam. 23:1-5) etc., while the book of Joshua attests its importance as guarding the back door into the mountains (Josh. 10:38, 39, 11:21, 12:13, 15:15, 49, 21:15; Jud. 1:11; 1 Chr. 6:58).

The Plain of Philistia houses the 5 great towns mentioned in unit 4, each of which is mentioned many times in the OT. Despite the higher elevation than the coast, the rainfall is less and the influence of the desert more felt. But it is generally an open country full of good grain land (Jud. 15:5) and famous towns, a land where movement is relatively

easy. It is on record that the inhabitants of this territory gave their name to the whole land of Palestine itself. Perhaps more significantly is the fact that Philistia lies athwart the great route from Egypt to the north, unprotected by any natural barriers at either end. Exodus 13:17 – 18 says:

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "if they face war they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea.

Philistia, perhaps more than Shephelah, was a veritable battle ground such that God directed His people away from such a place, especially when they were not ready for war.

Yet another woe of Philistia in biblical times was the danger of plague or pestilence, one of the four great scourges of God (Ezek. 14:21). Indeed, the two best-known stories in the Bible about this region concern an outbreak of plague, namely: the capture of the Ark (1 Sam. 5 and 6) and the destruction of Sennacherib's army (2Kgs. 19:8, 35:37).

In all these, as enemies of Israel, the people of the land of the Philistines were lessons on the power of God.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Write down 3 things each you now know about (a) the land and (b) the people of the Philistines, which you did not know before.

3.4 The Rich Valley

The last of the three groups of plains on the western side of the Jordan are the *Plain of Esdraelon* and the *Valley of Jezreel*: both are the only part of the coast that can be said to have lain entirely with the Jewish (Israel) territory, and a possession for which they paid very dearly. Indeed, the fact that they were part of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) is widely believed to be responsible for its fall over a century earlier than Judah (The Bible, of course, traced this downfall to sin on the part of the rulers and people of the Kingdoms [2Kgs. 17:7 – 23]).

Of the two plains, that of Esdraelon is the larger, marked by presence of the Kidron River, a seasonal stream that dries up during the summer. Yet, it played very important roles in Biblical history, notably in the defeat of Sisera.

In contrast to the almost level floor of Esdraelon, Jezreel valley drops steadily toward the rift valley. It is narrow, drained by the little Jalud river (the location where Gideon picked 300 soldiers (Jud. 7:1) as well as that of the Israeli camp before the disastrous battle of Gilboa (I Sam 29:1). The fact that the two battles recorded different outcomes, again, shows the divine influence. In the first case, Gideon trusted and obeyed and won; in the second case, Saul was ditched by God for stack disobedience.

The Jezreel valley is also well supplied with water from the hills on both sides; it is also well drained, without encouraging excessive soil erosion. It is, therefore, one of the richest areas, whose fertility is well reflected in the name “God will sow” (Hos. 2:21-23). Again, in the spiritual sense, the rich harvests in the valley where the prophet (Hosea) had earlier prophesized disaster (Hos. 1:5) are signs that God is always ready to have mercy on His people.

Jezreel was also a veritable transport route thus bringing riches from trade, as well as a beneficiary of the wooded mountains of Gilead, whose wealth was proverbial (see below).

Jezreel also witnessed some terrible events, such as the slaying of the house of Ahab (2 Kgs. 10:11), which prompted Prophet Hosea to use the name in execration (Hos. 1:5). Moreover, prosperity is often accompanied by temptations, including pride, idolatry and envy of neighbouring nations, occasioning war. It is, therefore, no accident that the name, Megiddo (a town in the Jezreel valley) signifies war, in the word *Armageddon* of Revelation 16:16.

Self Assessment Exercise 3

Repeat Self Assessment Exercise 2 for the two regions of Esdraelon and Jezreel.

3.5 The Hill Country of Judah

Unlike the plains and valleys, this region, where Jerusalem is located, is not an easy one to survive in.

Although this is not the situation in the entire region, especially the less – densely settled and wetter western slopes, the general belief of the people is that of a difficult terrain: the rabbis, for example are quoted as saying that “it was easier to raise a legion of olive trees than one child in Judea.” Also, although grape harvests may be excellent and the dark terra rosa well suited to the growing of wheat, figs and olives, “no less

than half of the country is desert and the soil of the other half, rich though it may be, is patchy” (Baly 1957 :157).

One big advantage of Judah, particularly Jerusalem, is good natural defense, such that she was protected from the invasion to which less fortunate areas/towns were often exposed. Yet, it can only be said that Judah (Jerusalem) was only insulated, not isolated, as she witnessed several attacks and, in fact, fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 582 BC. Judah, however, enjoyed the benefit of greater stability than, for instance, Israel. Yet a constant term for a prophet’s work in Biblical (OT) times was that of a *watchman* (Is. 21:6; Ezek. 3:17; 33:7; Hab 2:1): wrote Isaiah: “when a watchmen saw riders, horsemen in pairs, riders on asses, riders in camels, then he must harken very diligently.” (Is. 21:7).

This constant state of siege served divine purposes, as it was widely recognized by God’s people in Biblical times that they had no place for spiritual complacency. Jesus Christ also confirms that spiritual complacency saps the will and the spiritual strength of even the best of men.

The three chief towns of Judah – Jerusalem, Beersheba and Hebron – lay at the crossroads, in the most vulnerable locations, yet it is covenanted that Jerusalem will be a city bound firmly together (Ps. 122:3); the city of our appointed feasts, quiet habitation (Is. 33:20) and city to be prayed for (Ps. 122:6). The last point is very important since the city, like the entire nation of Israel, has suffered vicissitudes in the course of her history. Nevertheless, the concept of Jerusalem as the city of God, city of the great king, remains valid; indeed, when the earthly Jerusalem is no more, it is going to be replaced by a heavenly one (Rev. 21: 1-2).

The tribes of the Judean territory were Judah, Benjamin and Simeon, while to their north were Ephraim and West Manasseh, who occupied an equally hilly country, an extension of the Judean Plateau.

Self Assessment Exercise 4

Turn to Ps. 48:1-2 and comment, based on what you’ve learnt about Judah and Jerusalem in this part of the unit.

3.6 Galilee (of the Gentiles)

After Jerusalem, Galilee is perhaps the other most prominent region of the Bible land, especially in the ministry of Jesus Christ (Fig. 5.2):

Jesus went through Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people (Matt. 4:23)

The country of Galilee, geographically, divides into two: Lower and Upper. Immediately to the north of the plain of Ezdraelon and the Valley of Jezreel begins the region of Galilee, which Christians generally associate with the Gospels.

Of the villages of Galilee, all in Lower Galilee and very many of which must have been visited either by Jesus or by his disciples, three came out prominently, namely, *Nazareth, Nain* and *Cana*.

The Jews of the south (Judah) despised the people of Galilee, feeling that no prophet could arise from there (Jn. 1:46; 7:41; 52). Yet it was in Galilee that Jesus chose to teach, rather than in Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism, to which He only paid occasional visits.

The places where Jesus worked were mainly in Lower Galilee, on the shores of Lake Tiberias (Galilee) where the major businesses (fishing and commerce) took place. His teachings, especially parables, reflect the geography of the region. Examples include:

- The merchant in search of fine pearls (Matt. 13:45)
- The man going on a journey (Matt. 25:14)
- The prodigal son (Lk. 15)

Upper Galilee, by contrast, provided a region of escape for Galileans, just as Shephelah or Jeshimmon served the people of Judah and Carmel, in forested Gilead heights, served the Samaritans.

The tribes with their possessions in the Galilee region included Naphtali, Zebulun and Issachar.

Self Assessment Exercise 5

1. Use your Bible to find out at least two events that took place in each of the towns covered by Jesus around L. Galilee, during His early ministry.
2. For Nazareth, increase the number of events to 5.

3.7 Land East of the Jordan Valley

This is the territory given to the tribes of *Gad, Reuben* and *East Manasseh* (Josh. 18:7): the R. Jordan physically separated it from the rest of their brothers. Other “walls” between the two are the *qatara* and

zor. Above all there was a marked difference between the two “peoples,” between, on the one hand the Mediterranean life of the hills and valleys west of the Jordan, where the classic “trinity” of *grain* and *vines* and *olives* grew together, and, on the other hand, the economy of the steppe to the east, which either was predominantly pastoral or else forced the farmer to concentrate mainly upon one crop.

The Bible in Numbers 32:1-5 confirms this description of this land:

The Reubenites and Gadinits, who had very large herds and flocks saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were suitable for livestock. So they came to Moses and Eleazer the priest and to the leaders of the community and said, “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo and Beon – the land the LORD subdued before the people of Israel – are suitable for livestock and your servants have livestock. If we have found favour in your eyes, they said, “let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan (Fig. 5.3)

Also Joshua 18:7:

Gad and Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave them.

At least four distinct ways of life have, in the course of time, emerged in the region, viz: *the Farmer of Bashan*; *the Shepherd of Moab*; *the Trader of Edom* and *the Highlander of Gilead*. We will discuss only two of them, leaving you to find out the situation of the other two.

Bashan is essentially a tableland growing wheat, whose harvests were (and probably still are) the envy of the surrounding people. In NT times, it was one of the great granaries of the Roman Empire, exporting its grain across Galilee to different countries, while in OT its rich pastures were proverbial, with the Psalmist singing: “Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me” (Ps. 22:12). Amos 4:1, also spoke of “the cow of Bashan ... in the mountains of Samaria”, while Ezekiel eulogized: “of rams, of lambs and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan” (39:18). Other OT texts which speak glowingly about the richness and prosperity of Bashan include Isaiah 2:13; Ezekiel 27:5-6; Jeremiah 22:20; 50:19; Micah 7:14; Nahum 1:4 and Zechariah 11:1-2.

To the south of Bashan lay *Gilead*, a mountainous region, hence the epithet “the Highlander of Gilead.” Fed by excellent winter rainfall and

heavy summer dew, its forests were almost as famous as those of Lebanon (Jer. 22:6; Zech. 10:10), while the “balm of Gilead” was proverbial (Jer. 8:22, 46:11), being veritable export to Tyre (Ezek. 27:17) and Egypt (Gen. 37:25). The “vines of Gilead” were also superb. Gilead, therefore, like Bashan, was always a temptation to neighbours, notably Ammon, Syria and Israel. Examples include Kings Saul and Jephthah, (I Sam. 11:1-11; Jud. 11:29-33).

Gilead was also a safe refuge:

- for the family of Saul after his disastrous defeat on the mountains of Gilboa (2 Sam. 2:8)
- David during the Absalom revolt (2 Sam. 17:21-22).
- Mahanaim, in Gilead was also a designated city of refuge in Gad (Josh. 21:38),
- in NT times, at the destruction of Jerusalem, large numbers of refugees fled to parts of Gilead, just as they did in 1948.

Self Assessment Exercise 6

Get hold of a map of the territories assigned to *Gad*, (Fig. 5.3) *Reuben* and *Manasseh*, east of the Jordan River, and locate as many of the towns mentioned above as possible. Also write at least one important thing the Bible says about 2 of the towns.

3.7 The Wilderness and the Dryland

Isaiah 35:1-2 says:

*The wilderness and the dryland shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing*

This is a clear indication of how God sees His creation: dry, perched deserts will not remain so perpetually, but shall be turned into “pools of water” while rich lands may turn wilderness, at His beckon. Besides, both deserts and rich fertile lands serve God’s purpose in their own right: just as the regions already discussed namely: the eastern plateau of Trans-Jordan, the Wadi Hasma south of the Edomite Negb (Negeb) and the wilderness of Zin, served God’s purpose, the surrounding deserts.

The two major divisions of this region are the Eastern Plateau of Trans-Jordan and the Wilderness of Zin.

The **Eastern Plateau of Trans-Jordan** is an extension of Bashan described above, which enters into Biblical history mainly as a threat to

Israel's security, particularly as homes of the **Medianites** or **Bedouin**, who unsuccessfully fought the Israelites under Moses and Gideon (Num. 31:1-12; Jud. 6:1-6; 7:1-25; Is. 9:4; 10:26). These people were brought under Israelite control under David and Solomon (1 Chr. 27:30). In other words they were threats to Israel only when ruled by weak leaders (Ps. 83:6, 9-12).

The **Wilderness of Zin**, on its own part includes all areas south of the modern Gaza – Beersheba road and of a line running from Beersheba to the Dead sea, through Ras ez-Zuweira. It is largely barren, and has to be crossed in any passage from the coast (of Cis-Jordan) to Arabia or the Red sea. The region was connected as much to Palestine as to Egypt, such that Israelite rulers found it difficult to maintain an effective control over it. Moreover, Egypt often allied with Edom and Philistia to menace Israel in the area. Thus, the prophet Amos wrote that when the “Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, (in) Hadad the Edomite,” it was to the protection and help of Egypt that the Edomite turned.

The wilderness of Zin particularly featured very prominently during the Exodus (Fig 5.4). Even though the route therein as well as Sinai cannot be accurately identified today, however, Kadesh, where the Israelites stayed for a long time (Num. 13:26, 20:14, 22), and located in the region of Negeb, is significant for the sending of spies into southern Judea and the Shephelah (Num. 13:22-23). The wilderness also featured prominently in the ministry of Jesus.

The following are two of the important events that took place at Kadesh:

- Israelites were given their first indication that God's promises were to be fulfilled there.
- Israelites were assured at Kadesh that the land God was taking them to was “an exceedingly good land... which flows with milk and honey” (Num. 14:7-8)

Self Assessment Exercise 7

1. Contrast the life in the 6 regions discussed above from life in the Wilderness and Dryland described in this section.
2. Write at least 3 things each you know about deserts generally and the deserts mentioned in the Bible in particular.

3.8 Discussion

It is not very easy to cover the geography of a region as large and complex as Palestine or Holy land in one unit. In fact, I expect that this

unit will take much more of your time than most of the others. My advice is that you find the time, not only to read and study the points included here, but also to study the maps and supplement both from other sources, including those recommended for this unit. Also, if you know any one who has visited the Holy Land (Jerusalem Pilgrim), you can seek audience with him/her, with a view to checking on some the points made here, as well as collect additional information, especially on aspects/areas not mentioned here. In the final analysis, you should convince yourself that the Holy Land is right here on earth, like Nigeria and other countries/places you know, and that although many names have changed since Biblical times, these places are as real now as they were in Biblical history.

5.0 SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

It has been a marathon journey over the territory of Palestine/ Bible land/Holy land. Using the geographical approach, we have described the major regions, including:

The plains of Cis-Jordan, namely:

- The Plain of Asher
- The Coasts of Dor
- The Plain of Sharon
- The Plain of Philistia
- The Shephelah, or foothills of Judea
- The Central Valley – Esdraelon and Jezreel

The hills of Cis-Jordan, namely:

- The hill country of Judah
- The Galilee of the Gentiles

The hills of Trans-Jordan, namely:

- Bashan
- Gilead
- The Wilderness of Zin

In doing this, we have picked the most important regions as far as Biblical history is concerned. Even then, we have not intended to degrade the others left out of the discussion, such as the *Hill Country of Ephraim and Manasseh*, the *Carmel range*, the *Rift Valley region*, etc. In fact, leaving out the Rift Valley is at a high cost, and I will suggest you read this up, particularly on Lake Galilee and its region, the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea and Arabah.

With this we complete the first module, which, it is hoped, has given you enough background information on Geography generally and the Geography of the Bible in particular. We can then go on to specific topics relating to the physical (natural resources) (Module 2) and human (man-made) aspects (Module 3), with emphasis on the light they throw on the Biblical message. The idea is to highlight, using specific examples/illustrations. The one important legacy of the Jewish civilization as represented by Judaism/Bible, namely, that of the *close (inseparable) link between the physical and the spiritual*.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Certificate

1. Assemble the Bible references on this region (both cited here as well as others you can find) and from them comment on the way God sees the plain of Sharon as distinct from the way humans see the place in Biblical times.
2. Write down 3 things each you now know about (a) the land and (b) the people of the Philistines, which you did not know before.

Diploma

1. Turn to Psalm 48:1-2 and comment based on what you've learnt about Judah and Jerusalem in this part of the unit.
2. Use your Bible to find out at least two events that took place in each of the towns covered by Jesus around L. Galilee, during His early ministry.
3. Contrast the life in the 6 regions discussed above from life in the wilderness and dryland described in this section.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Baly, D. 1957, *Geography of the Bible*, Part Two: Regional

Dockery, D.S. 1992, *Holman Bible Handbook*, Part II

Stott, J., 1984, *Understanding the Bible*. (*op. cit.*)

The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible, pp 9-13

MODULE 2 THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF BIBLE LAND

INTRODUCTION

In this module, you will be introduced, as I wrote in the conclusion to module 1, to the close links between the physical, as represented, on the one hand natural objects, materials, events and features of the earth generally, and on the other hand the Bible land in particular, and spiritual truth as contained in the Holy Bible in general. The message that runs through the module, as also that of module 3, on the human aspect, is that to God, there is no real boundary between the physical and spiritual; to Him, the things found on earth (His creation essentially, are replicas of things in heaven; to Him, to understand mundane things is also to understand deep spiritual truth.

The examples used are:

- a) The land and landscapes
- b) The waters and water bodies
- c) The trees and shrubs
- d) The animals and birds,
- e) The elements, climates, seasons, etc.

The main textbook is *Nature in the Bible: A Commentary on God's Revelation in His Creation*, written by your tutor, and copies of which can be accessed through some libraries, including those of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminaries (at Ogbomoso and Kaduna) and Baptist Colleges of Theology throughout the country. In case you need copies of your own, you can contact me or visit bookshops in Ibadan and Ogbomoso.

- Unit 1 The land and landscape of Israel/Bible land
- Unit 2 The waters and water bodies of Israel/Bible land
- Unit 3 The trees, shrubs and grasses of Israel/Bible land
- Unit 4 The animals and birds of Israel/Bible land
- Unit 5 The elements, climates and seasons of Israel/Bible land

UNIT 1 THE LAND AND LANDSCAPES OF ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Israel, the holy land of the Bible
 - 3.2 The figurative express as the land and landscapes of Israel
 - 3.2.1 Introduction
 - 3.2.2 A good and spacious land
 - 3.2.3 Land flowing with milk and honey
 - 3.2.4 Land of briers and thorns
 - 3.2.5 Land that devours its inhabitants
 - 3.3 The hills and mountains of Israel/Bibleland
 - 3.4 Rivers and river valleys of Israel/Bibleland
 - 3.5 Rocks and stones and other (Earth Materials) of Israel/Bibleland
 - 3.5.1 Rock and Stone Defined
 - 3.5.2 Rock and Stone in the Bible
 - 3.6 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

To start off this module and unit, I consider it appropriate to quote, once more from our main source, namely, A. Faniran's *Nature in the Bible*, p2:

That the Bible... is written from the background of the Jewish (Israeli) land and tradition cannot be disputed or contradicted... (with the very) close links between, on the one hand, the plants and the landscapes, and, on the other hand, the religious rites and worships contained in the Bible

This has also been confirmed by many authors, particularly people with first-hand personal knowledge, quoted by your tutor in the same source mentioned above, namely, Hareuveni (1980:6):

The book's...main purpose is to show how the land of Israel became an inseparable part of the very essence of Jewish people and to explain the significance of this relationship to all who accept the Bible as part of their cultural heritage (p. 2).

This is also what I intend to do in this module, beginning with this unit on the land and landscapes of Israel/Bible land.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Accordingly, the objectives of this unit will include presenting various aspects of the land and landscapes of the Bible land, including the concepts of Israel as:

- i. The Holy Land
- ii. Land flowing with milk and honey
- iii. Land of briers and thorns
- iv. Land that devours its inhabitants, etc.

The idea is to show the depth of knowledge possessed by the Author of the Bible (God) about the land and landscapes of Israel, which knowledge, if appreciated, will help students of the Bible to understand the book and its divinely-inspired message.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Israel, the Holy land of the Bible

As shown above, the area that constitutes present-day Israel forms only a small part of the original Israeli Kingdom, especially at the time of kings David and Solomon (Fig. 6.1), when it extended to the region of R. Euphrates among other places. Prior to that period, Moses described the land promised Abraham and his descendants thus:

Your Southern side will include some of the desert of Zin along the border of Edom. On the east, your southern boundary will start from the end of the Salt Sea, cross south of Scorpion Pass, continue on to Zin and go to Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and over to Azmon, where it will turn, join the Wadi of Egypt and End at the Sea. Your western boundary will be the coast of the Great Sea...

For your northern boundary, run a line from the Great Sea to Mount Hor...to Lebo Hamath. Then...go to Zedad, continue to Ziphram and end at Hazar Enan...For your eastern boundary, run a line from Hazar Enan to Shepham... to Riblah on the east side of Ain and continue along the slopes east of the Sea Kinnereth. Then the boundary will go down along the Jordan and end at the Salt..Sea (Nu. 34:3-12).

The eastern and northern boundaries, of course, extended beyond the above description, as shown by the land eventually occupied east of the Jordan (Nu. 32:1-5) and ruled over by David and Solomon (Fig. 6.1).

Also as shown in (units 4-5) above, the Bible land, sometimes referred to as Palestine, but definitely beyond it to places where the Jews sojourned, is much more expansive. Indeed some people will define it as including all those areas which have come under the influence of the Judaic Scripture, namely, the Judaic, Islamic and Christian world, i.e. places where “God’s people” live. However, the concept of the holy land of the Bible is more restricted, limited to the Promised Land of the Israelites, i.e. Biblical Israel (see below).

The idea of holy land derives from the fact that the land is occupied by God’s people. This is the way your tutor expressed this idea in your textbook.

As the abode of God’s people and consequently that of God Himself, the area and parts thereof connote deep spiritual meanings through which God deals with and speaks to the people (p.4)

God Himself confirms this concept in declaring part of Mt. Sinai (Mt. Horeb) where He encountered Moses, a holy place:

“Do not come any closer”, God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place you are standing is holy ground (Ex. 3.5)

The concept of holy land (sacred earth) is discussed further in unit 15, below.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Locate at least one other place in the Bible, other than those cited above, where the “boundaries” of the Promised Land of Israel are described. Note at least one significant difference.

3.1 The Figurative Descriptions of the Land and Landscapes of Israel

3.1.1 Introduction

Before we go on to discuss the various perspectives of land, it is necessary to attempt some definition/clarification; more so, when we are going to touch on aspects which ordinarily will not be considered relevant. This is especially so of topics such as hills, rivers, rocks, soils, trees, climates, etc.

The dictionary meaning of the word “land” includes:

- Solid part of earth’s surface
- The ground or soil
- An expanse of territory
- A country state or nation
- Property as in landed property;

A Bible concordance gave the following synonyms of the word “land”: country, earth, ground, dry land etc. In the geographical usage, the word “land” may refer to a piece of ground or a part of the earth’s surface, such as a slope element, a facet, a unit, a landform system, a region, a country, a continent or the planet earth. It may also refer to a resource, e.g., land resource, examples of which are:

- Rocks and minerals
- Landforms/landscapes
- Soils
- Plants and animals
- The atmosphere – air, weather, climate, etc.
- The hydrosphere or world of water – oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, ponds, groundwater, etc.

It is in this (geographical) sense that the word land is used in this module.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Look up the meaning of the word, land and landscapes and copy it into your notebook.
2. Consult a Bible concordance for the synonyms of the words land and landscape and write any new words to the above list.

Now back to the figurative descriptions of the land of Israel/Bible land, also referred to as the Promised Land. The Bible contains several epithets, mostly by Moses, of this land, all warning the Israelites about the land they were going. Most of those descriptions are contained in the book of Deuteronomy, namely: a good land; land flowing with milk and honey; land of briars and thorns, land that devours its people, and so on. We discuss some briefly here.

3.1.2 A Good and Spacious Land

When God told Moses that He was about to bring the Israelites out of Egypt into Canaan, He described the land as ‘a good and spacious land’, among others (Ex. 3:8), God also added that the land was ‘the most beautiful of all lands’ (Ez. 20:6, 15). Also when the 12 spies reported to Moses, they confirmed this description from their own experience: ‘The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good ...’ (Nu. 14:6-8). The single cluster of grapes they brought, which was so heavy that it had to be hung on a pole and carried by two men, with some pomegranates and figs (N. 13:23, 24) was a concrete evidence of how good the land is. Then, just before entering the land, after 40 years delay, Moses urged the people to keep God’s commandment in order to stay long in the land:

For the LORD your God is bringing you to a good land – a land with streams and pools of water, with flowing springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees ...; a land where bread will not be scarce any of you will lack nothing ... When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you (Deut. 8:7-10).

3.1.3 Land Flowing with Milk and Honey

Although the word “land” as shown above, has several connotations and meanings, the Bible uses it mostly for a country or the nation of Israel also called the Promised Land. This is the sense we also use it here, with particular reference to the ways the country is described in the Bible, only three of which are discussed here, while others are taken up in other parts of this unit.

The earliest of such descriptions is found in Exodus 3.8, where God says:

So I have come down to rescue them (Israelites) from the hand of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

The commonest understanding of the phrase flowing with milk and honey is that of a rich and fertile land, a land of bounty and prosperity. While these connotations are not precluded, the actual meaning relates to the biology – plants and animals – of the country, i.e. that of a land of vegetation and pastures which provide abundant forage for animals (sheep, cattle, etc.), for which the Israelites were known – reference Goshen in Egypt. The same type of (savannah/parkland) vegetation also produces plenty of honey – hence, the epithet “flowing with milk and honey”. This is how your tutor states it on pp.13-14 of your textbook:

The idea of land flowing with milk derives... from the abundant vegetation and pasture, which provides abundant forage for animals, which produce abundance of milk... the same... extends to honey. Just as milk is produced in the body of an animal (a mammal) to nourish its young, honey is produced in the body of a bee to supply the hive with food for the next generation... Honey is usually most plentiful in the same area where livestock produces the most milk, as the same pastures, rich in greens for goats and sheep, also sustain the bees in the “manufacture” of honey.

Nevertheless, the idea of bounty and prosperity is also relevant/applicable especially, in the sense that it is God who blesses the land, based on His favour and will, just as He did Goshen in Egypt and Gerar valley for Isaac in Philistine (Gen.26: 12-15).

3.1.4 Land Of Briers And Thorns

If the epithet of land flowing with milk and honey refers to God’s benevolence, that of briers and thorns turns the opposite side of the coin – that of a just God. The two ideas are brought close together by Prophet Isaiah thus:

In that day, a man will keep alive a young cow and two goats...of the abundance of the milk they give...All who remain in the land will eat curds and honey...in every place where there were thousands of vines...there will be only

briers and thorns. Men will go there with bow and arrows, for the land will be covered with briers and thorns...the milk once cultivated...you will no longer be there for fear of briers and thorns... (Is.7: 21-15)

As noted above, and is generally well known till date, war, accompanied by large scale physical destruction and wholesale devastation, especially in Biblical times, is part of the history of Israel (unit 14). One such situation is described by Isaiah in the above passage, where, among other things, it was prophesied that:

- *A war from the north (by the Assyrians) would come, destroy all the vineyards and other cultivated areas of Israel.*
- *This will turn the countryside into largely uninhabited thorn bush and briers*
- *Honey and milk (v. 22) will come from the wild vegetation/non-agricultural land*

Hosea 2:14 and Micah 3:12, are examples of the kindness of God in providing for His people even after a destructive war brought about by the sin of the people. In other words, whether in peace or war, the faithfulness of God does not cease to His people: God's people will feed when others lack (Ps. 23:1; 34:10).

3.2.5 A Land That Devours Its Inhabitants

This description is contained in the report of 10 of the 12 spies Moses sent from Kadesh Barnea to learn what the Promised Land looked like (Nu. 13:17-20). This report goes as follows:

We went into the land...and it does flow with milk and honey! ... but the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw the descendants of the Anak there ... We can't attack these people; they are stronger than we are ... The land devours those living in it.

The report is accurate in many ways, namely:

- The country was inhabited by warlike people, with superior weapons, including iron chariots.
- The forests harboured carnivorous animals (see, 2Kgs. 2:24; 12:25; Jer. 4:7; see also references to Samson's, David's, Benaiah's, etc., encounters with wild animals, especially bears and lions).
- Giants or "men of gigantic size" were among the inhabitants, in the presence of whom the Israelites looked "like grasshoppers" (Nu. 13:33).

The report, however, lacked faith in God, who had shown beyond doubt to the Israelites that He was more than all those problems. Yes, there will be problems and tribulations, but Christians are not to fear there is a God who has overcome the world (Jn. 16:33) and has given humans dominion over His creation (Gen. 1:27).

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Search through the books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy and list at least two other epithets or ways the land and landscape of the Promised Land has been described.
2. Attempt a simple explanation of each, based on what you have learnt in units 4-6 of this course, among others.

3.3 The Hills and Mountains of Israel/Bible Land

Hills and mountains occupy very prominent positions in the Bible for many reasons:

- The Israelites' experience during the Exodus, especially on Mts. Sinai (Horeb) Hor, Pisgah, Nebo
- The Israelites initially settled in the hill country
- Hills and mountains have natural attractions and so feature in many cultures
- Next to vegetation, hills and mountains constitute conspicuous features of the land
- Hills and mountains are readily associated with worship and religious rites (e.g Mt. Sinai (Horeb) Mt. of Transfiguration). Hills featured prominently in the Ministry of Jesus (Mt. 5:1) (see unit 12).

Perhaps, on account of the above, God, in many places warned His people against worshipping hills and mountains (idolatry) as many other peoples around them did and still do.

In particular, before entering the Promised Land, God educated His people on what to expect, especially because of the wide contrasts with the plains and deltaic land of Goshen, where they had lived for at least four generations.

The great mountains and hills of Israel/Bible land are shown in Table 6.1, with their Bible references, from where you will obtain information about each of them. You are advised to note in particular, the Abarim, Bethel, Calvary, Ebal, Gerazim, Gilboa, Gilead, Hor, Horeb (Sinai), Moriah, Nebo, Olives, Pisgah and Zion, and the significant events associated with each.

Table 6.1: The Great Mountains and Hills of the Bible

Name	Text(s)
Abarim	Nu. 27:12, 33:48; Deut. 32:49
Ararat	Gen. 8:4; Jer. 51:27
Bashan	Ps. 68:15
Bethel	1 Sam. 13:2
Carmel	1Kg. 18:19; 2Kg. 2:25
Calvary	Mk. 15:22; Lk. 23:33
Ebal	Deut. 15:22; Deut. 27:4, 13
Ephraim	Jo. 17:15; Jd. 2:9; 1Kg. 12:25
Gerizim	Deut. 11:29; 27:12; Jos 8:33
Gilboa	1 Sam. 28:4; 31:11; 2 Sam. 1:6, 21
Gilead	Gen. 31:21, 25; Jg. 7:3
Hermon	Deut. 3:8; Js. 11:17; 13:11; Ps. 29:6
Hor	Nu. 20:22, 21:4, 53:37
Horeb	Ex. 3:1, 17:6; Deut. 4:10; 1 Kg. 8:9; Mal. 4:4
Lebanon	Deut. 3:25; Jg. 3:3; 1 Kg. 5:14
Misar	Ps. 42:6
Moriah	Gen. 22:2; 2 Sam. 24:18
Nebo	Deut. 32: 49; 34:1
Olives or Olivet	2 Sam. 15:30, 24:3; Mk. 11:5; 13:3, Lk. 19:29; 21:37; 22:39; Ac. 1:12
Pisgah	Nu. 21:20, 23:14; Deut. 3:27; Js. 12:3
Seir	Gen. 14:6; Deut. 1:2
Sinai	Ex. 16:1, 19:11, 24:16; 31:18; Ac. 7:38
Tabor	Jg. 4:6; Ps. 89:12; Hos. 5:1
Zion/Sion	2 Sam. 5:7; 1 Kg. 8:1; Ps. 87:2; Rom. 11:26 Rev. 14:1

Self Assessment Exercise 4

1. For any five of the above hills and mountains, state at least 2 important events that occurred there in Biblical times. Use the Bible for this if necessary.

3.4 Rivers and River Valleys of Israel/Bible Land

Apart from hills and mountains, rivers and river valleys constitute other prominent features of landscapes generally and Israel/Bible land in particular.

Like hills and mountains, the Israelites were warned, before their arrival in the Promised Land, of the existence of “hills and valleys” (Deut. 11:11). However, while hills and mountains are prominent in the life and events in the Bible, the rivers and river valleys are not so emphasized. This does not mean, however, that they are less important. The warning by God that the Promised Land is one of “river and river valleys”, like that of “hills and mountains” is to stress the marked difference from Goshen, where life centred on the Nile (irrigation), as against “rains of heaven” in the Promised Land (Deut. 11:12).

A source described the difference between Goshen and Canaan (Promised Land) thus:

On entering the land of Israel, they were faced with the problems of adaptation to very different conditions and farming methods. The Israelites found themselves in a land of hills and valleys, with streams, springs, underground water... The agricultural and irrigation techniques so effective in the Nile Valley could not be applied here ... Entrance into the Promised Land exposed the Israelites to phenomena of nature which they had not known in Egypt or in the Sinai Desert. Water, the source of all life, was totally dependent on rainfall brought by wind-driven clouds (quoted by Faniran 2001:34).

The implication is that the strange phenomena of rivers and river valleys, like hills and mountains, were capable of being misconstrued, more so when they had alternative explanations of deities among the native peoples they were replacing. God, therefore, warned against such misconception, leading to idolatry, especially in Exodus 20:3-4:

Worship no other god but me. Do not make for yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth. do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the LORD your God and I tolerate no rivals.

The rivers mentioned in the Bible are not restricted to those in Israel, but all of them have bearing on and implication for the Bible message; all affected in one way or another the life and history of the Israelite nation in Biblical times. Table 6.2 shows the most commonly mentioned rivers in the Bible, with the Nile, Euphrates and Jordan standing out among them, in terms, not only of their frequency of mention, but mainly on account of their significance in the life of the peoples. For example:

Table 6.2: Some rivers of Israel/Bible land

River	Text(s)
Euphrates	Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Deut. 1:7; Jos. 1:4; 1 Chr. 5:9; 2 Sam. 8:3; 1 Chr. 18:3, etc.
Nile	Gen. 46:33-34; Ex. 2:1-10; 7:14; 19:35, etc.
Jordan	Jos. 3:4; 14-15; 2Kgs. 5; Lk. 4:27
Merom Brook	Jos. 11:5;7
Mizpah	Jn. 11:18
Arnon	Jos. 12:1
Megiddo & Kishorn	Jud. 4:5
Kabbok	Jos. 12:2
Lebanon	Jos. 12:7
Enshemesh	Jos. 14:7
Hinnon	Jos. 14:8
Rephaim	Jos. 14:8
Nephroah	Jos. 14:9
Jezreel	Jos. 17:18
Iphtahel	Jos. 19:14
Elah	1 Jam. 17:2, 19; 21:9

- The Euphrates, the only one referred to in the Bible as “The River”
 - provided a route of communication between east and west
 - marked the boundary of the land promised to the “seed of Abraham” (Gen. 15:18)
 - had the city of Babylon on its banks
 - was mentioned in connection with:
 - + Jacob’s return journey from Median (Gen. 31:21)
 - + Balaam (Nu. 23:24)
 - + David’s military campaigns (2 Sam. 8:3)
 - + Solomon’s kingdom (2 Kgs. 4:21)
 - + the defeat of the Syrian army
 - + the destructive power of God (Is. 11:15)
 - + the punishment of Israel (Is. 7:20; 8:7)
 - + judgement of God (Is. 27:12; Jer. 2:18)
 - + restoration of Israel (Mic. 7:12; Zech. 9:10)

- Similarly the Nile is the “sacred” river of Egypt mentioned most frequently in connection with the ‘Israelites’ sojourn in Egypt and Goshen, where the Israelites lived for over 400 years and multiplied in number several fold was in the Nile Delta region (Fig. 5.4). the most significant mention was in connection with the events that led to the deliverance of the Israelites and their successful exodus to the Promised Land (Ex. 7:14; 9:35)
- Finally, River Jordan is the most important river in Palestine, being the largest river and with the associated lakes and seas the most important source of water in Palestine.
 - Three significant events took place there, viz:
 - + Passage of the Israelites, under Joshua, on dry land to enter the Promised Land. Prophets Elijah and Elisha also crossed the Jordan dry land, just as the spies on Jericho.
 - + The healing of Naaman (2 Kgs. 5; Lk 4:27)
 - + Baptism of Jesus by John (Matt. 3:14-17)

A valley is any hollow low-lying land bounded by higher ground and usually traversed by a river; a stretch of land between two hills or mountains, often with a river flowing through it.

Unlike river, water, land, hill, mountain, etc., the word “valley” occurs less frequently in the Bible. Nevertheless, significant events occurred in valleys as well in the Bible, e.g.

- Sites for the prescription for the expiation of crime or concerning unresolved murders (Deut. 21:1-9)
- Sites of both successful battles (with God’s help, 1 Kgs. 20:23-34) as well as disastrous ones (without His help, 2 Chr. 25:5-13)
- The valley of dry bones (Ez. 37:1-14)

Self Assessment Exercise 5

1. Locate five rivers and river valleys on any maps in units 5 and 6.
2. write at least two important events that occurred on any two important rivers mentioned in this section.

3.5 Rocks and Stones (Earth Materials) of Israel/Bible Land

3.5.1 Rock and stone defined

The word “rock” is used in many senses, namely, for:

- any naturally formed aggregate or mass of mineral matter, whether coherent or not
- an appreciable part of the earth's surface
- a mineral ore, e.g. copper
- a prominent landform such as peak, cliff, promontory
- a massive area of a country, or to parts thereof
- spectacular land forms, e.g. "Rock of Gibraltar"
- firm and coherent or consolidated substances that cannot be normally excavated by manual methods alone

The last two connotations are closer to both the popular (common man) usage and the Biblical one. The Biblical usage also does not discriminate between "rock" (massive" and "stone", broken, cut, piece of rock, as in cornerstone.

3.5.2 Rock and Stone in The Bible

In addition to the literal (physical, natural) connotation, indeed more than it, the Biblical usage of the words "rock" and "stone" connotes fundamental spiritual truth. Even in the literal usage, the miraculous is implied as in the "water – from rock" incident (Ex. 17:1-7; Nu. 20:8-13)

The peak of the spiritual connotation is the analogy of Jesus Christ as

- Rock or stone
- Our salvation (Deut. 32:15);
- The stone which builders rejected that has become the cornerstone/capstone, etc. (Ps. 118:22; 1 Pe. 2:4-8)
- the only foundation that has been laid for our faith in God (1 Cor. 3:17)
- the foundation for a stable life in God (Is. 28:16; Mt. 7:24)

At the level of humans, Jesus Christ called Simon, one of His disciples, Peter or *Cephas*, meaning stone or broken/cut rock (Mt. 16:17-19), on account of his confession of Jesus Christ as "the Son of the living God," the Messiah of humankind.

As instrument in the hand of its maker, God used rock and stone for various purposes:

- The Ten Commandments were engraved in rock or stone tablets by God Himself (Je. 19:24; Ex. 34:1) which have since replaced with fleshly tablets of the heart (2 Cor. 3:3)
- Jesus' body was buried in a grave "hewn out in the rock" (Mk. 15:46)

- Huge stone was placed at the grave entrance to “protect” the body from being stolen, but the stone was rolled away at the point of resurrection (Mt. 28:2; Lk. 24:2)
- David killed Goliath with only one of the five smooth stones he picked up from a river bed (1 Sam. 17:40)
- Stones were used as Joseph’s pillow when he encountered God for the first time, following which He was never the same (Gen. 28:10-22)
- Several rock memorials were established in Israel (Jos. 4:3; 24:27; 1 Sam. 7:12)
- Stones from heaven (hailstone) were used as weapon against the Amorite army (Jos. 10:11), among others

As an instrument in the hand of humans; rocks and stones were used in the Bible positively to build up and negatively to break down; both of which served God’s purpose, e.g.:

- for killing law breakers – adulteress and blasphemers (Nu. 15:35; Mt. 23:37; Ac. 7:59; 14:19), to demonstrate God’s justice or
- Satan as stones of darkness and shadow of death (Jb. 28:3), to show God’s protective power (Ps. 91:12)

Other earth materials that have been treated in similar manner to rocks and stones are *soils* (He. 6:7-8; Mt. 13:1-15; Mk. 4:1-12; Lk. 8:4-10); *dust* (Gen. 2:7; 3:14, 14; 13:16; Nu. 23:10; Ex. 8:16; Is. 25:12; 29:4; *clay* (RO. 9:9-21; Dan. 2:31-44; Jn. 9:1-7); *ornaments* (precious stones) and *salt*.

Conclusively, the position of the Bible is very clear on earth materials. Whereas Jesus Christ, the creator of all things, is the original rock foundation, in the scientific sense the **igneous rock** base (earth’s crust, mantle and core) – Christians are the rocks/blocks, and stones, soil, dust, clay, ornaments, etc. In other words, the Bible envisions the fragmentary rock particles – stones, soil, etc., as parts and parcels of the unweathered rock foundation of the earth planet (the earth’s crust, just as His followers (the church) are parts of Himself, of His body (1 Cor. 12:27:30).

Self Assessment Exercise 6

1. List four of the different types of earth materials discussed in this section with at least two Bible references on each type.
2. Discuss the analogy drawn from the relationship between rock (foundation) and stones (broken/cut rock) vis-à-vis the way Jesus (*Petra*) and Peter (*Petros*).

3.6 Discussion

The material summarized in this unit covers a wide range of topics. In the textbook it is covered in about five chapters. Here we have brought them together, based on the fact that they all belong to the *lithosphere*, as distinct from the *hydrosphere*, *biosphere* (plants and animals) and *atmosphere*, to be treated in units 7, 8, 9 and 10, respectively. Moreover, it will be necessary for you to appreciate the link between the different topics, namely, that:

- landforms, including river valley, hill and mountains are built/developed in rocks of various types.
- Rocks and stones are broken fragments of weathered part base geology, from which soils form.
- Soil provide food and other support for plants
- Plants are food for animals and humans

It is also necessary for you to appreciate that landscapes involve more than rocks but also vegetation (land flowing with milk and honey; land of briars and thorns) as well as wild animals (land that devours its inhabitants).

4.0 CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from this unit, like that of the others in the other parts of the course, is that the Bible presents an holistic view of God's creation, with Him as the core, the centre, the *nadir*, to which everything else is tied and which everything else revolve. While the landscapes in particular and nature in general reflect the almightiness of God in Jesus Christ, the various earth materials are linked to their source in the way the church is linked to Jesus Christ its founder and embodiment. They all belong to one body, namely the Body of Christ Jesus.

5.0 SUMMARY

As noted above, I have covered a wide range of topics/issues in this unit, in relation to our study area, namely, Israel/Bible lands, including:

- the epithets/figurative expressions of the land and landscapes
- the hills and mountains
- the rivers and river valleys
- the rocks, stones and other earth materials

I have brought them together as parts and parcels of the lithospheric portion of the planet earth

More importantly, I have discussed the various topics from the Biblical perspective, i.e. from the way God perceives them and also expects humans, as part of His creation, to see them, in order to be His image and exercise likeness, and in which form they (humans) can satisfactorily fulfil the dominion role given to them at creation.

My prayer is that you will see and understand this divine message about the earth, which God creates, and live by it the rest of your life.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Certificate

1. Use a Bible text to define/describe the boundary of the Promised Land, preferably including the Canaanite nations to be incorporated into it.
2. Give at least two synonyms of the word “land” as from the Bible.

Diploma

1. With reference to the geography of Israel, explain the epithet: “a land flowing with milk and honey”.
2. Discuss the importance of mountains in worship in Biblical times.
3. Consider the appropriateness of the analogy between, on the one hand, rock and rock fragments, and, on the other hand, Jesus and His followers.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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The Holy Bible – Different versions

UNIT 2 THE WATER AND WATER BODIES OF ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Water in nature
 - 3.2 Water in the Bible
 - 3.3 Water bodies of Israel/Bible land
 - 3.4 Jesus Christ the source of the Water of Life/Living Water
 - 3.5 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Water features prominently in parts of the previous discussions, especially under rivers and river valleys in unit 6. This is because valleys, to be so properly called, must have resulted from fluvial (water erosion) action at the earth's surface.

However, while rivers and river valleys are essentially landform/landscape, or better still geomorphological, features, water is a substance (hydrosphere), like air (atmosphere) or rock and minerals (lithosphere). Although some authorities classify water with earth materials, the Bible does not do anything of the sort. Rather, it distinguishes between the channel and the water in it.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Accordingly, the assignments before us in this unit relates to:

- i. describing and discussing the position of water both in nature and in the Bible

- ii. describing the water bodies of Israel/Bible land, including water in rivers, seas, lakes and wells
- iii. exploring the spiritual connotation of water generally and specific water bodies in particular

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Water in Nature

Water is definitely one of the major recurring topics of human history, especially its lack (drought) or superabundance (flood).

In recent years, emphasis has been on the sustainable development of water resources, both at global and regional (including national) levels, especially fresh or potable water for domestic and agricultural use. Water resources have, therefore, been featuring prominently in the development programmes of nations and nation groups alike, especially at the drainage basin level.

Water is a unique substance with several valuable attributes, namely:

- *exists in the three states of matter* – liquid, solid, vapour/gas
- *high level of stability* associated with the nature of its hydrogen bonds, and responsible, among other things, for the high heat absorption capacity, or specific heat, of the substance, compared to other substances – solid and gaseous, - thus making it possible for it to support life and regulate the temperature of other substances and that areas close to it.
- *high power of cohesion*, i.e. power to stick together, thus making it conducive to plant, animal and human life.
- *adhere to and wets substances in contact with it*. Termed *capillarity*, in science, this property explains the movement of water and nutrients in soils to feed plant roots, stems and leaves, through the process of *osmosis*.
- *a remarkable solvent*, i.e. dissolves more substances than any other liquid or matter.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Find your previous notes or textbook on integrated science and revise the properties of water as a substance. You may be able to add to the qualities enumerated in this section.

3.2 Water in the Bible

The Bible mentions mostly fresh water resources, especially those on surface (seas and rivers) or near the land surface (wells). The deep aquifers of today were unknown in Biblical times.

Most if not all the properties of water are exemplified in the way the word “water” is used in the Bible. This is the way your tutor stated in your main textbook:

It is as if the writers of the Bible were (water) scientists, which they really were ... taught by the inspiration of God, the source and author of all knowledge, science and otherwise (2 Tim. 3:16; Jam 1:5). They were shown the details and intricacies of God's wisdom as represented by the nature of water as a component of God's creation. They were aware that God is the creator of water with its properties and for specific purposes – physical, spiritual, psychological, social, economic and so on (pp 44-45).

More specifically the word “water” is used in the Bible in connection with:

- the creation story (Gen. 1:1; 9-13; 20-23; 26-28; 2:6, 10)
- Noah's flood (Gen. 6:9-8: 19)
- fight against God's enemies, e.g. Sisera's army (Jos. 5:21) and the Egyptian army (Ex. 15:8)
- the demonstration of being completely subject to God e.g.:
 - the Red Sea during Exodus (Gen. 14:8)
 - R. Jordan, on the occasion of the Israelites entering the Promised Land (Jos. 3-4), and in the ministry of Prophets Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:8) and Elisha (2 Kgs. 2:14)
 - R. Euphrates (Jos. 24:2)
 - Galilean Sea walk by Jesus (Mt. 14:22-32)
- Healing, e.g.
 - Naaman (2 Kgs. 5)
 - Man born blind (Jn. 9:6-7)

Like rock and related materials, water is used of God to achieve His purpose. Other more specific divine roles of water are contained in the next section.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. List four different places in the Bible God used water to demonstrate his power in different ways.

3.3 Water Bodies in Israel/Bible Land

The water and water bodies of Israel/Bible land, as found in the Bible belong to 3 categories:

- those in lakes and seas
- those in rivers
- well water

There are four lakes/seas – Mediterranean or Great Sea, Dead Sea, Sea of Galilee (Chimereth) and L. Hula (Semechonistis).

The rivers and associated phenomena have already been discussed in unit 6

Wells played very important roles , mainly on account of scarcity of surface water:

- as memorials of great events and peoples
- as rendezvous or meeting points
 - in connection with Isaac's marriage
 - the scene of the strange Samaritan woman and Jesus

The three water sources or categories have one thing in common in the Bible: they affected the lives of the people in their vicinities in various ways, namely:

- R. Jordan's water, as observed earlier, was made famous by at least 2 events:
 - the healing of Naaman, the Syrian captain (2Kg. 5:14)
 - the baptism of John, especially that of Jesus Christ (Mt. 3:1-12).

In the two cases ordinary (natural) water was turned into (a) a physical drug and (b) a soul cleansing (spiritual) substance respectively. The baptism case, in particular, has since assumed greater/wider dimensions, especially in the church, where it serves the purpose of:

- remission of sins
 - full membership of the church of God, Body of Christ
 - entrance into the celestial kingdom
 - doorway to personal sanctification by the reception of the Holy Spirit
- Also known as the Salt Sea, *the Dead Sea* marks the southern end of the Great Jordan River and, unlike the Sea of Galilee, has no outlet. It also lay in a typical desert location with intense evaporation and consequent over concentration of mineral salts. The water was described as bitter and its shores made famous (memorable) as

scenes of God's judgement or vengeance, e.g. of the cities of Sodom, Gomorah, Adamah, Zebiom and Zoar or Bela (Gen. 19). The *Dead Sea Scrolls* found their in 1947 and subsequently have popularized the site (see Theodore Heline, 1980, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Essenian Forerunners of Christ*).

- The Sea of Galilee is located in a wetter and richer area than the Dead Sea; and had, in Biblical (NT) times, such flourishing towns as Capernaum, Bethsaida, Gergesa, etc. (Fig 5.2). The Sea of Galilee region is particularly important in the Ministry of Jesus, e.g. in connection with:
 - the calming of storm (Mt. 8:26)
 - the calling of Simon (Peter), Andrew, James and John (Mt. 4:18-22)
 - Jesus and Peter walking on storming water (Mt. 14:22-37)
 - healing of multitude of people (Mk. 3:10)
 - teaching with parables (Mk. 4:12)
 - the miraculous fish catch (Lk. 5:6-11)
 - appearance to the disciples after the resurrection (Jn. 21:7-14)
- The wells also served God's purpose in several ways:
 - God spoke to Hagar at the "Well of the Living God who sees me" (Gen. 16:15)
 - Hagar and her son Ishmael were saved from instant death by thirst by water from another well (Gen. 21:19)
 - The well where Abraham's servant met Isaac's wife, Rebecca (Gen. 24:11-22)
 - The well where Moses met Jethro's people who later became Moses' father in law (Ex. 2:15) and counselor/adviser (Ex. 18)
- Perhaps the most memorable of the wells mentioned in the Bible was *Jacob's well*. Still in existence today, it was the location of Jesus' very rare "Press Conference" or "Crusade", with the Samaritan woman of questionable character the strange, unexpected audience (see above; Jn. 4)

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Giver at least two examples (with references) of each of the 3 categories of water bodies of Israel/bible land
2. Describe the spiritual significance of any one of the categories of water bodies.
3. With particular reference to *Jacob's Well*, expatiate he roles played by wells in the life of Biblical Israel.

3.4 Jesus Christ the Source of the Water of Life/Living Water

In addition to the well-known uses of water indicated by the Bible, e.g.:

- drinking (Gen. 21:14; Ex. 15:25)
- cleansing/healing, etc. (Lev. 6:27; 2Kgs. 5; Mt. 3)

water serves much more important purpose in the Bible, especially in the symbolic/figurative sense of the concept of living water/water of life, and its links with Jesus Christ. Two books of the Bible, among others – John and Revelation – made this point very clearly.

- In John 4:10, we have:

*Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you **living water** (emphasis added).*

- And in John 4:13, we again have:

*Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a **spring of water, welling up to eternal life** (emphasis added).*

- Revelation 22:17 has:

*And the spirit and the Bride say, “Come”. Everyone who hears this must also say, “Come”. And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the **water of life** without cost (emphasis added).*

- Other references to this concept include Ez. 47:1; Zec. 14:8; Jn. 7:37-38; Rev. 22:1-2
- This meaning or analogy is also extended to water - related phenomena at the earth's surface, viz:
 - brook (Ps. 110:7)
 - well (Is. 12:3)
 - fountain (Ps. 36:9; Pro. 13:14; Jer. 2:13)

The analogy is expressed in the way Jesus Christ, more than physical water sustains both physical and spiritual life of His people. As your tutor stated it on pp. 51-52 of your textbook:

Water is important in sustaining the physical earth, Jesus Christ is much more than that. He sustains both the physical

and the spiritual life. He lasts longer than the physical water, so that when all earthly water is dried up, He will continue to flow. Indeed, the waters of Israel to God are much more than just the physical... Whether in brook, pond, lake, stream, sea, well, fountain or river, the waters in the Bible point to Jesus, the source of life and without whom we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5)

Self Assessment Exercise 4

1. Use a Bible concordance to obtain more references to Jesus as the source of a sustaining life
2. Read Ezekiel 47:1-12 and comment on what you understand by the idea of “the river from the Temple”.
3. Read Rev. 22:1-6 and explain what you understand by “the River of Life” (NIV).

3.5 Discussion

The following are possible discussion/meditations/points/topics which will assist you to better comprehend the message of this unit:

- The unique (physical) properties of natural water
- The miracles connected with water in the Bible, e.g. Nile, Red Sea, Rivers, Lakes, Seas, etc.
- The analogy of Jesus as the Water of Life or Source of Living Water.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Water is crucial in both the physical and the spiritual life of God’s people. This unit has cast light on the much neglected spiritual significance, for the scientist, without leaving out the physical component, for the theologian with limited scientific background.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit completes/complements the natural (mineral – based) substances began in unit 6. As mentioned at the beginning of the unit, some scientists classify water alongside rocks as earth materials, and with it it shares many attributes. Nevertheless, we have identified and provided the basis for separate treatment of water and water bodies by stressing:

- Water in nature
- Water in the Bible

- Water Bodies in Israel/Bible land
- Jesus Christ as the Source of the Water of Life/Living Water

In all these, emphasis is placed on the spiritual aspect to have the topic well within the entire programme of Christian Theology. This is done by laying greater emphasis on the Biblical than the scientific aspect of the topic.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Certificate/Diploma

1. Find your previous notes or textbook on integrated science and list the physical properties of water, paying attention to properties not included in this unit.
2. With reference to Jacob's Well, examine the roles of wells in Biblical Israel.
3. Comment on the concept of Jesus as Living Water/Water of Life.

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The Holy Bible – several versions

UNIT 3 THE TREES, SHRUBS AND GRASSES OF ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 Trees and shrubs in nature
 - 3.3 Trees and shrubs of Israel/Bibleland
 - 3.3.1 Introduction
 - 3.3.2 Trees in the Garden of Eden
 - 3.3.3 The tamarisk tree
 - 3.3.4 The Rotean and the salt plant
 - 3.3.5 The Sneh (burning bush)
 - 3.3.6 The caper
 - 3.3.7 The Yetarim (Hebrew Yitran)
 - 3.3.8 The Olive, fig, grape and atad
 - 3.3.9 Olives and sycomores
 - 3.4 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

So far, in this module, I have been discussing essentially lifeless in non-organic or living substances of the earth's surface and near surface. In Module 2 Unit 1, I discussed the land and landscapes, including rocks and mineral of various types, all being part of the *lithosphere*. In unit 2, I treated water or the *hydrospheric* component, leaving us with two spheres, namely, the *biosphere*, or the world of plants and animals and the *atmosphere* or air and the celestial space. While the *biosphere* contains the living component, including humans, the *atmosphere*, like the *lithosphere* and *hydrosphere*, is essentially lifeless, except in microscopic forms. In this unit, I will take on the plant component of the biosphere while unit 9 will deal with the animal component, minus humans. The last unit in this module will be on the *atmosphere* and the outer space or celestial space.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit will follow a pattern similar to that of unit 7, i.e.: discuss, in succession:

- i. Discuss the place of plants (trees, shrubs and grasses) in nature
- ii. Identify the trees planted in the Garden of Eden
- iii. Discuss the typical trees, shrubs, grasses, fruits, seeds and flowers of Israel (Bible land)

Analyse the more figurative/spiritual meaning and uses of the various examples.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introduction

As noted above, trees, shrubs and grasses, with landforms (hills, mountains, plains and valleys) form the major components of the landscape of an area, Israel/Bible land inclusive. Therefore, it is not surprising that they occupy a very crucial place and play very significant roles in passing the Biblical message across to humans.

Chamber's Encyclopedia (1969:787), has this to say about the flora of present – day Israel:

The Flora, owing to the variety of climate, is remarkably rich. In the northern hills, tracts of maguis survive from the ancient forests; the commonest growth is evergreen oak, but many other bushes, such as hawthorn, terrebinth, buckthorn and storax, are found. The contrast is marked between the arid appearance of the mountains during the greater part of the year and their brilliant colouring during the brief spring, which they are carpeted with anemones, poppies, tulips and asphoitel. The banks of R. Jordan, lined with thick growth of poplar, tamarisk and oleander, contrast with the arid plain on either side, where the saline soil supports only such plants as saltwort. Only steppe and desert plants can survive in the Negev; e.g. the prickly pear (Sabra). Around the Dead Sea grow such tropical shrubs as the apple of Sodom and the Indian mallow (p. 92)

The above description essentially reflects human influence after several millennia of occupation and destruction, rather than the natural/original vegetation. Fortunately, however, as in the cases of settlements and wells, the Bible has proved to be a most reliable 'museum', for the trees and shrubs, especially, of the area. The Bible is, therefore, a veritable

living evidence (mirror) of what humans have done to nature generally and vegetation in particular in Israel/Bible land.

More than this, the Bible is the only source of information on the very close links between God and His creation, detectable from the special symbolic use of words, with special reference to trees and shrubs, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, God's message to humans. Haveureni (1969: 14-15) is quoted on p. 93 of your textbook as follows:

... a major reason... for involvement with nature was the fact that the landscapes of Israel and its phenomena of nature have been deeply intertwined with the entire field of Jewish tradition throughout all generations ... they have always raised in the imagination of particular aspect of individual or national life, whether as metaphor, parable, or symbol, whether in the Pentateuch, in the words of the prophets, or in the oral law, or in aggada.

Giving the dozens of plants (trees, shrubs and grasses) encountered in the Bible, each of which is significant in its own right, for the divine message conveyed, only a few examples can be included here. Interested readers are encouraged to consult the references as well as other sources, including publications of the Neot Kedumin Organization on *The Biblical Landscape Reserve in Israel*. In the mean time, I review for you in the next section, as it is my practice, the roles of plants in nature generally, as a prelude to entering the spiritual realm of the Bible.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Give one reason why the Bible is a reliable 'museum' for the trees and shrubs of Israel/Bible land
2. Give one reason for studying the trees and shrubs of Biblical Israel

3.2 Trees and Shrubs in Nature

Trees and shrubs are not only among the largest plants, they also constitute the ultimate in the vegetation of places, i.e. *climax vegetation*. Some trees grow higher than 30 - floor sky scrappers and to 1000 years. Consequently, many people see trees as if they live forever.

The use of trees and shrubs are many, viz:

- shade houses for generations
- tree buds, flowers, fruits, etc., tell the seasons of the year

- provide food and other supports for humans, including wood, latex, resin and tannic acid, among others
- conserve nature if properly managed, used
- objects of worship (detested by God)

All these and more are also found in the Bible, the great gift/heritage of God to humans. God has also used trees, shrubs, grasses, etc., in special ways to communicate with His people, a few examples of which are contained in the rest of this unit.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Enumerate as many uses of trees as possible, as found in nature
2. Use a Bible concordance or dictionary to assemble as many trees, shrubs, grasses, fruits, seed and flowers as possible, in preparation for the next section of this unit. (Your textbook, if you have access to it, contains in an appendix, an example of such inventory which you can consult. The appendix is also useful for the other units in this module).

3.2 Trees and Shrubs in Israel/bible Land

3.3.1 Introduction

As noted above, it is impossible only not to exhaust but also to include all the important examples of trees and shrubs in a work like this. However, the examples included will be sufficient to drive out point home on the ways “the landscapes (trees and shrubs) of Israel and its phenomena of nature have been deeply intertwined with the entire field of Jewish tradition” (Haveureni, 1969:14), notably the Bible.

An indication of the great number of the trees and shrubs of Israel is given in the index to Haveureni book, which contains over 100 items, varying from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the rock. The following trees (and shrubs) are discussed in some detail, in what follows:

- Tree of Life and Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil
- The tamarisk tree
- The Rotean/salt bush
- The caper
- The sneh
- The yetarim
- The olive, fig, grape and atad

- The sycomore
- The cedar
- The palm
- The vine

3.3.2 Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

The Bible mentions these trees of the Garden of Eden in connection with the fall of man and his ultimate redemption.

According to Genesis 3, Eve and Adam tasted the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and so lost their eternity: they sinned and received the consequent sentence of death (Gen. 3:19). They were also prevented from tasting the Tree of Life by their physical expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:22-24)

The implications of the “Fall”, i.e. eating the forbidden fruit, are many, beyond physical death. Among these are:

- *Tree worship.* This practice has remained rampant, including among the Israelites, who were given specific laws against it (Ex. 20:3-4; Deut. 5:7-10). They (the Israelites) are known to have “carved wooden idols in the imitation of their other neighbours, just as many pagans worship and otherwise deify especially the large everlasting trees” (Faniran, 2001:98)
- The popularity of the pagan practice of tree worship among the Israelites is reflected by the quantum of its condemnation by prophet after prophet (see Is. 44:13:17).

By contrast, the attitude of Abraham to trees seems to go back to that of the Tree of Life, when he planted a *tamarisk tree* at Beersheba and then “called upon the name of the LORD, the eternal God” (Gen. 21:33). The tamarisk tree, as will be shown later, is a shade tree that protects both people and the land.

The name “Tree of Life” fits the popular description, whether of the unknown Garden of Eden example, or its contemporary equivalents in different countries, e.g.:

- The *Arborvitae* found in USA and China and described as:
 - a hardy, evergreen tree
 - with sweet odor
 - noted for its durability
 - grow to >60m
 - wood used for boats, poles, shingles, siding, ornamental, etc.
- The oil palm in the humid tropical regions, with myriads of uses.

The Biblical connotation of the Tree of Life signifies *eternal life*. God intended humans to live forever like the “eternal” or “everlasting tree,” which life sin has cut short. This tree has since been “replanted” as Jesus Christ, such that any one who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (Jn. 3:16). Romans 5:12¹⁹ put it this way:

... as by one sin entered into the world and death by sin... so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

The idea of Jesus being the Living water/water of life, discussed earlier is again apposite here (Ez. 47:1-12; Jn. 4:1-4; 6:35-40; 48-51, 58; 7:33-38).

3.3.3 The Tamarisk Tree (Hebrew Ethel)

This tree is mentioned in connection with Abraham (see above) and with Samuel and Saul (1 Sam 22:6). Its choice by Abraham has been traced to its major characteristics of:

- its ability to provide shade, of great advantage in the hot dry lands of Beersheba
- its ability to hold or bind (desert) sand together, another great asset.
- its ability to withstand heat and long dry spells by sending its root deep down to find water underground.

Your textbook, on p. 101, summed up the importance of the tamarisk tree thus:

The place of the tamarisk tree ... is, therefore, unique and shows the extent of the botanical (ecological) knowledge available to Abraham that back in history ... God taught (inspired) Abraham what he needed to know about his new abode in Beersheba, as well as about the plants that will profit both the land and the people most.

The spiritual significance of this lies in seeking and readiness to learn from God, the source of all knowledge, understanding and wisdom (1 Cor. 12:4-11).

3.3.4 The White Broom (Rotem) and the Salt Plant

This is another prominent plant (a bush or shrub) again in the Beersheba area. In Genesis 21:14-15, Hagar (and Ishmael) are reported to have felt sudden change from the cool shade under the tamarisk to the burning expanse of country of the desert environment. They, therefore, sought some protection under the (white broom) bushes.

Many Bible passages aptly describe this bush in Israel:

- In Palm 120:3-4, a slanderous, deceitful or false tongue is likened among others to the “burning coals of the broom tree” (also called *rotem embers*). This is borne out of the experience that:
 - *rotem* embers, although extinguished on the outside, still continues to burn inside, beneath the ashes, long after other embers have died out.
 - *rotem* is commonly used as kindling in cooking stoves, including its roots, trunk and branches
 - trade in *rotem* was banned by law
- thus signifying or clearly showing the disastrous consequences of slander, deceit and falsity in human affairs and, worse still, in spiritual matters. Its effects last and last until, if unchecked, it destroys the fabric of the society.
- Elsewhere, God warns against the evil use of the tongue (Ps. 34:13; Ps. 57:4; James 3:5-14), while its wholesome use is likened to a “tree of life” (Prov. 15:4); an instrument to confess and praise the Lord (Is. 45:23; Ro. 14:11).
- In Job 30:1, 4, the younger generations who were ridiculing Job were likened to salt-plant leaves and *rotem* roots. In the case of the *rotem*, the picture presented contrasts the aristocratic Job in his hey days with his impoverished state and target of scorn by nomads gathering desert plants for food, thus spotlighting/stressing the extent of Job’s psychological, apart from physical torture/pains.
- In 1Kg. 19:3-8, Prophet Elijah at Beersheba, sat under a broom tree and prayed that he might die (v. 14). He, however, at the same time felt so comfortable that he felt asleep (v. 5). He was also fed twice by an angel with bread (cake) “baked over hot coals” (v.6) or embers, which sustained him for “forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, ‘the mountain of God’ (v. 8)

Overall, the overwhelming spiritual imagery presented of this plant in the Bible seems to be that of fire, the symbol of God’s:

- presence and Glory (Ex. 3:2; 13:21-22)
- holiness (Deut. 4:26; Heb. 12:29)
- protection (2Kgs. 6:17; Zech. 2:5)
- judgement (Is. 60:15-16; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2)

Culturally, rotem is used for the 24-hour burning for Sabbath, and to keep water and dishes, etc., warm, without kindling new fire.

3.3.5 The Sneh (Burning bush)

The story of the burning yet unburnt bush is contained in Exodus 3:1-5. Unlike the other plants discussed in this unit, no specific name is given this plant in the Bible, thus giving room for speculations. There is no need for speculation here, but rather to stick to the word “bush”, from the Hebrew *Sneh*.

There is justification, however, for inferring the presence of God at the scene, more so when He spoke from inside the flames (Ex. 3:5), showing that there is no place God cannot be present, including a burning bush. (In any case, one of the signs of the Holy Spirit is fire, as it happened on the day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:4).

The non-specification of the name of the bush may be understood in the same light that God did not specify the precise location of Moses’s death place/burial ground – to guide against idolatry – turning the bush into a god.

3.3.6 The Caper

This is another plant that is not mentioned specifically in the Bible, but inferred from the incident described in Numbers 15: 32-36, where a man was gathering kindling on the Sabbath day during the Exodus, an offence punished by stoning to death (see also Num. 27:1-7, where the daughters of the slain man laid claim to and got right to their father’s land). The analogy between the life-giving role of caper plant and the way the descendants of the killed man was rehabilitated (given life through their father’s property) is quite apt.

The caper is a native wild and field plant of Israel that provides sustenance for several people throughout the year. It is a durable and valuable economic plant whose leaves, buds, flowers, branched, fruits, etc., are very useful: it is acclaimed to be useful to both the shepherd and the farmer, just as it appears on the table of both the peasant and the king – a “tree of life” *per excellence*.

3.3.7 The Yetarim (Hebrew Yitran)

Called *Samson’s Rope* in most Bible translations, only the Hebrew Bible adopts the name Yetarim or Yitran (latin *Thymelia Hirsuba*).

It is a desert plant in many dry beds of the Negev as well as on the coarse sand-hills along the Mediterranean coast – quite some distance

from the foothills of the Judean mountains where Samson lived (Jud. 13:25).

The essence/significance of this distance is seen in Samson prescribing freshly picked and not re-wetted, market purchased material, thus ensuring that the Philistines were punished severely by:

- walking the long distance to and from the source in one day
- gathering huge quantities of the material
- working them clear of twigs in preparation for plaiting
- plaiting them to specification

all before the strand dried out; all also called for experience and expertise.

The Philistines took the assignment seriously; we can, therefore, imagine the frustration, agony, disappointment and determination each time Samson snapped the seven ropes with minimum effort. The purpose of God to punish the Philistines was achieved, as long as Samson kept the faith; he fell when he broke God's covenant, but got his strength back following repentance and forgiveness. Then "he killed many more than when he died than when he lived" (Jud. 16:30).

vThe real message from "Samson's rope," episode therefore, relates to:

- the close familiarity of Bible writers to the local environment
- the use of that knowledge to achieve God's purpose

3.3.8 The Olive, Fig, Grape and Atad

These four plants are mentioned in Jotham's "parable of the trees" in Judges 9:1-20, in the "contest" between him and his half brother Abimeleh, king of Shechem, a position his father (Gideon) rejected (Ju. 8:23), just as Othniel, Deborah and Barak.

The parable illustrates most clearly the point being made in this unit and module in particular and in the course generally, namely, the close link between the physical and the spiritual; in this case, between plants and human character/behaviour. The story was told, at the "coronation" by usurpation and intrigue of Abimelech, to describe the type of person Abimelech actually was, as different from the way he presented himself to the people (Ju. 9:7-15)

In the parable:

- trees stand for the people of Israel
- olive for Othniel, the first recorded Judge of Israel

- fig for Deborah, the prophetess/leader (judge) of Israel
- grapevine for Barak, the commander of the Israeli army in the war with Sisera
- atad (thornbush) for Abimelech

The contrast between, on the one hand, the first three plants (trees) and, on the other hand, the fourth tree, of the story brings out the point of the parable. While everybody knows the virtues of the previous three judges – their humility, dedication, commitment, honesty and devotion, among others, the same cannot be said of Abimelech – murderer (killed his 70 brothers, sons of Gideon) pretender and evil person.

He parable was told purposely to challenge the right of Abimelech to kingship, and that was what it eventually achieved.

The atad in Jotham's parable has been traced to a large native tree whose shade and height surpass those of the olive, fig and grapevine. It bears poor-quality fruit, ignites easily and burns for fiercely as to threaten its immediate vicinity (Ju. 9:15).

The following is a brief summary of the interpretations of the story, using the atad as an example:

- The atad is not among the high quality fruits but its fall trunk and widespread foliage provides good shade; thus, after the other godly – fruits bearing trees have rejected kingship, the poor-quality atad cannot be a suitable alternative
- The strength of the atad, its wild nature, thorny branches, among others, adequately represent the strength or military prowess of Abimelech, compared to the other candidates
- The invitation extended by the atad to the other trees to come and live under its shade, although seemingly sensible and logical, is, however, a warning of danger since few, if any, other trees really survive under its shade
- The difficulty of reaching the shade under the untendered atad, as a result of its wild thorny branches, also points to the dangers involved in the choice of Abimelech as king.
- Reference to cedars of Lebanon connote the prospect of wild spread fire from the plains (habitat of the atad) to the mountain regions of the cedar.

Conclusively, Jotham's parable provided warning such that even the most ardent admirers of Abimelech could not help but reconsider their position. The prophesy of consuming fire with which the people of Shechem were quite familiar, also pointed to danger; the result was revolt which resulted in the death of Abimelech:

as he (Abimelech) approached the entrance to set it on fire, a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull ... when the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they went home. God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech had done to his father ... God also made the men of Shechem pay for all their wickedness. The curse of Jotham, son of Jeru-Baal came on them (Ju. 9:52-57).

3.3.9 Olives and Sycomores

The olives and the sycomore are famous plants on the plains and lowlands of Israel

The olive tree has dense billowing grayish foliage with silvery sheen, while the sycomore has dark green leaves, dense branches and canopies through which the sky is virtually invisible.

The olive tree is frequently surrounded by *offshoots*, used for transplanting (*netzer*) and shepherd's staff (*hoter*), which characteristics refer to:

- Jesus as Messiah (*netzer*, in the line Jesse's son, David) and great shepherd (*Hoter*) (see Is. 11:1)
- fruitful Christian families (Ps. 128:3, 4; 144:2)

The sycomore occasionally has *offshoots*, but these are less useful than olive's *sapplings* because they wither quickly. The Israelites, therefore, traditionally liken Saul's dynasty to the sycomore *offshoots* and David's to the olives.

Nevertheless, the sycomore has extraordinary regenerative powers, to which the tribe of Benjamin, in particular, and the Israelite people in general, have been compared (Is. 65:22).

The sycomore tree is "proverbial to the western foothills (Shephelah, 2Chr. 23:18) thus explaining the statement in 1 Kings 10:27 that Solomon made "cedar as plentiful as sycomore – fig trees in the foothills".

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Compile a list of all the trees and shrubs mentioned in this unit
2. Write short notes on two of them, based on the material in this section

3. Compile as comprehensive a list as possible of the plants and shrubs of Israel in Biblical times. Cite the other sources used beside your unit material
4. Narrate in your own words, the “parable of the trees”. Explain the meaning of the parable.
5. Describe and/or explain the concepts of the Tree of Life and of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

3.4 Discussion

People tend to see trees and shrubs as if they live forever! This is because:

- year after year, if uncut, large old trees shade house and city streets
- their buds, flowers and fruits of tree indicate seasons
- they provide fibers food, medicines
- they protect the soil from damage by the sun, rain and wind erosion
- they provide shelter for wildlife
- they make recreation/tourist attraction
- they preserve the balance of gases in the atmosphere which help animals to survive.

In other words, as gift to humans, trees and shrubs are among the most useful natural resources

Trees and shrubs are also part and parcel of the Bible’s natural heritage, having been used copiously to communicate points and ideas as well as divine messages in clear unequivocal terms by stressing the parallels (similes) between the characteristics of trees and those of events and peoples.

Therefore, to obtain clear understanding of events, peoples and ideas contained in the Bible, a good grasp or understanding of the relevant environment generally and the plants (trees and shrubs) in particular is very essential. Your tutor, quoting Hareuveni (1989), put it this way:

without an intimate familiarity with the nature of the land of Israel, students of the Bible face unsurmountable obstacles in understanding the Written Word (p. 120)

4.0 CONCLUSION

As observed above, it is impossible to cover the range of plants mentioned and used in the Bible to convey the divine message. However, from the few that have been discussed in this unit, it should be possible to get further insight into this “mystery” or obscure link

between nature or the physical and the spiritual, further to that already discussed in units 5 and 6 above, (and soon to be discussed in units 9 and 10 below). In the end, it is expected that you will have a better view of the Biblical natural heritage of the magnitude of spiritual message contained in the physical world, in nature.

5.0 SUMMARY

I have tried to describe the plant component of the earth's biosphere, touching on such topics as:

- the place of plants in nature
- the Garden of Eden Experience
- examples of trees and shrubs, the crown or climax vegetation of the earth

In doing this, particular emphasis was placed on the way the natural endowments or characteristics of trees and shrubs, generally and specific trees and shrubs were used in the Bible to convey deeper meanings, including spiritual truths, just as we have done with other physical features and elements treated so far, and will do in the following two units. The examples used included those whose names were given and those whose names were not. In both cases, the divine truth analogy/links have been borne out clearly as much as practicable.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Certificate/Diploma

1. Comment briefly on the statement that the Bible is a veritable 'museum' for the trees and shrubs of Israel/Bible land.
2. Enumerate at least 5 possible uses of trees and shrubs
3. Compile a short/comprehensive list of the trees and shrubs mentioned in this unit.
4. Paraphrase the 'parable of the trees' as told in Judges 9 and give a succinct explanation of the parable

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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The Holy Bible (Different Versions)

UNIT 4 THE ANIMALS AND BIRDS OF ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 Animals in the Bible
 - 3.3 Examples of animals
 - 3.3.1 Introduction
 - 3.3.2 Animals of the land
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 - 3.3.4 Animals of the sea
 - 3.4 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of unit 8 on the topic of the biospheric or living component of the earth; this time the fauna or animals of the land air and the sea of Israel/Bible land.

Just as in case of plants, only a few examples can be included here, sufficient to illustrate our basic goal of relating the natural/physical heritage to the culture, including the religious/spiritual life of the people of Israel/Bible land in particular and the entire humankind in general, especially those who use the Holy Bible, either for purely academic or religious/spiritual source material.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Accordingly, I shall endeavour to provide information to enable you, at the end of the unit, to do the following:

- i. recall the events in the Garden of Eden, especially between animals and Adam
- ii. know the animals mentioned in the Bible
- iii. know the uses of animals in Biblical Israel in particular and religious worship generally
- iv. appreciate the way specific animals are used to communicate divine message, within the context of the Jewish culture

- v. see the divine position on human-animal relationship

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introduction: Animals and Adam

Unlike plants, whose composition has been adversely affected by human interference, most of the animals mentioned in the Bible are still around in Israel/Bible land. Close to 40 are included in the list compiled by your tutor, in the main textbook (pp. 201-202), not counting the fauna of the sea, while the general index to Thompson Chain – Reference Bible (1983) lists 139, out of the over 400 animal species known to exist at the earth's surface. Yet the list continues to grow as more and more species get discovered.

The Bible states categorically that God created animals, like everything else on earth and in the heavens (Gen. 1:20-25), and that Adam gave them their names (Gen. 2:19-20). This makes Adam the first and foremost (greatest) scientist that ever lived.

God expects humans, the descendants of Adam, given dominion over creation (Gen. 1:26), to copy Adam by studying and knowing the animals in particular and the entire creation in general.

I use the Bible in what follows, to illustrate the quality of biological knowledge in Biblical times, which knowledge has been applied to enhance their communication skills.

3.2 Animals in the Bible

The animals in the Bible, like other components of creation, are presented as serving God's purpose in one way or another, mainly to glorify Him. Therefore, God, in the Bible makes provisions for these purposes generally and in the way humans are expected to relate to them in particular.

The following are the most important of such provisions/specifications:

- classification into clean and unclean animals (Lev. 11:2-23, 39-43; Deut. 14:13-21; Ac. 10:11-14)
- specification of animals for sacrifices (Lev. 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15; 17)
- specification of punishment for offences against animals – humane treatment of animals (Nu. 22:27-28; 2 Sam. 8:4; 1 Cor. 18:4)
- demand that humans take care of animals, including their preservation (Gen. 2:15; Ex., 23:5; Deut. 22:6. Lk. 14:5)

There is overwhelming evidence in the Bible that animals are precious to God, including the very lowly ones, and while some scientists (biologists) have caught this vision, many Christians appear to be oblivious of this fact, even after reading the Bible over and over. It is to be expected that you, after reading this unit, will catch the vision of God for the proper care of the animal world. The current programme, especially at the global (World Bank) level on *biodiversity* is definitely a step in the right direction, which God's people should endeavour to join and even lead.

Your book, on p. 136, concluded this section of the book with the following words:

Scientists ... as well as some other religions have caught this vision by not only preaching but also acting to preserve nature generally and biodiversity in particular, many Christians appear still oblivious of this dispensation of God. Traditional African religion/culture ... pay attention to the preservation of nature ... This is close to the real intention of God in making man have dominion over ... creation. He is expected not only to use but also to guard or take proper care of God's creation, in the case of animals, treat them humanely.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Show 2 ways in which the animal world glorify God
2. Cite 2 important provisions God made in the Bible for the protection of the animal world. Cite Bible text(s) in each case

3.3 Examples of Animals

3.3.1 Introduction

As noted above, the number of animal species already discovered and named runs into hundreds, and the number keeps increasing. At the time of writing this particular unit, precisely on Tuesday 14th February, 2006, two new marine animals were reported on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to have been discovered in the mid - Pacific Ocean.

The animals of the earth are here discussed under the three headings of *land animals*, *sea animals* and *birds* or *air animals*, ranging in size from the amoeba to the monstrous seal, as well as in the value attached to them by humans.

However, in our discussion, the examples in each case are not arranged in any particular order or based on any particular set of criteria, except: but they are arranged in some form of alphabetical order.

3.3.2 Animals of the Land

In order to cover a sufficiently wide area, I will discuss these animals in groups, e.g. insects, etc., with examples of each set. All the examples are those mentioned in the Bible.

Ants and insects are among the smallest (especially ants), most delicate and lowly animals mentioned in the Bible. Yet, especially the ant, they are also among the most clever animals in the world (Prov. 6:6-7; 30:25). The *bee* is also shown to act corporately like ants, whether when preparing for the rainy day (*honey*) or in *defence* (Deut. 1:44-45; Ps. 118:12; Is. 7:8). Other examples of insects mentioned in the Bible include *grasshopper*, *locust*, *beatle* and *moth*.

The Bear, Dog, Fox, Wolf, Leopard and Lion are wild, carnivorous animals, mentioned especially in connection with the danger they pose to the people, within the concept of “the land that devours its people,” discussed above (unit 6)

The Palestinian bear occurs invariably, in the Bible together with lion, wild animals which attack and kill people, except the anointed of God such as Samson (Jud. 14:6) and David (1 Sam. 17:34). The bear also features prominently in the visions of both Daniel and Apostle John, where it represents one of the earthly kingdoms that will rise after the Babylonian empire but which, being evil, will not last (Dan. 7:56).

The dog is generally regarded as a useful animal, especially in guarding flocks. However, in the Bible, its appearance is more in the negative, being generally held in aversion in Biblical Israel as a half-wild, greedy creature, often acting as a scavenger (1 Kgs. 14:11, 22:38; Ps. 59:6; Lk. 16:21; Phil. 3:2).

The fox and wolf belong to same family, used of God, in the Bible, to punish the enemies of His people (Ju. 15:3-5) and disobedient members of His family. People are also shown in the Bible to act like fox and wolf, usually in the negative sense. Thus, Benjamin was described by his father as a *vicious wolf* (Gen. 49:27), a reference to/prophesy of what his descendants would do to their enemies while occupying their portion of the Promised Land.

Leopard and lion also belong to the group of carnivorous animals of the cat family (like the wolf). The lion is the largest, bravest and strongest

of the group and so is associated with royalty (Gen. 49:8-12). The two animals are, however, mentioned together in several places in the Bible (Song 4:8; Is. 11:6-8; Dan. 7:3-6; Jer. 5:6; Hos. 13:7)

The donkey, also called ass or beast of burden, was definitely the most useful animal for transportation in Biblical Israel (Gen. 22:3; Nu. 22:28; Ju. 5:10; 10:4; 1Sam. 9:; Mat. 21:2) and about which God made specific regulations for its proper use, e.g:

- it should not be used with the ox for ploughing (Deut. 22:10)
- it should not be maltreated – beaten unnecessarily (Nu. 22:32-33)
- it is a special instrument of God, used:
 - for Jesus' triumphant entry to Jerusalem, to die for the sins of humankind (Zec. 9:9; Mt. 21:1-11; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:28-40; Jn. 12:12-19)
 - to carry Abraham to Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22)

Generally, the donkey, according to the Bible is a holy animal that must be treated humanely.

Goat, Ram, Lamb and Sheep are all domesticated or farm animals, unlike most of those discussed above. They are all widely used for sacrifice in Biblical times, in which connection they are commonly mentioned in the Bible. We treat the goat as an example of these animals.

- the *goat* produces quality milk; its hair is used to make the curtains of the tabernacle; its skin is used for water container and its flesh used as meat
- as a sacrificial animal, goats are used as *sin offering* (Lev. 4:24), as well as for general purposes (Ju. 13:9), the *scapegoat* sacrifice being the most spectacular (Lev. 16:8, 22).
- the NT is, however, less generous with the goat, following its loss of value after the ultimate sacrifice of the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of the sin of the world (Hab. 9:12).
- consequently, goats come out in the NT as representing the wicked, cursed, unrepented sinners, while sheep represent the righteous (Mt. 25:31-46)
- the wisdom of the NT about the true nature of goats, compared to sheep has informed such contemporary applications as:
 - “behaving like sheep”, meaning someone who is easy to teach and influence positively, i.e. the mark of a Christian or good citizen.

- “separating the sheep from the goat” when distinguishing good from evil people.

The Horse, in contrast to the goat, sheep, ram, etc., in the Bible points to war, especially since the time of Solomon (1Kg. 10:28, 2Kg. 1:16; 9:25) in violation of the divine injunction to the contrary:

The king is not to have a large number of horses for his army, and is not to send people to Egypt to buy horses (Deut. 17:16)

In spite of the strength of the horse and the weakness (and stupidity) of the donkey (see above), the Bible presents the horse in deemer light than the donkey, warning persistently of the dangers of trusting in the horse for power and safety (Ps. 20:7-8; 33:17; Prov. 21:31; Is. 30:16-17; 31:1; Mic. 5:1; Ja. 3:3)

Consequently, the horses and chariots of the Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians, etc., were no match for the lowly Israeli foot soldiers, when God was on the latter's side (Ex. 15:1; 2Kg.6:8-7).

The Pig, Swine and the Boar, are another set of animals with volumes of lesson for the Bible student, especially the pig, with several negative connotations, based on observed characteristics, including being greedy, rapacious, dirty and unpleasant. Thus, people who live in dirt and/or believe in disorderly way are called pigs, while obstinate and stubborn people are called pig-headed.

- The picture of the pig as presented in the Bible is akin to the above one i.e. that of the society at large. *It is that of* a horrible disgusting and unclean animal:
 - whose flesh was forbidden as food (Lev. 11:7)
 - a fair woman without direction (Prov. 11:22)
 - trampling pearls underfoot (Mt. 7:6)
 - backslider caught in the plot of a false teacher (2Pe. 2:20-22)
- God, however, used a pig/swine farm to breath sense into the prodigal son (Lk 15: 17-18)

The Snake/Serpent/Viper/Cobra and Scorpion are all reptiles, among which we shall only discuss the snake, also called serpent, viper or Lucifer (Satan, Gen.3). The Bible also talks of the fiery, bronze, brazen serpent which was hung by Moses on God's instruction on a pole, to save the Israelites from deadly snake bites.

The commonest point stressed about snakes and scorpions in the Bible is that of poison (see Deut.8:15), whose effect or action is similar to the

havoc wrought by Satan, sin or evil people on humans (Ps.58:4-5; 140:3; Mt.12:34; 23:33)

Snakes and scorpions have also been used of God to punish sin (Nu. 21:6; Is.14:29), thus showing God as having ultimate power over all His creation, including the venomous snakes and scorpions (Mt.16:17-18; Ac. 28:5).

3.3.3 Animals of the Sea

These are discussed together here under “fish and other sea animals”, mainly because, unlike land and air animals, fish and fisheries do not feature much in the Bible. Moreover, no fish and fisheries was specifically mentioned in the Bible.

Perhaps the closest observation recorded in the Bible is the two-part classification into:

- fish that have fins and scales, which are allowed as food, and
- fish without fins and scales, prohibited as food (Lev. 11:9-12)

Another prominent reference to fish and fishing is in connection with the Ministry of Jesus, as contained in the four gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, while the worship of fish is specifically forbidden in Deuteronomy 4:18).

Nevertheless, the Bible is replete with evidence of God’s power over the fish and other marine animals:

- God subjects the fish under human dominion (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:8)
- destroyed all the fish in the Nile as punishment for Egypt for not obeying God’s command to free the Israelites (Ex. 7:21)
- used the belly of a fish as an ‘altar’ for Jonah’s prayer of repentance and as ship to ‘transport’ him to Nineveh (Jon. 1-2).
- Jesus fed thousands of people on two occasions on small fishes and a few loaves (Mt. 14:17; 15:34).
- Jesus used a fish to ‘catch’ a coin from a lake to enable Peter pay the necessary tax (Mt. 17:27)
- the first set of disciples of Jesus were fishermen (Lk. 5:1-11)
- resurrected Jesus met the disciples while fishing (Jn. 21:1-11)

Finally, Jesus used the analogy of the fisherman to drive home the message He has for His followers: they are fishers of men.

3.3.4 Animals (birds) of the Air

- a) Talking about creation the Bible says, about the birds of the air:

Then God commanded ... “let the air be filled with birds ... all kinds of birds ... to increase in number ... (Gen. 1:20-23)

In other words, like the other animals, God made the birds and fowls of the air, treating them in the same way, as follows:

- divided them into two groups of “clean” and “unclean” birds and fowls (Lev. 11:13-20)
- made special provisions for their care (Deut. 22:6; Mt. 6:26; Lk. 12:6).
- Taught them to keep their young “near God’s altar, where they sing praises to Him (Ps. 84:3-4), which song also pleases humans (Ecc. 12:4; Song 2:12)
- b. Like land animals, the Bible mentions a variety of birds, created for various purposes. We discuss some of them, again in groups and some sort of alphabetical order.

The Dove (Turtle dove) and the Pigeon. The dove was first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 8:8-12, when Noah used it to ascertain the end of the flood and the right time to come out of the boat. Here, the dove “heralded” the new dawn, new era, just as it heralded the beginning of Christ’s earthly Ministry of redemption of humankind (Mt. 3:16). It is, therefore, generally identified with peace and reconciliation. Other mentions include:

- in connection with sacrifice and worship, particularly the turtle dove (Gen. 15:9; Lev. 1:14; 5:7; Lk. 2:24).
- as Nazarite offering (Nu. 6:10)
- emblem of purity (Ps. 68:13; Mt. 3:16; 10:16)
- emblem of affection and humility (Ps. 74:19)
- emblem of harmlessness (peace) (Mt. 10:16)
- sign of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 1:32-34)

There is, therefore, no doubt that the dove is an important animal to God, just as the pigeon, with which the dove is usually offered in sacrifice (Gen. 15:9; Lev. 1:14; Nu. 6:10; Lk. 2:24).

The Eagle, Hawk, Kite, Falcon and Vulture, unlike the dove and pigeon, are large birds of prey, noted for speed and, especially the eagle, sharp eyes. The birds, however, are not always distinctly identified and

recognized in the Bible, possibly because the Bible is not so much interested in their names as with the message their God – given features and nature has for humankind.

The Eagle in the Bible is noted for its swiftness (speed) and strength especially its wings, on which it carries its young to very lofty heights. Thus, the first mention was to describe the way God “carried the Israelites, by His outstretched arm from Egypt to the foot of Mt. Sinai” (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11); other mentions are to the same effect (Deut. 32:11) including in the opposite sense of destruction, punishment (Deut. 28:49-50; Jer. 48:40).

The *Ostrich*, *Peacock*, etc., receive relatively scanty mention in the Bible.

- The *ostrich* was presented as a wild cruel animal living in desolate war-ravaged places (Is. 13:21), cruel to its young (Lam. 4:3)
- The *peacock* was imported by Solomon as part of his vanity. Also called stork, the bird is noted for its beauty and strength (Zec. 5:9)
- The *pelican* is another bird appreciated by humans (Ps. 102:6)
- The *quail* fed the Israelites in the desert (Ex. 16:13; Nu. 11:31; Ps. 105:40)
- The *sparrow*, in Jesus’ teaching represents divine provision (Mt. 10:29; Lk. 12:6)
- *Swallows* belong to the group of doves and turtle doves.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Compile a list of animals of the land, sea and air, in tabular form, found in the Bible. Include Bible references where possible.
2. Mention two things, each birds are used for in the Bible (a) in the physical and (b) in the spiritual).
3. Mention two ways God has provided for the care of animals in the Bible. Use real life examples.

3.4 Discussion

Animals form a very important component of the ecosystem of the earth in one very important area: they produce the CO₂ which plants use to fulfil their own role in nature. Plants “breathe in” CO₂ and “breathe out” O₂ which animals need to survive. In other words, without animals, especially humans, plant cannot function as they should, and vice versa.

Animals are particularly important in the affairs of humans in providing various raw materials for human use – milk, meat, leather, etc., particularly as a source of protein for body development – growth. However, by far the most important role of animals is in the area of

sacrifices, especially blood sacrifices. The Bible makes it clear that without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sin (Heb. 9:22) while Christ's blood is the Blood of the Covenant (Mk. 14:24).

It is, therefore, no surprise that, more than plants, God makes elaborate provisions for the care and protection of animals. He also made them "wise and wonderful", beautiful, etc., for His pleasure and will.

4.0 CONCLUSION

At the risk of repetition, I conclude this unit by quoting from your main textbook, p. 157:

Animals ... have been given greater prominence by God, compared to plants. In creation, animals were the first to be accorded the status of life (Gen. 1:21; 24-25), and to be blessed (Gen. 1:22). They were only the only set given names by Adam, on God's order (Gen. 2:19). God also specifically gave the herbs (plants) as food for the animals. Finally animal sacrifice is valued higher than other forms of sacrifices.

This divine order is equally borne out in the place of animals in the ecosystem, where plants and animals are intricately linked in a basic pattern of nature that is often called the web of life. Here many kinds of animals keep alive by eating ... plants, which themselves rely for their food on the body wastes of animals as well as their (animals) ... dead body ...

What is missing in the scientific literature is the fact that the role assigned animals is God ordained, under whom they operate. God uses animals to achieve His purpose, and, in the Bible, uses familiar examples to get His message across to humans.

5.0 SUMMARY

I have successfully surveyed the animal world, based on information about them contained in the Bible. The following are some of the topics covered:

- noted the creation of animals by God, alongside other things in the universe
- inventoried animals mentioned in the Bible, many of which are still very much around in present day Israel/Bible land and elsewhere in the world

- noted the special attention given to animals by God
- given examples of the ways animals are used in the Bible to convey divine truth, within the context of Jewish (Biblical) culture

Perhaps the most important single point of emphasis is, as in the other parts of the course, the nature and characteristics of particular animals that have been used to communicate divine message to humans. Bible authors knew these animals quite closely and so drew valuable lessons from them for the sake of humankind generally and their (humans) spiritual development in particular.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Certificate and Diploma

1. Mention 3 ways animals glorify God
2. Mention and discuss two important provisions God made for animals to survive.
3. Compile a short list, 5 each where available (in tabular form) of land, sea and air animals found in the Bible, cite one Bible reference for each mention.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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The Holy Bible (Different Versions)

UNIT 5 THE ELEMENTS, CLIMATES AND SEASONS OF ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 Atmospheric elements, features and events
 - 3.2.1 Introduction
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 - 3.2.5 Light/darkness
 - 3.3 Weather and climate in the Bible
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 - 3.5 The heavenly bodies and the universe
 - 3.6 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References
- 7.0 Tutor – marked Assignment

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bible states that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). So far I have been discussing the “earth” part, about which you must have learnt a lot, and about which the Bible speaks a lot. The only exception are birds and fowls, which also inhabit part of the heavens, what some people regard as the land or earth part.

Although what is referred to in the bible as “heavens” can be taken to include the entire “outer space” or terrestrial space (the Hebrews as noted earlier actually talk of three heavens, and the Moslems seven), I am here calling attention mainly to what geographers call the *atmosphere* as well as some *heavenly bodies* which the Bible mentions and which are visible to and observed/studied by humans.

The approach to the study will be similar to the previous ones, as shown below.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit will include to provide relevant information on:

- i. the earth's atmosphere and outer space
- ii. the elements, features and events associated with the lower atmosphere
- iii. the elements, features, events and bodies mentioned in the Bible

The goal is to unravel the linkage between the physical knowledge and its spiritual application as found in the Bible.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introduction

The dictionary interpretes “heavens” to mean ‘sky’ (also used in the Bible), or the outer space as seen from the earth, in which the sun, moon and stars are as well as where the saints and even God live, i.e. the space around the earth.

Since our main reference in this course is the Holy Bible, however, we need to explore further, to start with, what constitute the three heavens of the Hebrew/Bible. These are:

- the home of the birds and clouds, partly touched in unit 9, but constituting the major area of interest in this unit. It is also called the *lower atmosphere* or *troposphere*.
- the home of the sun, moon and stars (Ps. 19:11), also partly of interest in this unit
- the home of the angels and departed souls (2 Cor. 12:2), not of interest to the course, except in the sense that it is the area conceived as the final home of the saved souls, the place where Jesus has gone to prepare homes for His followers (Jn. 14:3).

Some Bible translations talk of ‘firmament’, ‘the cloud’ and ‘the stars’, etc., but these words are is not considered appropriate for use here. Rather, we stick to the word ‘heavens’, used for the atmosphere and outer space, and where the elements, patterns, events and bodies that are visible to humans and lavishly mentioned in the Bible are found.

Specifically, I shall discuss the following topics:

- atmospheric elements, features and events
- weather and climate in the Bible
- time, seasons, etc., in the Bible
- the heavenly bodies and the universe.

3.2 Atmospheric Elements, Features and Events in the Bible

3.2.1 Introduction

The *atmosphere*, by definition is the air which surrounds or envelopes the earth. It consists of several layers, each of which has distinct characteristics of temperature, moisture, pressure, weight, etc.

Most of what happens in the upper layers have limited direct bearing on humans; only the lower layer or *troposphere* is vital. This is where the elements and conditions such as heat or temperature, humidity, wind, etc., are just ideal for human existence, just as the earth is the only known planet that supports life as we know it presently. The Bible, in Genesis 1 and 2, tells how God made this ideal living conditions or situation to be so.

It is not easy to count all the elements, features and events of the atmosphere mentioned in the Bible, the most common being air/breath/wind; cloud; light/darkness; moisture/mist/dew; rain/ vapour/storm/hail/hailstorm and rainbow. I describe a few examples for illustrative purposes only.

3.2.2 Air/Breath/Wind

The word 'air' is used in the Bible both literally and idiomatically/symbolically.

- An example of literal (physical) usage is found in Acts 22:23, when 'dust' is said to be thrown into the air in rage by Paul's accusers.
- Examples of idiomatic/symbolic use include:
 - 1 Cor. 9:26, where Paul contrasts his Christian work from that of 'beating the air' or 'running after the wind'
 - In 1 Cor. 14:9, where Paul compares speaking in tongues (without adequate interpretation) with speaking to the air, rather than people

The word 'breath' in the Bible invariably refers to:

- life (Gen. 2:7; Ez. 37:5)
- spirit of God (Ex. 15:10; Ez. 37:5; Rev. 7:1)

Wind (as an expression of its normal meaning as moving air) is used in the Bible mostly figuratively/symbolically to show how God uses the phenomenon to serve His purpose. Examples include:

- in Genesis 8:7, God made a wind to pass over the earth to dry up the flood water

- in Exodus 14:21, God caused the water of the Red Sea “to go back by a strong wind all that night, and made the sea dry land”
- in Jonah 1:4, God sent out a great wind into the sea to cause a great storm on the sea to stop Jonah from going to Tarsus
- the different winds affecting Israel brought different weather conditions/events, according to God’s design:
 - East wind, brought the locusts (9th plague) on the Egyptians; also drought to Israel (Ex. 10:13)
 - West winds, from the Mediterranean sea “picked up the locust and blew them into the Gulf of Suez (Ex. 10:19); quails “on the camp of Israel (Nu. 11:31) and rain to Israel (1 Kg. 18:44-45; Lk. 12:54)
 - South winds bring warm weather, relief (Song 4:16)
 - The North winds bring cold and biting conditions (Jb. 37:9)
- Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kg. 2:1)

3.2.3 Clouds

The word cloud is used in at least three senses in the Bible:

- for a (physical) weather phenomenon associated with or without rain, snow, etc. (Ju. 5:4; Jb. 26:8; Ps. 77:17; Ecc. 11:3)
- a symbol of the presence of God (Holy Spirit) (the most common usage)
- figuratively to describe events that are transient, temporary, light (without weight) etc. e.g. a “rainless cloud” connotes useless unfruitful effort (Prov. 25:14; Is. 19:1; Jd. 12)

Examples of the symbolic usage include:

- pillar of cloud during the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land (Ex. 13:21-22; 14:24; 33:9-10; Nu. 9:15-23; 10-11; 2-34; Deut. 31:15).
- mist of cloud on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:26)
- cloud filling Solomon’s Temple (1 Kg. 8:10-11)
- bright cloud on Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:5)
- Jesus received into the cloud, at His Ascension (Ac. 1:9)
- Jesus’ second coming with a cloud (Rev. 7:7)

There is little doubt that the cloud in the Bible is different from the physical cloud. Rather, it refers more symbolically and figuratively to the power of God, a sign of His presence.

3.2.4 Dew/Fog/Frost, Rain/Rainstorm, Snow, Hail/Hailstorm, etc.

When cloud condenses, it results in one or the other of the above phenomena, depending on the prevailing environmental conditions or situations: because they are all visible, all of them are mentioned in the Bible.

Dew is of great significance in Israel/Palestine from Biblical times, because of the incessant drought conditions during a large part of the year. Its presence is directly linked with:

- the arrival of manna and quails to feed the Israelites in the desert (Ex. 16:13)
- the quiet, gentle, unsung, undramatized, but sure act of the Holy Spirit in blessing His people (Deut. 32:2; Ps. 110:3; 133:3; Prov. 19:2; Song 5:2; Is. 18:4; Hos. 6:4; 13:3; Mic. 5:7)
- bringing life, fertility to the soil (Gen. 27:28),
while its very rare withholding (absence) is shown as evidence of God's wrath (1 Kg. 17:1)

By contrast, *frost* comes out in the Bible mostly in the negative; its occurrence symbolizes God's power in punishing sin (Ps. 147:16)

The *rain/rainstorm* in the Bible is rarely the normal one, but rather the unusual, spectacular type, such as:

- the flood rains at the time of Noah, which lasted 40 days and nights (Gen. 7:12)
- the rain that followed the prayers of Samuel (1 Sam. 12:8) and Elijah (1Kg. 18:4), among others
- the rainstorms, winds, etc. that will not destroy the property of the righteous (Mt. 7:25)
- the bread and manna (blessing) from heavn (Ex. 16:4; Ps. 78:24)

Drought is the antithesis of rain, snow, etc., which the Bible presents largely as an act of God to punish sin. The spiritual emphasis is shown, among others, by the way God provided for His people during such (drought) conditions, including in desert environments, viz:

- during 40 years sojourn in the desert
- occasional/periodic drought spells and famine, e.g.:
 - Isaac in Gerar valley (Gen. 26: 1-25);
 - Jacob's descendants in Egypt (Gen. 41; Ex. 12)
 - purification of bitter water in the desert (Ex. 17:16)

In virtually all cases, God clearly demonstrates His sovereignty over the elements, withholding and releasing rain at His will, not only in the physical sense but also in the spiritual realm. In the physical, as pointed out above, the Bible makes clear that God does not only know about the droughts, but in most cases claims responsibility for them, to bring His erring children back to Him (Am. 4:6-8). Evidence of spiritual drought is contained, among others, in Psalm 63:1; 66:68; Is. 1:30; 41:17.

3.2.5 Light/darkness

The word 'light', as used in the Bible, conveys different meanings. When used as 'lightning', it connotes fear and is linked with the awesome power of God (2 Kg. 22:13-15; Jb. 38:25), to scare and even destroy the enemies of His people (Ex. 9:23; 1 Sam. 7:18). Lightning is also used in the Bible as a sign sent by God, e.g.:

- at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:9; 20:19)
- where the Israelites asked Samuel for a king (1 Sam. 12:18-19)
- heavenly worship revealed to Apostle John on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 10:18)

Darkness in the Bible is used principally to connote divine punishment/judgment for sin, e.g.:

- the tenth plague of Egypt to subdue Pharaoh to his will (Ex. 10:21-23)
- to separate the Israelites from the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Ex. 14:20; Jos. 24:7)
- honoured Christ at crucifixion (Lk. 23:44)

The physical properties (contexts) of both light and darkness are also transferred to the spiritual realm in the Bible. E.g.:

- Jesus is the "light of the world" (Jn. 8:12)
- Christ's followers are "lights of the world" (Mt. 5:14:16), brought out of spiritual darkness (Is. 9:2) and suggesting
- This (spiritual) darkness is not final, there is always light at the end of the tunnel, treasures in darkness.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Compile a list of atmospheric elements mentioned in the Bible, alongside the Biblical sources/references.

4. Read the section on air/breath/wind again and write out two things that are common to each of the elements, based on their Biblical usage.
5. Enumerate the various symbolic uses of the word 'cloud' in the Bible and explain one of them briefly.
6. Enumerate 4 examples of rain in the Bible and describe the effects of one of them.
7. Mention two ways in which drought is used in Bible to punish sin.
8. 'Light and darkness are the same to God'. Comment.

3.3 Weather and Climate in the Bible

The word '*weather*' (i.e. the condition of the atmosphere at a certain place and time, with respect to the presence or absence of sunshine, rain, wind, etc.) is used sparingly in the Bible, while *climate* (the average condition of weather over a long period, usually over 30 years) does not occur at all: both words are brought together here because they are linked scientifically. Aspects of both are contained in the descriptions of the elements above, since the elements are the basic ingredients of both.

Perhaps the most significant mention of 'weather' in the Bible is that where Jesus exposed the limitations of the religious leaders of his days (and perhaps of all time), in understanding divine truth. This is contained, among other places, in Matthew 16:2 –3:

... When, the sun is setting, you say 'we are going to have fine weather', because the sky is the red. And early in the morning you say, 'it is going to rain,' because the sky is red and dark! You predict the weather by looking at the sky but you cannot interpret the signs concerning the times!

In other words, the religious leaders could not relate their knowledge of physical events, especially the weather, to reading the signs and wonders (miracles) being performed by Him, which are pointing to the coming of the kingdom of God into their midst. Jesus is inviting the attention of His people to move from the physical to the spiritual. Jesus is confirming the divine truth that the physical things and events of the earth have deep spiritual implications which His followers must endeavour to unravel/comprehend and utilize.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Define the words 'weather' and 'climate'.
2. Describe the scene in Matthew 16, and comment on the appropriateness of Jesus' statement in verses 2-3.

3.4 Time, Day, Seasons, etc.

Time means duration; a period something occurs or endures. Its significance in life here and in heaven is stressed in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Perhaps the best exposition is Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, with which you are definitely familiar, and an expansion of God's covenant with Noah after the flood:

As long as the world exists, there will be time for planting and for harvest. There will always be cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night (Gen. 8:22)

It is within this same context that God:

- sets as “acceptance time” for seeking His face, His favour (Ps. 32:6; 69:13; 95:7-8; Is. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2).
- determines what is and what is not timely service to Him (Mk. 14:8; 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Tim. 1:18)
- determines what constitutes or makes the “fullness to time” (Dan. 9:28; Mk. 1:15; Gal. 4:4)
- determines the right and wise use of the time (Ps. 9:12; Eccl. 12:1; 1 Cor. 7:29; Col. 4:5)

Time started to be counted, reckoned with the creation of light (first day of creation, Gen. 1:3) and separation into day and night (Gen. 1:4-5); while divisions into second, minute, hour, etc., apparently came with the creation of the sun, moon and stars (Gen. 1:14-19).

All the divisions of time in the Bible have both cultural, including religious/spiritual importance/implications, viz: for example, the Bible uses day and night in various ways:

- *natural day* is from sunrise to sunset
- *natural night* is sunset to sunrise
- *civil day* is from sunset one evening to sunrise of the next; i.e. there is both evening and morning in one civil day (Gen. 1:5)
- *day in OT times was divided into three*
 - morning, till about 10.00 am;
 - heat of day, 10.00 am – about 2.00 pm;
 - cool of the day, 2.00 pm – 6.00 pm
- in NT times, the day was divided into 3 hours segments:
 - *third hour* (6.00 am – 9.00 am)
 - *sixth hour* (9.00 am – 12 noon)
 - *Ninth hour* (12 noon – 3.00pm)

- *twelfth hour* (3.00pm – 6.00pm)
- the *night* was partitioned differently from day in both parts of the Bible, into 3 watches in ancient Israel (OT)
 - *first watch* (till midnight)
 - *middle watch* (midnight till 3.00am)
 - *morning watch* (3.00 am till 6.00 am)

More information is contained on pp. 184 – 187 of your main textbook, where the other divisions – *week, month, year, season*, etc., are discussed. It is important for you to read this up whether in the prescribed source or elsewhere, since it is impossible to include all the relevant information here, which information you will need to comprehend the Biblical usages.

Similarly, John Stott (1984:40-42), describes the seasons and human life/activities in Israel/Bible land, and the ways various personalities and texts in the Bible used them to make divine points clear. Examples include:

- Jesus' parable of building with good and bad foundation (Mt. 7:25-27)
- early and late rains and agriculture (Ps. 65:9 –13)
- Jesus' parable of field white for harvest (Jn. 4:35)
- Autumn and spring rains (Jn. 5:7)

More information on agriculture is contained in unit 14

Day. The following are the ways in which the word 'day' is used in the Bible:

- day of the Lord
- day of the week
- day of visitation'
- day of preparation, etc.

For 'the day of the Lord', we have the following:

- day of judgment, i.e. the evil day of the sinner and joyful day of the righteous, (in OT connotes 'devastation by war; while in NT refers to the Second Coming of Jesus and the Last Judgment)
- day of worship – seventh (Sabbath) and first day of the week

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Give three different connotations of time as used in the Bible.
2. Give three divisions of time as contained in the Bible.
3. Provide four interpretations/connotations of 'the day of the Lord' as found in the Bible.

3.5 The Heavenly Bodies and the Universe

The heavenly bodies of relevance here are those associated with the Jewish second heaven – the home of the *sun*, *moon* and *stars*.

The *sun*, an object of worship by gentiles (Deut. 17:3), was created by God and so, like other created things, is subject to Him and prohibited from being worshipped (Deut. 17. 4-5).

In the hand of its Creator, God, the sun:

- respected Joshua (Jos. 10:12-14) by standing still for a whole day
- turned dark for three hours (12.00 noon – 3.00pm) at the crucifixion of Jesus (Mt. 27:45)
- God's children are 'protected' from its heat (Ps. 121:6)
- its shadow moved back and fro three steps (Is. 38:8)
- overpowered by the divine light at Saul's conversion (Ac. 9:3)

In the earthly realm the sun is a great thing, giving its brightness, awesomeness, pervasiveness, controlling power of natural processes and events, etc., thus Solomon compared :

- its beauty and brightness to that of the divine (Song. 6:10)
- its setting with the darkness that pervades Satan's kingdom or world of the wicked (Am. 8:9);

while God's saving power will rise on believers "like the sun and bring healing like the sun's rays" (Mal. 4:2)

The *moon* and the *sun* are commonly mentioned together in the Bible, but the difference between them is not obscured:

- they were assigned different roles at creation (Gen. 1:16): sun operates during the day and moon during the night
- they brought out different products (Deut. 33:14)
- the sun appears daily while the moon operate monthly cycles
- new and full moon are marked by festivals in Biblical Israel which practice was later condemned (Is. 1:14; Ho. 2:11)
- they both obey the laws of the creator:

- both stood still during the war of the Amorites, at the command of Joshua

The *star* present greater challenges to humans than either the sun or the moon: while we have one of each of the sun and the moon in our heaven, the latter run into billions. Furthermore:

- stars shine, i.e. emit and radiate energy
 - their light does not reach the earth directly but passes through several other “spheres”
 - they are very large bodies
- Nevertheless, all the heavenly bodies were created on the same (fourth) day of creation (Gen. 1:16).

Stars are believed in the Bible to influence people’s fortunes, notably in:

- the story of Joseph (Gen. 37: 1-11)
- the visitors at Jesus’ birth (MT. 2:1-12)
- the fighting against Sisera’s army (Jed. 5:20)
- the song to the joy of the heavenly beings (Jb. 38:7)
- Jesus being referred to as a star
 - *Bright star* (Nu. 24:17)
 - *Morning star* (2 Pe. 1:19; Rev. 22:16)

Stars, with other heavenly bodies join in praise of their maker (PS. 8:3; 19:1). In other words, the heavenly as well as earthly bodies, events, objects and phenomena in earth and heaven are created by God to serve the purposes of glorifying God.

Self Assessment Exercise 4

1. List two characteristics each of the sun, moon and stars
2. Cite two instances in the Bible where the sun and the moon obeyed God’s command.
3. Comment on the Psalmist view as contained in Psalms 8 and 19)

3.6 Discussion

This has been a rather tough unit because the subject matter, even though we live with them, are not so familiar. Only people who have studied geography, physics or integrated science to some level are likely to have come across the topics discussed in this unit.

Yet, as we have tried to show, the Bible is replete with examples of them, such that you need to pay special attention if you are to benefit maximally from reading/studying the Bible.

It is, therefore, essential that you master the material presented and augment it from other sources, including Bible concordances and dictionaries.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In order to appreciate further the message of this unit, it is necessary to touch briefly on the third heaven of the Jews, i.e. God's home as well as the ultimate home of the faithful or the spiritual heaven. This is necessary because of the Christian belief that whatever humans do in and with life here, including in and with the first and second heavens and the earth as well, directly link up or determine their (humans) ultimate fate. This takes us back to the point made several times above, that the boundary, between the physical and the spiritual may be, in fact is, very thin, in some cases non-existent.

It is important, also, to recollect that virtually all the cases of physical objects discussed in this module in particular, and in the entire course generally, have strong links with the spiritual. Therefore, there is great need to think seriously about the "third" heaven.

5.0 SUMMARY

I have covered a wide range of topics, dealing with an area of unknown extent, namely, the atmosphere and outerspace. Among the topics we have discussed are:

- the atmosphere and its constituent elements, features and events
- weather and climate
- time, day, seasons, etc.
- the heavenly bodies and the universe

I have followed the same tradition as above by relying on the Biblical source and linking it with what we know in the scientific community

By and large, there is little conflict between both sources and there needs not to be since the same God inspires both sources of knowledge – the scientific and the revelational (spiritual).

6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Certificate

1. Compile a short list (minimum 10) of the atmospheric elements included in this unit.
2. List at least 3 symbolic uses of the word 'cloud' in the Bible

3. Mention two ways in which drought is used to punish sin in the Bible.
4. State two ways each in which the sun and the moon are different

Diploma

1. Enumerate the various symbolic usages of the word 'cloud' in the Bible and explain one of them.
2. Discuss at least two applications/interpretations of the phrase 'day of the Lord' in the Bible
3. Comment on the Psalmist view of the heavens and heavenly bodies.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Faniran, A. 2001, *Nature in the Bible: A Commentary on God's Revelation in His Creation*. Sacred Earth Ministry Monograph Series 2. MANASC, Ibadan, Chapter 10.

The Holy Bible (Different Versions)

MODULE 3 THE PEOPLE AND SOCIETY (HUMAN GEOGRAPHY) OF ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This is the third and last module of this course, where I shall attempt to wrap up the course by completing the picture of the land of Israel/Bible land, which I started in Module 2. There, (in you will recall module 2), I considered different aspects of the physical geography of the area, including land and landscapes, water and water bodies, trees and shrubs, animals and the elements and bodies of the earth's atmosphere and outer space or heavens. In this module, and to do what I have set out to do, I shall present some aspects of the human geography, of Israel/Bible land including:

- a. The nation(s) and people (s)
- b. Religion and religious life
- c. Home and family life
- d. Work and society

The last unit will address what I consider to be the core message of this course, namely, that of *Sacred – Earth*. The unit will represent a call on Bible users generally and you in particular to the mind of God on His creation generally and a sustainable earth in particular.

The major source for the module is *The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible*, i.e. for units 11 – 14). Mind you, the thrust and focus of this module are different from that of the one presented in module 2. Whereas the latter was written purposely to link Geography and the Bible (Theology) the former is not so focused. The reasons for the gap are many but the most important one is that while your tutor has researched into the physical realm (being a physical geographer), he has not had the opportunity of doing the same thing for human realm, nor has he seen any one else to use. For unit 15, however, you will be returned to the work of your tutor, once again, i.e. to books written by him. Happy reading.

Unit 1	Nations and Peoples of Israel/Bible land
Unit 2	Home and Family Life in Israel/Bible land
Unit 3	Work and Society in Israel/Bible land
Unit 4	Religion and religious worship in Israel/Bible land
Unit 5	A created earth sacred to God

UNIT 1 THE NATIONS AND PEOPLES OF ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 The Beginning of the nations and people of the Bible
 - 3.2.1 Introduction
 - 3.2.2 The setting
 - 3.2.3 The world of the OT
 - 3.3 The legacy of the patriarch, leaders and kings
 - 3.3.1 Introduction
 - 3.3.2 The Patriarchs and the Promised Land
 - 3.3.3 The leaders and judges
 - 3.3.4 The kings
 - 3.4 The Jews in their neighbours territory
 - 3.4.1 Introduction
 - 3.4.2 The Jews and the Assyrians
 - 3.4.3 The Jews and the Babylonians
 - 3.4.4 The Jews and the Persians
 - 3.4.5 The Jews and the Greeks
 - 3.4.6 The Jews and the Romans
 - 3.5 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Go back to units 4 and 5 and read again about the nations of Israel/Palestine and of their neighbours, in preparation for this unit, which deals with similar topics. However, rather than repeat what you have studied in those units, I shall adopt a different strategy that will present you with fresh stock of information on these nations and peoples. In case, however, there is any repetition, count it more as an advantage, a bonus and an opportunity to understand the course better.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of this unit will include:

- i. tracing the beginnings of the peoples of the world according to the Bible
- ii. looking at the legacy of the patriarchs, leaders and kings of Israel
- iii. tracking the impact/legacy of the Jews in the places (countries) where they sojourned and otherwise made contact with, and vice-versa
- iv. drawing some lessons from the background information for subsequent units

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introduction

Israel, in Biblical times, refer to the Jewish people generally and the northern Hebrew kingdom, after the division under king Rehoboam, in particular. Presently, it refers to the Jewish state in Palestine. For this course it translates to the Promised Land/Bible land.

Yet, it is still a very small nation but whose influence, especially in the area of religion, is felt globally. Jewish people (Israelites) are, of course scattered all over the world, especially Europe, North America and Russia, where they spread this influence.

As shown in unit 5, the major ‘natural’ regions of Israel Bible land are:

- the coastal plains
- the Judea – Galilean highlands
- the rift valley
- the Negev – Sinai desert
- the Sinai highlands
- the Trans – Jordanian territory

This is the core of the Bible land from where the influence has spread to all parts of the world.

3.2 The Beginnings of The Nations And Peoples of The Bible

3.2.1 Introduction

The first eleven chapters of Genesis look back to many beginnings, such as:

- creation (Gen. 1-2)
- family (Gen. 2)
- sin (Gen. 3)
- death (murder) (Gen. 5)
- flood (Gen. 7-8)
- covenant (Gen. 9)
- incest (Gen. 10)
- languages (Gen. 11)
- The Israeli/Hebrew people (Gen. 11)

3.2.2 The Setting

The story of humankind begins in the Garden of Eden, placed somewhere in Mesopotamia, the region which became (with Egypt) one of the two centres of civilization. The story, as told in the Bible, shifted west to the present day Palestine, with the story of Abraham, who moved from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan (Gen. 11:31)

There are other stories of the creation, including those of the Assyrians and Babylonians but the Biblical accounts have come to be the most popular and accepted.

3.2.3 The World of the OT

The story of ancient Israel began around 2000 BC (Gen. 11) and continues throughout the OT. The following are highpoints or stages:

- Genesis 11 – 50 cover the period from Abraham to Joseph, from the beginning to the movement of Jacob and his family to Egypt.
- Exodus tells the story of how God rescued the Israelites (descendants of Jacob) from slavery in Egypt, under the leadership of Moses
- The book of Joshua describes the conquest of Canaan (the Promised Land) and its division amongst the family – clans - of Israel
- Judges records the low-point of national life, marked by disobedience to God, invasions by enemy neighbours and heroes sent by God to the rescue, called Judges.

- 1 Samuel heralded the beginning of monarchy, against the plan of God with dire consequences.
- 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles describe the period of kings up to the captivity (722 BC for northern kingdom – Samaria – and 582 for southern kingdom – Judea)

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Cite two major events in each of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges.
2. Compare the Biblical story of creation with any other story you know, e.g. the Yoruba mythology of Ile-Ife.

3.3 The Legacy of the Patriarch, Leaders and Kings

3.3.1 Introduction

The setting of Israel's early history, as shown above, was one of rich and powerful kingdoms and civilizations, such as those of Egypt and Mesopotamia separated by walled cities and smaller kingdoms. It was in this area in Shechem that nomadic Abram settled around 2000BC. The fertile coastal plain and Jordan valley were already settled, and when Lot coveted part of this land (the Jordan Valley), he faced problems. Nevertheless, the early leaders of Israel, called patriarchs, leaders and kings, made their marks.

3.3.2 The Patriarchs and the Promised Land

I use the examples of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph

- Abraham – bought a piece of land from the Hitites to bury his wife Sarah
- Jacob (Israel) – was the father of the 12 children who became the 12 tribes of Israel. Later moved to Egypt to save his family from extinction. By the time he and his family left Canaan, they were still virtually landless.
- Joseph, Jacob's favourite son, after much tribulation rose to high position in Egypt, which position he used to save the then known world from seven years of drought and famine to settle the Israelites in fertile Goshen, where they increased in number and became a strong nation that eventually under Moses and Joshua occupied the Promised Land.

3.3.3 The Leaders/Judges

After over 400 years in Egypt, God chose *Moses* to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. The story is told in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The legacies of Moses include:

- leading his people for about 40 years, through Egypt, the Red Sea, the desert, to the plains of Moab.
- gave the Israelites the commandments, religious ceremonies and rites, including rules and regulations about fasts, festivals, the tabernacle and the temple and its paraphernalia of priests, levites, etc.
- gave land to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and East Manasseh, east of the Jordan
- handed the mantle of power to Joshua, who he mentored throughout the forty years plus journey from Egypt to Moab

Joshua took over leadership of the people at the point of entering the Promised Land, faced with many difficulties, including:

- the River Jordan, in flood (bankfull stage)
- the walled town of Jericho lying at the entry point to the Promised Land
- Canaan, the Promised Land in waiting, was occupied by a large number of independent states, each centred on a number of fortified town with its ruler

The following achievements were recorded by Joshua

- Jericho, a strategic walled town, fell after a remarkable siege: marching round it quietly for six days and seven times on the seventh day ending with a tremendous shout, after which the wall fell (Jos. 6:1-27).
- Took nearby Ai, after an initial set back, as well as other towns and cities, in the south of the Promised Land – Shechem, Makkedaly, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon and Debir; and north – Hazor, etc. – and extended control over much of the land (Jos. 6:13).
- Divided the occupied land among the remaining 9 tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh, making a second portion for this first son of Joseph, because of their large population (Jos. 14:19)
- Set up Tabernacle at Shiloh (Jos. 18)
- Set up six cities of refuge for manslaughter cases (Jos. 20) and 48 cities with their suburbs for the Levites (Jos. 21)

After Joshua, a number of leaders, called judges ruled Israel, including

- Othniel of Judah who defeated Cushan - rishathaim (Ju. 1)
- Ehud of Benjamin killed king Eglon of Moab (Ju. 3:29)
- Shamgar defeated the Philistines (Ju. 3:31)
- Deborah from Ephraim and Barak from Naphtali defeated Jabin and Sisera of Midian (Jn. 4-5)
- Gideon of Manasseh defeated the Midianites and Amalekites (Ju. 6-8)
- Japhthah of Gilead defeated the Ammorites (Ju. 11)
- Samson of Dan fought the Philistines (Ju. 14:16)

The above shows the precarious situation during the period of the Judges, leading to the demand for a king (1 Sam. 8:5-22)

3.3.4 The Kings

The last and greatest of the Judges was Samuel – prophet and kingmaker. He appointed Saul king, under the guidance of God (Ju. 9-10). Other important kings are David, Solomon, after whom the kingdom split into two-northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) kingdom.

Saul had initial successes, winning against the Ammorites (Ju. 11) and Philistines (1 Sam. 13-14), but soon lost out and disowned by God (1 Sam. 15) replaced by David.

David was a huge success:

- As a shepherd boy killed Goliath, the Philistine champion
- United the Israeli kingdom
- Captured Jerusalem and made it capital
- Expanded the Israeli kingdom by driving off old enemies
- Organized the temple and temple worship
- Left a legacy of peace and security for his son, Solomon, including materials to build a temple

Solomon:

- built and dedicated the temple
- ruled over all nations from the R. Euphrates to Philistia and the Egyptian border, the largest empire ever, without fighting a war. His was the largest extension of the Israelite territory or kingdom.
- peace and security in the kingdom gave him time to organize government and administration and overseas trade
- his wisdom was legendary

- repressive governance (heavy taxes) sowed the seed for discontentment which lead to the breakup of the kingdom under his son Rehoboam.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. State 2 important legacies left by each of the following:
 - (a) the patriarchs
 - (b) the leaders/judges
 - (c) the kings
2. Comment on the statement “the man after my heart” said by God of David, in 1 Samuel 13:14)

3.4 The Jews in their Neighbours’ territories

3.4.1 Introduction

Following the reign of Solomon, the centre failed to hold for the kingdom of Israel, especially after the split into two – Israel and Judah. Attacks from neighbouring nations escalated, leading to a series of defeats and captivity. The first of such was the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrians in 722 BC, followed by that of Judah in 582 BC, thus taking Israelites to foreign countries to sojourn for variable lengths of time. Others who ruled the Israelites were the Babylonians (Chaldeans), Persians, Greeks and Romans.

3.4.2 The Jews and the Assyrians

The Israeli nation, as observed above, lay between Egypt and Mesopotamia and so was very vulnerable to aggression, especially under weak leaders and kings. The traditional enemies to start with were Syria, Ammon, Moab, etc., but it was the Assyrian power that finally over ran the Northern kingdom in 722 BC (2 Kg. 17).

A common practice in the Assyrian empower was the taking of hostages. After a major rebellion, large numbers of the population were often deported to other parts of the empire and replaced with strangers from far away. This was what happened to the people of the Northern Kingdom when the Assyrians captured Samaria (2 Kg. 17:6; 18:31,32; 24)

The result is the “pollution” of the Israeli (Jewish) blood, a major cause of the hostility between the two kingdoms, until the time of Jesus (Jn. 4:9). Apart from the separate places of worship (Jn. 4:20), the vast

majority of the settlers, whether the Israelites in Assyria or Israelites in Assyria, adopted foreign gods, mostly the great powers of the universe, rather than the living universal God of the Jews.

Examples of these gods, which were also worshipped by Babylonians, include:

- *Anu*, king of heaven – the chief of the gods
- *Enlil* - Anu's son, ruling at the earth's surface and identified as the king of the gods
- *Enki/Ea* – in charge of fresh water and giver of life
- *Ishtar* – wife of Anu and in charge of war and love
- *Shamash*, the sun-god of justice
- *Adad* – god of rain and storm
- *Ashur* – the national god of Assyria

Besides, they believed in demons, myths, divination, etc., all of which are prohibited for pure Jews/Israelites

The Assyrians also attacked Judah several times, notably during the reign of Hezekiah (2Kg. 18-21:3; 2 Chr. 29- 33:35; Is. 36 – 39). A source quoted Sennacherib, commander of the Assyrian army, of making the following claim:

Forty six of (Hezekiah's) strong towns ... I besieged and conquered and I brought out from them 200, 150 people ... (Hezekiah) I shut up like a bird in a cage in Jerusalem his capital city ... the awful splendour of my lordship overwhelmed him ... he sent 30 talents of gold, 300 talents of silver ... to Nineveh.

Jerusalem and Judah, however, survived, only to be over run by the Babylonians in 582 BC.

Finally, with the Assyrian captivity, things have never been the same again for the Jews, up to the present day. The prophets, virtually all of them, traced the problem of the Jews to idolatry, caused essentially by their contacts with foreign gods, beginning with the original settlers of the Promised Land, and worsened by the powers that ruled them, whether in their territory or outside it in captivity.

3.4.3 The Jews and the Babylonians

The Jews came under the Babylonians influence, when the latter overran the Assyrians, and established the Babylonian (Chaldean) empire that included both the Northern (Israel) and Southern (Judah) kingdoms of

Israel. The conquest occurred under Nebuchadnezzar (605 – 562). The book of Daniel exposes the ‘conflict’ between the God of Israel and the gods of the Babylonians, including the king/emperor himself (Dan. 3), who wavered from idolatry to worship of One God, the God of Israel (Dan. 2: 46 – 47; 3:28 –29; 4:37). The successors of Nebuchadnezzar (Belshazzar and Darius) witnessed similar experiences (Dan. 5 and 6).

Prophet Ezekiel, one of the exiles in Babylon, was used of God to keep in constant touch with the remnants in Judah, apart from keeping the spirit of his co-exiles, the impact of which can be seen in the books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, among others. In other words, in spite of the experience of captivity, the people of Judah, to a large extent kept the worship of the God of Israel intact, under very able and inspired leadership.

Indeed, from all indications, the Babylonian captivity served God’s purpose of taking His people to repentance, as witnessed in the “ministries” of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, among others.

3.4.4 The Jews and the Persians

The Persians made a dramatic entry into the Bible when Cyrus II invaded Babylon in 539BC. As predicted by Prophet Isaiah (Is. 44:28 – 45; 13), Cyrus II caused major policy shifts, by:

- sending all the images of gods to their original homes (temple articles back to Jerusalem)
- allowing Jews to return to Israel (Jerusalem/Judah), taking with them the treasures which belonged to the Jerusalem temple
- ordering the rebuilding of the temple (Ez. 1) and the altar (Ez. 3)

Later, under Artaxerxes, the Jerusalem wall was rebuilt and more exiles continued to return to Israel/Judah (Ne. 1-3)

In short, as prophesied by Jeremiah, the Babylonian captivity was for a limited period of 70 years and a punishment that led the people back to God. Thus, unlike the Assyrian experience, which was total annihilation, the Babylonian experience was short – lived (70 years) after which God Himself intervened by terminating the cruel regime of the Babylonians and replacing it with a more humane one under the Persians, with enlightened governance, aspects of which included:

- division of the empire into provinces, each with its own ruler (satrap) and one of which was Israel/Bible land
- the different peoples were encouraged to keep their own customs and religions (indirect rule)

- introduction of coins, legal system and a lingua franca (Aramaic)

3.4.5 The Jews and the Greeks

The Greeks later replaced the Persian and the Egyptian empires, bringing the Jews under the Greek influence.

Under Alexander the Great, the policy to acculturate, i.e. spread the Greek culture or ideals to all parts of the empire, was established. Aspects of this culture were:

- Greek language, which became, like Aramaic, an international language (The NT was written in Greek, rather than Aramaic, and Hebrew, the language of the OT)
- Greek culture – architecture, philosophy (Paul of Tarsus was strongly influenced by Greek philosophy, which is reflected in his letters), literature, arts, science, etc.

Greek influence was particularly strong in the period between OT and NT, such that it is widely believed that the background of the hellenistic (Greek) culture came to play a vital part of the events of the NT.

The NT often mentions Greeks which may refer to Greek – speaking or non-Jews (Gentiles).

Very little of the events of the NT actually took place in Greece, yet Paul, a strict Jew, wrote in Greek and understood Greek ways of life, e.g. interest in athletics, picturing the Christian life as a race and a boxing match (1Cor. 9:24-27)

The classic meeting of Christians with Greeks took place in Athens, a University town and full of images and fine temples for the various Gods, which Paul condemned outright (Ac. 17:24). Nevertheless, very few Athenians converted, which made Paul to conclude that

... Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:22-24)

3.4.6 The Jews and the Romans

As noted above, the spread of Greek culture and the fact that many Jews were already dispersed in other lands set the scene for the NT But the

final key factor was Roman rule, which unified the ancient world politically, just as hellenism unified it culturally.

The Romans ultimately took control of the former Greek empire in the first century BC, under emperors such as Julius Caesar, Pompey and Octavian, who became the first real ruler of the Roman Empire, adopting the title Augustus' reign – *when the time was ripe*.

The philosophy of the Greeks and the materialism of the Romans soon degenerated into superstition, so that many people, including non-Jews, were searching for more “spiritual” answers to problems, thus attracting non-Jews to the Jewish faith or God fearers. Also because of good roads and peace (*pax Romana*), the good-news of Jesus Christ traveled quickly throughout the Roman Empire, vide the missionary journeys of Paul (Ac. 13 –28).

Although the first set of Roman emperors seemed to respect the feelings of their subjects, they found it difficult to cope with the religion and nationalism of the Jews. This led to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70, a period of real trauma, particularly for the Christians, the latest arrivals.

However, the problem of Christianity came more from the Jews than from the Romans, who were more for justice. Indeed Paul had to appeal to Rome when he suspected he was not going to have justice from his fellow Jews (Ac. 25:10). Rome had provided the peace and freedom for the Apostles to travel and spread the gospel. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Roman empire adopted Christianity as the national religion, calling the empire Christendom.

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Place unit 4 and this unit side by side and cite two areas each where they are similar and different.
2. State one positive and one negative impact each one the fine nations/peoples studied in this unit made on the Jews of the Bible.
3. Which one of the Persians, Greeks and Romans would you consider to have promoted the Jewish culture/religion most? Give two reasons for your answer.

3.5 Discussion

It is not possible to mention and discuss all the nations and peoples that had dealings with the Jews and influenced them and the process of writing the Bible. The Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, Phoenicians,

Elamites, Moabites, Midianites, Edomites, Arabs, Amalekites, Sudanese (Cush), Cretans, Cypriots, among others also interacted with the Jews to varying extents of Biblical periods. This not only due to space but relevance: the selection made here has been made based on the perceived degree of influence. Thus, although Moses, the writer of the first 5 books of the Bible, lived and was trained in Egypt, the bulk of the material contained in those books came during the Exodus, while God prohibited Jews from returning to Egypt. It is also not on record that the Egyptians ruled Israel as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans did, except during the Greek era when part of Palestine was ruled from Alexandria, king of Egypt. The other nations and peoples would also seem to have played rather peripheral roles.

Another point to remark here is the quasi – historical approach. this is deliberate because history is a prominent part of geography – in fact specialization called *historical geography*.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Perhaps the only conclusion to draw from this lesson is that the Jewish culture, and especially Jewish Bible, much as one can claim to the contrary, have benefited from the influence of all the nations and peoples that surround them and/or among whom they lived or lived in their territory over the years. The more of these influences you can decipher, the better for you in the proper understanding of this unit in particular and course in general.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit overlaps in a few places with unit 4, but this is your advantage. It is, however, different from it in being basically historical.

In this unit, I have covered several topics, including:

- the origin (beginnings) of the nations and peoples of the Bible, with particular reference to Israel
- the legacy of the patriarch, leaders and kings
- the Jews and their neighbours.

In each case, the material presented tries to present the nations, empires and peoples, including their cultural heritage, in a way that they have helped or hampered events in the Bible land.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Certificate/Diploma

1. Compare the Biblical story of creation with any other story you know, e.g. the Yoruba mythology.
2. Cite two significant events in each of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges that shed light on the historical development of the Israeli people and nation.
3. State 2 important legacies left by each of the following:
 - (a) the patriarchs
 - (b) the leaders/judges
 - (c) the kings
4. State one positive and one negative impact each one of the 5 nations/peoples studied in this unit made on the Jews of the Bible.

7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READINGS

The Holy Bible – various versions

The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible: Life and Times, meanings and message of a comprehensive guide, 1986. Lion Publishing Tring, Herts, England Chaps. 11 and 12.

UNIT 2 RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS WORSHIP IN ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main body
 - 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 Old Testament
 - 3.2.1 Introduction
 - 3.2.2 The major actors and tenets
 - 3.2.3 The major features of the Jewish religion
 - 3.2.3.1 The Ten Commandments
 - 3.2.3.2 Fasts and festivals or feasts
 - 3.2.3.3 Tabernacle and temples
 - 3.2.3.4 Priests, levites and the sacrifices
 - 3.3 NT (Christian) teaching and practices
 - 3.3.1 Introduction: background of NT
 - 3.3.2 The teaching of Jesus
 - 3.3.3 Christian worship in the New Testament
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

You will recall that we touched on aspects of the religion and religious worship in Israel in the last unit, touching also on other neighbouring nations and peoples. This is true of the other aspects of the life of the peoples I shall also discuss in units 13 and 14. The idea in these units (11-14) is to dig a little deeper into the life, times, meaning and message of these people who have played prominent role, with God, in giving us the legacy of the Bible. The idea is to provide a solid base for the study and understanding of the Bible in particular and Bible geography in general.

However, unlike in unit 11, we shall limit our discussion here, as also in units 13 and 14, to the nation of Israel, taken to mean Israel before the division into Northern and Southern Kingdoms. This will not, however, eliminate the wider concept of Bible land, which Israel constitutes in the main.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The following will, therefore, constitute the major objectives of this unit:

- i. Present (recapitulate) life of the Israelis in the Bible times
- ii. Discuss aspects of the Jewish religion, including:
 - the major players and moulders
 - the major features of OT (Judaism) teaching
 - major features of NT (Christian) teaching
- iii. The idea is to present or describe, as much as possible, the religion of the Israelites in Biblical times, as part of the overall cultural heritage of the people.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introduction

Unit 11 has surveyed aspects of the life of the people of Israel in Biblical times, touching on the roles of the leaders (patriarchs, leaders/judges, kings, etc., and the influence of the neighbouring peoples on this life.

What is intended to be done here is to probe further the role of religion on the life of the people. Religion is treated first because of its domineering influence of the people, especially the central place of God and His commandments on the people. Religion dictates the home, family, society, work, etc. of the Israelites, topics that are discussed in subsequent unit of this course.

3.2 Old Testament Teaching

3.2.1 Introduction

The OT consists of 37 books, made up of different types of literature, e.g. funeral songs (Am. 5:2); lament of one falsely accused of a crime (Ps. 17); speeches (2 Kg. 18:28-35); sermons (Jer. 7:1-15); prayers (1 Kg. 21:8-10); rules governing worship and sacrifice (Lev. 1-7); short stories (Rit) and autobiographies (Neh. 1-7). As a collection, the OT is a marvel of literary variety and form conveying divine message through and through.

The information contained here deals essentially with the outward forms or rituals; the basic beliefs of the Jewish religion belongs to serious theology which you will get from other courses.

3.2.2 The Major Actors and Tenets

Abraham. The starting point of Israel's religion, is the day when God spoke to *Abram* (later Abraham), telling him to leave his land and family home to go to a new country (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham took God at His word: "He put his trust in the Lord and because of this the Lord was pleased with him and accepted him" (Ja. 2:23). So the very first and foremost basic belief of the Jewish (and Christian) religion is *the certainty that God is a real person and that human beings – individuals or as a group can know him*. Abraham's faith in God was at times shaky but he knew that God had committed Himself to him and to his family, an idea that was to grow into the entire nation of Israel (Gen. 15:6).

Jacob. The history of Israel as a nation begins with Abraham's grandson Jacob, (renamed Israel) and his 12 sons, from whom the 12 tribes were descended (see unit 11). God repeated his covenant with Abraham and Isaac (grandfather and father of Jacob) to him and he (Jacob) believed Him also (Gen. 28: 13-16).

Moses. God revealed Himself to Moses as *Yahweh* (LORD) and '*I AM*' or '*I will be who I will be*', meaning that:

- God is unchanging
- God is completely reliable,

This knowledge Moses took to his people in Egypt, from where he (Moses) eventually brought his people out, first to Mt. Sinai, where God further made Himself known as:

- a God who acts and speaks
- a God who is full of compassion and pity, who is not easily angered
- a God who shows great love and faithfulness (Ex. 34:6-7)

David and Solomon. By now Israel had become an independent united state under some powerful kings, such as David and Solomon, but who knew and believed in a king of kings, Lord of lords. This God is worthy of all grandeur, pomp and honour – vide Solomon's temple and all the grandeur, both physical structure and rituals. Consequently, God made a new promise: he would make David's kingdom a lasting one, his dynasty will never end (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 95:3; 97:1)

The Prophets

- The greatest contribution of the prophets of Israel was not a new revelation from God but a new challenge to be faithful to what God had already made known of Himself, and to return to God in repentance
- They never tired of hammering home the fact that true religion is not just *rituals* or even *belief*, but also of *behaviour*.
- They mercilessly attacked the religion of their day, not because it did not follow the patterns laid down in the law books like Leviticus, but because it was not matched by right behaviour.
- They spoke to the conscience of the Israelites, gave warning of approaching disaster (exile) and, when God's punishment came, they were offered hope of a new future (Am. 5:21-24).

3.2.3 The Major Features of the Jewish Religion

The features of the Jewish (Israeli) religion are legion, but the most important ones I shall discuss here are the commandments or laws and regulations, fasts and festivals, worship (in the tabernacle and temple), priests, Levites and sacrifices.

3.2.3.1 The Ten Commandments

The commandments, ten of them, cover every aspect of life, not only of Israelites but all people of God (Ex. 20:1-7); Deut. 5:6-21)

- In Deuteronomy 5:22, the Bible says:

These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more ...

meaning that there were no other commandments of equal importance.

- The Ten Commandments are addressed to the whole nation of Israel, not just a particular group like the priests; consequently each one of them is found in other places in the Hebrew laws – over 600 of them
- The Ten Commandments were the terms of the covenant God made with His people, which they accepted at Sinai. They were kept in the Covenant Box (Ark) and kings make their copies on accession to the throne. The Covenant Box was the centre of Israel, being the place of God's presence.

- The penalty for breaking any of the commandments is not mentioned in the Bible specifically, but, compared with similar ones elsewhere in the Bible, the penalty was surely death (Ex. 21:12)
- Later, the Jewish rabbis spent much time on defining exactly what was, for example, ‘work’, leading to conflict between the rabbis and Jesus (Lk. 14:3-4; Mt. 12:1-2)
- From Exodus to Deuteronomy are other ‘case laws’, belonging to three major categories
 - those following from the Ten Commandments (Ex. 21:23, sometimes called the “Book of the Covenant”), comprising *moral, civil and religious laws, instructions about worship, laws dealing with the rights of slaves, etc.*
 - the *holy laws* (Lev. 17:26) on how the Israelites should worship God, the rituals connected with the tabernacle, etc.
 - *sermons* (Deut. 12:25) to Israelites before entering the Promised Land – encouragements to keep the law,
 - *warnings on disobedience of the laws*
 - duties of the king (Deut. 17:14-20)
- The Commandments are purposed to forge good relationships with (love) God and with other people (Deut. 6:4; Lev. 19:18); they all reflect God’s character – His holiness, justice, goodness and will.

3.2.3.2 Fast and Festivals or Feasts

The Sabbath and most of the festivals (feasts), e.g. *Passover, tabernacle*, etc. have all been seriously kept from the very earliest period of Israel’s history.

The main religious festivals were connected with the seasons (see unit 10) and the agricultural calendar in Canaan – held in spring, early summer and autumn. On each occasion, the men were expected to go to their local shrine and present their offerings to God. (This arrangement by God Himself was, among other reasons, to prevent His people from joining their gentile neighbours in the (neighbour’s) rituals – to engage the Israelites rightly in His worship).

Festivals were:

- times of thanksgiving to God for harvests
- occasions for remembering outstanding events in Israel’s history
- opportunities for great rejoicing and feasting

Only one day in the year was set apart for a *national fast* in OT laws- i.e. *Day of Atonement* or “tenth day of the seventh month”. During exile in Babylon, special fasts were also held in the fifth and seventh month to mourn the destruction of the temple and murder of Gedaliah, Governor of Judah, respectively.

Prayer and fasting often went together – people fast as a sign of genuine repentance – when the people did not eat or drink. Other signs of grief included:

- tearing their clothes
- dressing in coarse sack – cloth
- throwing dust and ash on their heads
- leaving their hair unwashed

Annual Festivals:

- Passover and Unleavened Bread:
 - one of the most important annual festivals
 - took place the evening before the fourteenth of Nisan, when every family sacrificed a lamb, in remembrance of the first such festival observed just before God rescued the Israelites from Egypt.
 - Bread made without yeast must be eaten (Ex. 12; Jos. 5:10-12)
- First fruit:
 - held on the last day of Passover, when the first sheaf of the barley harvest was presented to God (Lev. 23:9-14)
- Weeks or Pentecost:
 - held at the end of the grain harvest, fifty days after Passover
 - the priest offered two loaves of bread made from the new flour, along with animal sacrifices
 - time of great rejoicing for God’s gifts of harvest, (including that of the holy spirit) (Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:15-21; Deut. 16:9-12; Ac. 2:1-6)
- Trumpets (New Year):
 - first day of the seventh month
 - day of rest and worship (Nu. 10:10; 28:9; 29: 1-2)

- Day of Atonement:

- all Israelis confessed their sins and asked God for forgiveness
- the high priest dressed in white linen; first offered a sacrifice for his own sin and the sin of the priests; he then offered another for the sin of the people.
- Only day in the year when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies the most sacred innermost part of the temple (tabernacle), where he sprinkled blood from the sacrifice; laid his hands on the 'scapegoat and sent it off into the desert, as a sign that the people's sin had been taken away (Lev. 16)

- Ingathering/Tabernacle/Booths/Shelters

- the most popular and joyful of all festivals
- held in the autumn when the fruit crops had been harvested
- celebrations included: camping out in gardens and, rooftops, in tents or huts made from tree branches
- reminder of the time when Israel lived in tents in the desert, during the Exodus
- included a ceremony in which water is poured out and prayers made for good rains for the coming year (Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:39 –43; Ju. 21:19-21; Neh. 8:14:16)

- Dedication/Lights:

- commemorated the cleansing and re-dedication of the second temple, after defilement by the Syrians
- called 'light' because lamps were placed in every house and synagogue (Jn. 10:22)

- Purim:

- an excited and noisy celebration traced to the time Esther saved the Jewish people from massacre during the reign of the Persian King Xerxes
- means 'lots', referring to the lots cast by Haman to decide on which day he should kill the Jews throughout the Persian Empire (Es. 3:7; 9:24, 26)

Other Festivals:

- Sabbath:

- Israel's most distinctive festival
- held every seventh day of the week (Ex. 20:8 – 11)
- traced back to creation (Gen. 2:1-3)
- no work done, only worship held in the temple (tabernacle)

- New Moon:

- start of each month
- trumpets blown and special sacrifices made
- understood as a reminder that God had created an orderly world
- no work done
- marked by special meals and religious teaching (Gen. 1:10; Nu. 10:10; 28:11-15; Ps. 104:19; 1 Sam. 20:5, 24; 2 Kg. 4:23)

- Sabbatical Year:

- held every seventh year
- year of complete rest for the land
- year dedicated to the Lord
- crops that year harvested for the poor
- sign that the land was not theirs but God's
- all Israelite slaves freed
- all debts cancelled (Ex. 23: 10-11; Lev. 25: 1-7; Deut. 15: 1-6)

- Jubilee:

- held every fiftieth year
- all land and property (except town houses) were returned to original owners
- Israelite slaves set free
- debts cancelled
- land allowed to lie fallow
- the year promised by Isaiah and announced by Jesus (Lev. 25: 8-17; 23-25; Is. 61: 1-2; Lk. 4:16-21)

3.2.3.3 Tabernacle and Temple

The tabernacle was a large tent made by the Israelites, according to a design shown to Moses at Mt. Sinai, a place where they worshipped God on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. Each time they camped (Nu. 1:50; 2:31), the Levites set it up at the centre of the camp, surrounded on all four sides by the Levites' tents; behind which were the tents of the twelve tribes, three on each side.

It was the centre of Israel's religious life, a sign that God was with them. It was a 'tent of meeting' between God and humans, "the dwelling place of God".

The major furniture/parts comprised:

- The covenant Box/Ark of the Covenant:
 - carried by poles
 - contained the *two tablets of the Ten Commandments*, *a golden pot of manna* and *Aaron's rod*, that blossomed overnight.
 - Stood in the Holy of Holies, the place where God was visibly enthroned (Ex. 25:10-22; Deut. 10: 1-5; Jos. 6:6-8; 1 Sam. 4:3)
- The Incense Altar
 - placed strategically in the holy place, in front of the curtain screening off the Holy of Holies
 - burnt each morning and evening (Ex. 30: 1-10)
- The golden lampstand
 - seven – branched stand, hammered out of one piece of gold
 - only source of light in the tabernacle
- Table of show bread/Bread of presence:
 - for the offering, 12 new loaves, one for each tribe, brought every Sabbath (Ex. 25: 25-30)
- Courtyard:
 - enclosed by a screen of linen curtains, with an entrance (Ex. 27: 9-19)
- Altar of burnt offering:

- where sacrifices of lambs, bulls, goats, etc. were made (Ex. 27: 1-8)

Solomon's temple:

- small by today's standard, but among the largest buildings the Israelites had constructed (9_m x 27_m x 13.5_m)
- consisted of:
 - priests entrance (porch)
 - Holy Place with the incense altar, table for showbread and five pairs of lampstand
 - 'Holy of Holies', approached by steps from the Holy Place and contained two cherubim, symbols of God's protection and the Covenant Box (ark)
 - incense burnt inside it but sacrifices offered outside
 - dedicated with a great worship service/sacrifice

Zerubbabel's temple

- built on the return from Babylonian captivity
- followed the pattern of Solomon's temple, but not as splendid (1 Chr. 36: 22-33; Ez. 1; 3-6)

Herod's temple

- built to win people's favour
- built on the site of Solomon's temple
- by far the grandest, twice as high, covered with so much gold that it was a dazzling sight in the bright sun
- the most impressive feature was the 'platform' (still in existence today) where pilgrims gathered and offered sacrifices.
- main entrance led to the court of the Gentiles
- next was the court for women
- the court of Israel
- Priest's court
- destroyed by Romans 70 AD and its treasures taken back to Rome

3.2.3.4 Priests, Levites and the Sacrifices

Priests and Levites

- descendants of Levi, third son of Jacob
- given special position by God for defending His honour when the rest of the people worshipped the golden calf

- set apart for religious duties
- did not own any territory except some towns and their suburbs
- collected the tithe from other tribes
- the family of Aaron produced first priests – the professional officials of the tabernacle
- the priests had the privilege to enter the ‘Holy of Holies’ once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Levites: Ex. 32:25 – 29; Nu. 3: 12-13; 18: 23-24; 35: 2-8; Priests: Ex. 28 –29; Lev. 8 –10; 16: 21 –22)

The Duties of Priests and Levites:

- mostly connected with the tabernacle and the temple sacrifices and worship
- temple choirs – composed several psalms –e.g. 85 and 87
- gave answers in God’s name to difficult questions – e.g. when to go to battle; used the sacred stone of Urin and Thummin
- responsible for teaching the law
- offered sacrifices (1Chr. 6:31-48; Lev. 13; Deut. 33:8-11; Neh. 8:1-12; Mal. 2:7; Jer. 23: 11-32; Ezek. 34)

The Sacrifices

- Details contained in the book of Leviticus
- Their meaning/implications include:
 - made to God Himself, not any other (intermediary)
 - a way of approaching God
 - prescribed for everyone
 - have limitations
 - substitutive
- Types of sacrifices
 - burnt offering (Lev. 1)
 - grain offering (Lev. 2)
 - peace offering (Lev. 3)
 - sin offering (Lev. 4, 5, 7)

Self Assessment Exercise 1

- 1a. Mention three important personalities in the OT teachings
- 1b. Mention at least one thing for which each is remembered today
- 2a. Identify three major features of OT teaching

- 2b. Describe one of the three briefly
- 3a. What are 2 common features of the tabernacle and the temple in OT times?
- 3b. What are the main features of Herod's temple?

3.3 NT (Christian) Teaching and Practices

3.3.1 Introduction: Background of NT

The background to the NT included at least three areas of religious thought and practice, namely that of Palestinian, Judaism and Hellenistic culture. The first was based on the OT, but subsequent development resulted in *institutions* (synagogue, Sanhedrin), *parties* (Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes) and *feasts* (Hanukkah of Dedication) that are outside OT.

The traditional period of this “background” is that between of return of exiles from Babylonian captivity to the birth of Jesus Christ, which marks the beginning of NT. This period fell into roughly four phases, viz:

- The *Persian rule phase* (see above) when the Jewish state was a province of the Persian Empire. The phase, as noted above, witnessed the encouragement of local loyalties and national religion, including provision for the upkeep of the Jerusalem temple on a lavish scale (Ez. 1; 6:1-12)
- Phase 2 was that of *Greek rule*, when the OT was translated into Greek and Hellenism was introduced (see above). Two parties emerged during this phase – those who favoured the foreign way (Hellenists) and the conservative Jews (Hasidim) who believed that Hellenism and Judaism were incompatible: the result was conflict and fight for supremacy of one over the other.
- Phase 3 came as a result of the revolt by *Judas Maccabaeus* which made Judea a *pure independent Jewish state*, with minimum of Hellenistic influence (see above)
- Phase 4 began with *the Roman rule*, also discussed above

In order to better understand the groups which arose during the period between the OT and NT, and so understand the role they played in the NT, I describe a few examples:

- The *Hasidim* or the ‘pious ones’ was not really an organized sect, but comprised essentially the Jews who resisted the inroads of Greek

culture into Jewish life. Some of them joined with the *Maccabees* in the armed struggle against Greek rulers while others were pacifists. All were faithful followers of law, many joining the Pharisees and the Essenes.

- The *Pharisees* ('separate ones') were a strict religious sect. They were ordinary Jews who kept closely to the Jewish law, whose application were extended to the extent that they became hard to keep. As pointed out by Jesus, these people were so obsessed with the *letters* of the law that they missed out the *spirit behind* it, more so when they despised those who did not follow them or, belong to their groups. Jesus described them as *self-righteous* and *legalistic*. However, it is important to note that Nicodemus and Paul, among others, came out of the group to follow Jesus (Mt. 12:1-4; 22:34; 23:36; Mk. 7:1-23; Lk. 18: 9-14; Jn. 18:3; Ac. 23:6-10).
- The *Sadducees* were much smaller than the Pharisees and belonged to the family of priests. They did not accept the Pharisees' extensions of the law and did not believe in resurrection among other ideas (Messiah, angels, demons, etc.) developed during the interphase between OT and NT (Mt. 16: 1-2; Mk. 12:18 – 27; Ac. 4:1-2; 5:17-19; 23: 6-10)
- The *Essenes* were another small sect of people against Greek (Hellenistic) influence on the Jewish religion. They were also against corrupt kings and the growing carelessness among Jews about keeping the law. In fact, they were stricter than the Pharisees, whom they denounced as 'giver of easy interpretations'. They were so disgusted with Jewish society that they opted for monastic life. Helene (1980) described them as 'forerunners of Christ'.
- The *Scribes*, unlike the others mentioned above, were not a sect or political party, but experts in the law; they were, therefore, called lawyers and teachers (rabbis). They interpreted the law and applied it to everyday life. They marveled at the way Jesus taught (with authority), even though He never attended any of their schools; they also, like the Pharisees and Sadducees, opposed Jesus (and later Paul).

3.3.2 The Teaching of Jesus

The subject matter of the NT (as that of the entire Bible) is Jesus Christ, while His teaching, especially that of the coming of the kingdom of God on earth forms the basis of the content of all the books of the NT.

The message of Jesus teaching touches on a number of themes or issues, notably, as noted above, the *kingdom of God*. Others are *faith* and *repentance*, the *person of Jesus Himself*, *joy*, *blessings* and so on. Come along with me as I describe some of them briefly.

- *The Kingdom of God*, as taught by Jesus, means the reign or rule of God in people's life, which happens when a person realizes that God is the creator, king and ruler of the entire world/universe. The kingdom of God also means the 'realm' or community of people where God's rule is obeyed, e.g. the church of Christ/God. It is what the Jews, for a long time, had looked forward to – when God in His power would:

- come to be their king
- set His people free
- judge the nations

But the kingdom that Jesus announced and taught (Mt. 12:28) does not belong to this world but that which, in another sense, is yet to come (Mt. 6:10). To teach the concept, Jesus uses several parables, e.g. the seed and the sower (Mt. 13:1-23, Faniran; 2001, pp. 61 – 76). Others are treasures hidden in the field, mustard seed, pearl, (Mt. 13:31 –52); the list is quite long as you will find out from reading your Bible.

- To receive and keep the kingdom of God, Jesus teaches *repentance* and *faith*, i.e. turning away from sin and believing in Him (Mk. 1:15; Jn. 3:16) and His good news of forgiveness of sin and salvation. In other words, Jesus teaches that God is offering new life to all who believe in, leave their old ways and follow Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17). It means giving up all that we cling to for security and trusting God alone (Lk. 15:1-7; 11:32)
- *The Person of Jesus* or who Jesus is another topic of Jesus' teaching. Here He teaches that He is:
 - the son of God
 - close to God
 - one with God
 - The *Way*, the *Truth* and the *Life*
 - Humankind's 'bread' (manna) (Jn. 10:10; 14:1, 6, 5:19-20, 30; 6:32-33), etc.

A note of *joy* runs all through Jesus' teaching, especially in stressing that the kingdom of God frees people and releases them to live a full life:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (Jn. 10:10)

Also, the prodigal son's father is recorded as telling the elder brother:

We had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found (Lk. 15: 32)

Similarly, the Bible states categorically that God Himself rejoices over every man and woman who comes back home to Him., every sinner who repents and believes in Jesus Christ His Son

The promise of *blessing* or happiness is another feature of Jesus' teaching. In fact many people today think of Jesus' teaching as basically the "sermon on the mountain", which begins with the "beatitudes" (Mt. 5:1-12; Lk. 6:20 -26), on the humble, spiritually poor, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, merciful, etc.: they are all candidates for the kingdom of God.

Another feature of Jesus teaching is His expectation of His (would be) followers who are expected to follow His example of putting their interests last, expect persecution, live a life of service for others, and so on (Mt. 10: 16-25; 13:16-17; 11:30; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:57 - 62; Jn. 13:4-17; 14-17).

Jesus teaches about *God and His acceptance worship*, thus bringing God to the level of a close and caring Father who is to be worshipped reverently, in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24). It is noteworthy that Jesus did not set up a new system of religious ceremonies but rather expected His followers to study and follow the Bible:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the Prophets: I have come to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappears, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished. Any one who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:17-19)

It is precisely this purpose of calling people back to God that He established *His church*, upon faith in Him (Mt. 16:18). The church is taught to:

go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them ... to obey everything I have commanded (taught) you (Mt. 28:19-20)

This injunction of Jesus is the message of the NT.

3.3.2 Christian Worship in the New Testament

The earliest Christians were Jewish, which explains the “transgression” of Jewish form of worship into the Christian church:

Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (Ac. 2:46)

In other words, they continued to meet in the Jewish temple and synagogues (Paul’s first call during his missionary journeys was also to the Jewish Synagogue) where they added a special Christian (love) meal and the teaching of Jesus Christ. They also discarded practices (such as sacrifices) which Jesus Christ had already paid for by His sacrificial death on the cross as well as His resurrection.

Nevertheless, two aspects of Jewish (OT) worship especially influenced Christian (NT) worship, namely:

- the Passover ritual, metamorphosed into The Lord’s Supper or Communion
- the Synagogue service with its Bible reading/study, prayer, song/hymns and sermons

In other words, the NT is a continuation of the OT, both of which present God in His correct perspective and teach humans how to relate with Him to profit. The Holy Bible is one book, just as our God is one, our faith is one and our goal (in heaven) is one (1 Tim 2:5).

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Mention 2 OT legacies in the NT teaching
2. Mention 2 of the groups (sects/parties) in Israel/Palestine during Jesus’ earthly ministry and briefly describe the encounter of Jesus with one of them.
3. Highlight two important teachings of Jesus during His earthly ministry

4. Mention two Jewish practices adopted by the Christian church. Show what changes have been made in the process.

3.4 Discussion

There is no doubt that the content of this unit, like those of others in this module, overlaps with a number of others in the course, notably CTH 102, 106, 107 and 110. This should be to your advantage since you can buttress the material here with what those of these other courses

The link between religion and the life of the people is best seen among the serious practitioners, those often described as *zealots*, *conservatives*, *hardliners*, etc., e.g. the priests/Levites, prophets and sect members, notably Pharisees, Essenes and Hasidims

What began with Abraham has now grown into 3 religions – *Judaism*, *Christianity* and *Islam* – all of who trace their roots to the faith espoused by Abraham.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Perhaps the best way to conclude this unit is to emphasize the fact of the continual revelation of God to His people over the period covered, from Abraham (2000BC) to the early church (up to 100AD). He revealed Himself:

- to Abraham, among others, as his *shield* and *great reward* (Gen. 15:1)
- to Moses as *I AM* and *God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*
- in Jesus Christ as *loving Father and Friend*

This is what some people call continuous revelation, even though others believe that the fullest revelation of God is in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The religion and religious worship of Israel/Bible land has now spread to the entire humankind, on the orders of Jesus Christ and it will continue to spread, until Jesus Christ comes back again to ‘harvest’ His own.

5.0 SUMMARY

I have definitely covered a very wide ground in this unit, broken into 3 parts of:

- major personalities

- major features of the OT teaching
- major features of NT teaching

I have tried to present these as a continuously unfolding play, i.e. in the historical tradition, with a wide area of overlap. Significant in this approach is the section of the OT background to the NT, where developments in the intervening period between the two explain much of the content of the NT.

Finally, I have shown that the personalities and places mentioned in the Bible are real and not imaginary or abstract. This is how Dockery (1992) put it in relation to the NT in history:

... Jesus Christ was a historical figure whose birth, ministry, and death occurred in first – century Palestine under Roman occupation. Paul wrote to actual congregations in Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. Revelation was written during a period when Christians were being persecuted for their refusal to participate in Roman emperor worship ... God sent His son to redeem the world at a definite time in human history ... To understand the NT in the light of the larger backdrop of its own contemporary world enhances our understanding of its message and our ability to communicate that message effectively in our own day (p. 590).

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Mention three important personalities in the OT (Certificate) and discuss one of them succinctly (Diploma)
2. Identify three major features of OT teaching and describe one of them briefly (Certificate and Diploma)
3. Mention 4 OT legacies in the NT teaching and explain one of them (Certificate and Diploma)
4. Highlight two of the Jewish practices adopted by the Christian church, showing one significant change made in each case (Certificate and Diploma)

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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The Holy Bible (different versions)

UNIT 3 HOME AND FAMILY /COMMUNITY LIFE IN ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Introduction: life within the family
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to correctly perceive the environment in a different land, even for a geographer. It is even more hazardous to talk of the environment of a strange land and at a period so long in history as that of the Bible times with over 2000 years (see above) of hectic history.

The Bible land belongs essentially to the Mediterranean region with a different climate, among other environmental variables (unit 6 – 10), all of which affected the life of the people.

Fortunately, as in the other units, the Bible is a veritable source of information on how the people of the Bible times lived, supplemented by archeological among other findings. Consequently, *the closer we get to the people of the Bible and their lives, as we intended to do here, the better we will understand what the Bible has to say to humankind.*

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The major goal of this unit is, therefore, to search the Bible for relevant information on the people of the Bible times. Especially their closest relations in the home and family, so as to get closer to the Biblical message. To achieve this goal, the following objectives will be pursued.

- i. Have some insight into the homes and family relationship of the people
- ii. Present aspects of family life of the people
- iii. Describe some common practices—customs, ceremonies, etc., of the people
- iv. Cast a beam on the social life of the people.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introduction: Life within the Family

The typical Biblical (OT) family (e.g. Abraham's, Jacob's, David's) is what people in the culture of small, nuclear family set up would describe as the "extended family", consisting of not just parents and children, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, servants, etc. Thus, Abraham was able to gather 318 fighting men with him to rescue Lot from the raiding kings (Gen. 14:14)

In this type of setting, as shown, again by the examples of Abraham and Jacob, the grandfather had completed authority, not just in practical matters but also in religious ones as well. His God was their God; his word was law.

Family life grew more important as the clans (tribes) settled down in permanent homes and as the family unit became smaller.

God had made a promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), including that He would be his God, caring for and protecting him and his descendants, in return for a life pattern fashioned after His rules (commands, law, etc.). So, from the very beginning, ordinary life in Israel was bound up with religious life. Everything about the people, whether as individuals or as families and communities, was based on God's law, including interpersonal relations. For example, if they treated one another badly they broke God's law (Gen. 39:9; Ps. 51:3-4)

It is from this background that I present some examples in the next section.

3.1 Family Relationship

3.2.1 Parents and Children

Religion and family life were woven together in the way parents brought up their children, including:

- children were encouraged to ask questions about their religion and history (Jos. 4: 5-7)
- the Sabbath was for both parents and children – all members of the household
- parents taught their children the laws of God and memorized other parts of the Bible.

- In the evenings, members of the family recited the stories, which have since been written down in the Bible

3.2.2 The Fathers

Within the small unit, the father had complete authority, which the grandfather had in the “extended family” setup. He (the father) could, among others:

- sell his daughter into slavery
- put a disobedient child to death
- divorce his wife without any reason and without providing for her
- arrange the marriages of his sons

3.2.3 Women

The woman:

- was owned by her husband whom she looked upon as her master (1 Pe. 3:6)
- did most of the hard work
- had low position both in the family and in the society

Jesus teaching on the family is set out to correct many of these e.g. the examples of the loving father (vide the father of the prodigal son) and the Samaritan woman. Paul also teaches that men and women are one in union with Christ; therefore, no second-class citizens in Christ’s kingdom.

3.2.4 Polygamy/Monogamy

There are six Biblical examples of polygamy before Moses, four during the period of the Judges and nine among the kings of Israel. The wealthy in the NT also practised polygamy and the *Mishnah* and *Talmid* sanctioned it. However, after Elkanah (1 Sam. 1:1-2) the Books of Samuel and Kings contain no references to polygamy among the people (commoners).

Monogamy is divinely ordained (Gen. 1:18-20; Prov. 5:15-21; Lk. 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:1-2) and was by far the most common form of marriage in Israel, except when the first wife was barren.

3.2.5 Wedding Customs

The typical Israelite marriage was arranged by the father, between distant relatives, when the boy was about 20 years old and the girl in the early to mid teens, and without the persons' consent. They could, however, make their wishes known (Ju. 14:2; 1 Sam. 18:20). Later, in NT times girls > 12years had the right of refusal

Negotiations/ practices included:

- *the mohar* – a compensation to the bride's parents: a portion may be kept for the girl, in case of some emergency or her husband's death.
- payment for a divorced wife
- at least one year's engagement during which the boy was not supposed to look on the girl's face (Gen. 24:65)
- both parents and groom gave the wife presents (Ez. 16:10-13)
- wedding feasts, lasting seven days
- escorting the veiled bride with music and dancing to the marriage home (Gen. 24:67; Nu. 25:8; Ps. 19:5)
- blood-stained garment presented to the bride's parents for safe keeping, as evidence of virginity after consummation (Deut. 22:13-21)
- marriage covenant (Mal. 2:14; Prov. 2:17' Ex. 16:8), consisting (in the 5th century BC) of the bridegroom's declaration that "she is my wife and I am her husband forever".

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Mention 5 polygamists in the Bible. State the number of wives and concubines each one of them had
2. State three duties of fathers to their children, in OT times
3. Mention two ways in which NT teaching improved the status of women in Biblical times. Cite examples of each case.

3.3 Family Life

3.3.1 Introduction

There are many ways of looking at the family, including where they live, how they live, or interpersonal relations, their eating habit, their clothing as cosmetics, and so on. I present just three of cases, namely, how the Israelites lives, especially in terms of hospitality, their food and drink habit and their clothing and cosmetics, or mode of dressing.

3.3.2 Hospitality

In Biblical times and in the general area of Palestine, hospitality was more than courtesy; it was a necessity and a reciprocal understanding. One reason for this was lack or poorly developed hospitality industry; another was the religious obligation of the Bible which demands/emphasize it in several places. Indeed, hospitality was a sacred duty and privilege such that a traveler had a right to expect food, shelter and protection (Gen. 19:11-1; Ju. 19:16-30; Lev. 19: 33-34): failure to offer it was considered a disgrace and a crime (Deut. 23:3-4; Ju. 19:12-15; 1 Sam. 25:2-42).

Willingness to care for strangers was considered a test of character (Jb. 31:32; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10; Pe. 4:8-10). *Talmud* lists it with studying the *Torah* as one of the five acts that bring eternal reward, declaring that “the entertainment of strangers was as great a matter as the reception of the *Shekinah*” (Heb. 13:2).

In Biblical times, some villages provided accommodation for travelers and some houses had guests rooms on an upper floor for this purpose (1 Kg. 17: 19; 2 Kg. 4:10; Mt. 25:35; Lk. 22:11).

Hospitality also extended to caring for the less privileged, widows, accident victims, the sick, etc. The story of the Good Samaritan shows the mind of God on this matter, as different from the practices of Priests and Levites in the parable of Jesus (Lk. 10:30 – 37).

3.3.3 Food and Drinks

The evening meal was the big meal of the day and typically consisted of:

- *bread* and whatever *fruits* (melons, figs, pomegranates, grapes) and *vegetables* (lentils, beans, cucumber, leeks, onions, garlic, etc.) that were in season
- on special occasions these were accompanied by *meat* or *fish* (in the Galilean region
- boiling with *herbs* common while meat was also roasted. *Stews* included *almonds* and *pistachio nuts*.
- Seasoning available were *mint*, *dills*, *cumin*, *rue* and *mustards*
- *Salt* from the Dead Sea or the Mediterranean important for seasoning and preserving

- For sweetening – *syrup* from cooking grapes or dates (probably the “*honey*” in the Bible except in Judges 14:8-9 and 1 Sam. 14:26 – 27 or wild honey)
- For meat, hunted animals, *deer* or *partridge* was available but *sheep*, *goat*, *beef* were most common. *Chicken* were known in the Roman period but *egg* was children’s food
- As a rule, food was eaten with hands out of a common pottery dish utensils were used to prepare the food
- Bread making was very important (Deut. 24:6) and often involved the entire family (Jer. 7:18). Wheat or barley flour was used, mixed with olive oil; salt, yeast and water.
- There were few professional/commercial millers; women usually ground their own grain on millstone.

Since nothing was (still is) more precious than *water*, homes usually had their own *cisterns* for drinking water unless there was a large community spring or well nearby. Public cisterns were introduced during the Roman period

Drinks (from grapes) included *sweet grape juice*, *cheap vinegar* and water other *intoxicating drinks* were made from pomegranates and dates (perhaps the “strong drink” of the Bible).

Milk, mostly from goats, was drunk or eaten as *yogurt* or *cheese*.

3.3.4 Clothing, Fashion and Cosmetics

There were comparatively limited variety in clothing and fashion in Biblical Israel, owing to the hot climate and limited raw material. The outfits include:

- *Soldiers and workers* - skirt or girdle, reaching to mid thigh and hold up by a woolen belt or girdle, which also hold weapons and valuables (2 Sam. 18:11)
- *Men* - pullover, knee or ankle – length tunic, hung from one shoulder, may be long or short – sleeved. It sometimes act as undergarment when worn under
- a *cloak*, worn in day time and used as covering at night (Ex. 22:26). Typically of wool or camel hair (for prophets, Zec. 13:4; 2Kg. 1:8; M. 3:4).
- *Tassels* or *fringes* were sewn to the “corners” of the cloak (Deut. 22:12; Nu. 15:38-40)
- Tassels were identified with devotion to the Torah and were conspicuously displayed by Jewish leaders in Jesus’ days (Mt. 23:5)

Clothing was handmade and highly valued, sometimes used as articles of exchange or plunder (Ju. 5:30; 14:12; Prov. 31:24)

Men were usually bareheaded with perhaps a strip of cloth around the head or a skull cap (turban)

Women's garments were similar to men's, except that they did not wear short skirt and had distinctive *embroidery, girdles* and *head wear* (Deut. 22:5)

Overall, clothing was designed modesty to hide rather than accentuate (advertise) the body

Archaeologists have discovered an abundance of *anklets, bracelets, necklaces, rings for ear, noses and fingers and beads* that were used by the women folk although Isaiah and Paul disdain women who wore ostentatious dresses (Is. 3:16-24; 1 Pe. 3:3-5). Jewelry was usually made of gold, silver, copper, bone, ivory or coloured stones (Ex. 28: 17-20; Ez. 28:13; Rev. 21: 19-21)

An abundance of *cosmetic utensils* has also been discovered, with which women ground minerals to powder, mix with oil and water and applied them to their faces (lips, eyelids and cheeks).

Mirrors were available, made of polished bronze, silver or gold

Perfumed ointments were used in medicine religion and as cosmetics (Ex. 30:21-25; Ps. 45: 8; Prov. 7:17). The special perfume used to anoint Jesus at Bethany is a case in point (Mk. 14:3).

Major differences existed between the dress of the rich and the poor. While poor peasants had only the woollen or goats' hair clothes, the rich had clothes for winter and summer, for working and leisure and from different raw materials – fine linen, silk, wool, goats' hair, camels' hair, etc. Some rich men and women spent so much time and money on clothes that they needed Jesus' words to remind them of the really important things in life:

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the fields grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If ... God clothes the grass of the field will he not much more than clothe you ... (Mt. 6:28 – 30).

Although many poor people went barefoot, *sandals* were the normal *footwear*. They were usually taken off before going into someone else's

home and it was the lowest servant's job to take off the visitor's sandals and wash his feet (vide Moses at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:5) and Jesus washing His disciples' feet in John 13)

According to Jewish custom, a man selling a property took off his sandal and gave it to the buyer as a sign of ceding off the right of the property (as Boaz's relative did in Ruth 4:7)

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Mention at least two important features of the following aspects of family life in Biblical Israel.
 - (a) Hospitality
 - (b) Food and drinks
 - (c) Clothing, fashions and cosmetics
2. Relate the dressing habit of the rich in Jesus' time to the passage in Matthew 6:28-30).

3.4 Special Occasions

3.4.1 Introduction

I have touched on aspects this topic in different places in this module, especially in Unit 2. To avoid repetition, which I have argued is not necessary bad or evil, I shall limit this discussion to the three revered occasions in the family setting generally, and Biblical Israel in particular, namely *birth*, *wedding* and *death*. But since I have discussed wedding above, I shall discuss only birth and death rites here. Indeed it will be advantageous to read this section and the previous two together, since they deal with the family from the smallest to the largest (Israelite nation) level.

3.4.2 A New Baby in the Family

Psalm 127: 3-5 captures vividly the way God and the Israelites felt about children, in Biblical times, viz:

- A large family was a sign of God's blessing (Ps. 127:5) and vice versa (cf. Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:1-20)
- Boys were the most valued; it was, therefore, so important to have a son that the woman's name was changed to "mother of ..." when her first son was born

- Unlike boys who worked the family land and fought the wars, girls were less valued, even though a bride price was usually paid to bride's parents (see above)
- Sons also were needed to carry on the family name. Originally, people thought they were going to continue living through their children; so if a man died without a child, it was the duty of his closest relative to marry the wife and name the first son of the remarriage after the dead man and inherit his land (Deut. 25:6; Ru. 4:2; Lk. 20: 27-33).

The following customary practices accompanied the birth of a new baby:

- The baby was washed and rubbed over with salt (to make the skin firm)
- Then it was wrapped in 'swaddling clothes' (Lk. 2:12)
- The bandages (part of the swaddling clothes) were loosened several times in a day and the skin rubbed with olive oil and dusted with powdered myrtle leaves, for several months

Babies were normally breast-fed for 2 – 3 years

Meaningful names were given at birth, relating to the circumstances of birth, family feeling towards God, etc. Babies were named on the eighth day when boys were circumcised – to remind them of the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 15), that every child in Israel belonged to God, i.e. one of God's people.

A first son was dedicated to God but bought back in a special way. (Ex. 13:13ff.)

The mother made a sacrifice of "purification" (Lev. 12) of pigeon and lamb, which the parents of Jesus could not afford and had to offer "a pair of doves or two young pigeons" instead (Lk. 2:24).

In NT times:

- Money was put into the temple offering boxes in lieu of the sacrifices
- A boy became a man on his 30th birthday, marked by a special service (Bar Mitzvah or "son of the law") at which he recited passages from the OT Law and Prophets. The rabbi then pronounced blessing on him from Numbers 6:24-26.

3.4.3 Death and Funeral Rites

Unlike most Christians with assurance of life after death (Phil. 1:21), the Jewish people had not always believed in life after death. Rather:

- In the early days they believed that dead people went down to *Sheol*
- Later, they reasoned that *sheol* could not be the end but that there would be resurrection after which a person's final destiny would depend on how he/she lived in the body (Dan. 12:2)
- In NT times the Pharisees believed in resurrection but the Sadducees did not
- Jesus' resurrection and victory over death finally removed the fear of death, for those who believe in Him

All through the OT, death is shown as a tragedy, which dictated the funeral when a person died:

- He/she was 'blind-folded', eye-closed
- Body was washed and wrapped in strips of cloth
- A quick burial was necessary because of the hot climate
- No coffin was used but body was carried on a wooden stretcher to the burial place
- Family and friends made a great show of mourning by:
 - weeping and wailing
 - wearing uncomfortable clothes
 - walking barefoot and putting ashes on their heads
 - tearing their clothes
 - shaving off their beards
 - professional mourners sometimes hired
 - mourning lasted seven days, but may be longer, e.g. seventy days for Joseph and thirty for Moses
 - fasting took place with the mourning
 - a funeral feast took place at the tomb
 - body embalmed if death occurred outside the territory (e.g. the body of Joseph in Egypt)
- burial took place in caves (Gen. 50: 13), cut in rock
 - rich people had specially constructed tombs, most of which were used over and over again after the bones of previous bodies had been removed and stored away.
 - the poor were buried in shallow graves in open ground; a row of stones placed round the body and the spaces in between filled with small stones and earth, a slab of stone was then put on top

- all graves were painted white to draw people's attention to them, as they must not be touched, or the person became unclean.

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Cite four practices of Biblical Israel which your own people also practise today when a baby is born into the family
2. Do the same for death and burial rites
3. Cite three events each in the NT, which confirm
 - (a) The importance attached to male children
 - (b) The assurance of resurrection

3.5 Discussion

The following points are very important for discussion with colleagues, friends, pastors and other mentors

- The linkages between religion and home/family life generally and among the Israelites in particular.
- The sources of information for a study like this, especially other courses, such as CTH 101, 105, 107, 110, 114, 603, 607 and 608

In your discussion, pay special attention to the following sources of information:

- the Bible
- other texts contemporary with the Bible
- archaeology
- Jewish tradition (present-day Jews)
- Arabic culture
- Referenced sources (see below)

The idea in all these is to assist you in personally “experiencing the home, family and community life of the Biblical Israelites/Palestinians

4.0 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions are drawn from the material in this unit:

All the topics are closely interwoven as they relate to a people with very strong tradition and culture

The unit takes us a step further into the heart of the geography of the Israelites/Bible people, whose major legacy is the Bible. It builds directly on unit 12 on the religion and religious worship. This is mainly because of the central role religion played in the Israelite society, as reflected in the Bible.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have moved a step further in our analysis of the human geography of the Israel/Bible land by studying aspects of:

- Life in the Israelite family in Bible times with special reference to family relationships and family setting and life.
- Special occasions in the family and nation.

In doing this we have tried to fill some gaps left in unit 12, while looking forward to the last topic on this theme of human geography of Israel/Bible land, as depicted from the Bible among other sources.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Mention 3 polygamists in the Bible. State the number of wives and concubines each one of them had (Certificate)
2. State three important duties of fathers in the OT (Certificate)
3. Mention two examples of NT teaching which changed the OT status of women and children. Describe one of them in some detail (Diploma)
4. Enumerate two important features of the following aspects of family life in Biblical Israel:
 - (a) Hospitality
 - (b) Food and drinks
 - (c) Clothing, fashions and cosmetics (Certificate)
5. Cite two examples of the use of Israel's family/society setting to communicate deep spiritual meaning/message and discuss one of them briefly (Diploma)

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 WORK AND SOCIETY IN ISRAEL/BIBLE LAND

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Work and working life
 - 3.1.1 Introduction: background to work in Israel/Bible land
 - 3.1.2 Crafts and Trades
 - 3.2 Farming

- 3.3 Building, Masons and Carpenters
- 3.4 Clothes Making
- 3.5 Mining and Metal work
- 3.6 Pottery
- 3.7 Other jobs (works) carried out in Biblical Israel/Bible land
 - 3.7.1 Leatherwork
 - 3.7.2 Fishing
 - 3.7.3 Government service
 - 3.7.4 Trade and commerce
 - 3.7.5 War, weapons and warriors
 - 3.7.5.1 Introduction
 - 3.7.5.2 The army
- 3.8 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bible describes or deal with people at different levels and in many places, varying from nomads/semi-nomads (part shepherd part farmer) to people in large civilized towns; from the first settlers in Canaan, through the time of the kings of Israel and Judah, to life under Greek and Roman empires.

Nevertheless, the lives of ordinary people were not much altered by the phenomenal political changes. The human geography of Israel/Bible land remained relatively stable. Besides, the Bible has information stored in it, which is a great help in a work such as this, aided by textbooks and other sources.

Having discussed the people, their religion and social life, we are left with the economy which is an important component of the (human) geography of any region. This is what I shall take up in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The major goal of this unit, therefore, is to focus the work life of the people of Israel/Bible land. This will be achieved via a number of objectives and assignments, including detailed description/discussion of the following:

- i. Work and working life of the people
- ii. Examples of work/employments engaged in
- iii. War, weapons and warriors

At the end of the lesson, it is expected that the student would be in the position to:

- i. know examples of the various jobs and assignments undertaken by the Bible people
- ii. understand the references to these activities as contained in the Bible
- iii. have a better grasp of the Biblical message related to the subject matter.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Work and Working life in Israel/Bible land

3.1.1 Introduction: Background to work in Israel/Bible land

The work that people do is closely related to the resources available to the people, whether internally or through importation. From the account contained in Module 2, these resources for Israel/Bible land include land and related rock and mineral resources, water and related fishery resources, plants and animals. The people or population (unit 11) also constitute resources, just as the elements (in the earth and atmosphere (unit 10) also constitute resources for the people.

Throughout the Bible period, some of the jobs which today belong to the professions or professionals were done by each household. Most families owned some land and worked at farming, including keeping of sheep and goats. Spinning and weaving were done at home by the women, while men built their own homes, which skills they taught their children.

Two practices featured prominently in the Bible, both OT and NT, viz: crafts and trades and slaves and forced labour.

3.1.2 Crafts and trades

Although limited in scope in OT times, certain families and areas were known for certain trade skills. For areas, these, as shown above, were linked with available raw materials:

- Succoth for casting of metal utensils
- Trade/craft guilds of town and cities e.g. mention four ‘carpenters quarters’, “linen workers”, “potters”, “goldsmiths” and ‘perfumers’ sections of cities in the Bible.

In NT times, by contrast, trade guilds were very well known during the Roman rule. Crafts were also held in high esteem by the Jews, with certain privileges. Most Scribes probably had a trade, with the writings of rabbis mentioning a nail maker, a bakery, a sandal maker, a master builder, a tailor, etc., while some were despised, e.g. tanning, tax collecting and weaving, for various reasons. The weavers, for example, worked in one of the poorest areas of Jerusalem, close to the *Dung Gate*.

For *slaves and forced labour* in Biblical times, the following points are noteworthy:

- the story of the Gibeonites, who were made slaves of the congregation of Israel (Jo. 9)
- the enslavement of Israelites in Egypt (Ex. 1-2)
- numerous projects done by slaves/forced labour
 - building and mining works of OT king (prophet Samuel prophetically warned his people in 1 Samuel 8:9 when they demanded to have a king rule over them that such kings would, among other things they (Israelites) would “become his slaves” (v. 17)
 - building works of Herod the Great and his successors
- in OT times, slavery was accepted in Israel – men and their families became slaves to better –off (indebted) household, making God to make provision for their freedom in the Sabbath year as well as the Jubilee year, reminding them (Israelites) that they were slaves in Egypt.
- prisoners of war were usually made slaves, e.g. on David’s and Solomon’s projects, which also engaged Israelite slaves – roads, fortresses, temples, etc.
- in NT times, there were both Jewish and non-Jewish slaves in Palestine who were engaged largely as servants in the houses of the wealthy and of the court (cf. Jesus’ parable of workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-6); cf. also the Apostles’ advice/words to Christian slaves (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; 1 Pe. 2:18-25).

It is from this background that we discuss some examples of work and working life in Israel/Bible land in Biblical times.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Mention three examples of trades and crafts common in OT Israel/Bible land

2. Give three examples of projects handled by slave in Biblical Palestine

3.2. Farming

In the main, the people of Palestine have always been farmers, with the nature of the soil, climate among other factors making the work a life of constant toil and hardship (A source states that the land that was cursed by God in Genesis 3:17 was actually that around Jerusalem, the Israeli capital). Besides, a large part of the country was desert and rock that could not be readily farmed.

The typical Israeli farmer did not live on his farm but in a nearby village or town, which was often close to a fortified city, for water and protection. He owned just enough land that he and his family could manage by themselves, perhaps with the help of a few servants or hired labourers. He might grow arable crops as well as grapes and olives; might possess a few sheep and goats, with one of his sons or a hired shepherd to take care of them (cf. David's family) or might decide to specialize, including being livestock farmers.

As observed above, the Israeli farmer in Biblical times faced four main problems:

- drought (Jer. 17:8)
- strong winds from the east, which take away his dry soil
- locust plagues (Ex. 10:4; Jo. 2:25)
- invaders (2 KG.. 17:5; 24:1)

The main grain crops grown were:

- Wheat – in the few fertile valleys, Philistine plain, Jordan valley and Plain of Jezreel
 - Barley – widespread, tolerated poorer soil
 - Spelt and millet
- (All used for bread, the staple food)

Other crops grown were:

- Vegetables – lentils, peas, beans, onions, cucumbers, garlic and herbs (see above)
- Fruit – grapes (for wine and raisin), melons, figs, dates, pomegranates, nuts
- Flax – for linen cloth
- Forestry – the highest lands

Cattle (which in Hebrew includes, sheep, goats, oxen and asses) were the most common animals (no pigs) were kept; asses were beasts of burden; oxen for ploughing; sheep and goats were kept together – sheep for its wool and meat; goats for its milk and neat (goats hair used for coarse cloth and their skins for bottles)

The shepherd's life changed little during Biblical times. He led his sheep; knew each one; watched over them night and day (Jn. 10: 1-6), against thieves and especially wild animals – wolves, lions, bear, hyenas, jackals, snakes and scorpions. He carried a staff to catch hold of any sheep that fell and a wooden club (Ex.22:12-13; 1 Sam. 17:34 – 36).

Although farming was more widespread and predominated the working life of Israelites in Biblical times, the farmer was not really held in high regard, especially by the Pharisees (NT), who referred to those with no religious edification as “people of the land”. The story of Cain and Abel as well as the high pedestal accorded animal (blood) sacrifices in Biblical times also pointed to the relative importance of the subsidiary occupation of livestock keep in Bible times, both OT and NT.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Name at least 3 examples each of the grain crops and other crops grown in Biblical Israel.
2. Mention the 4 major problems of the Israeli farmer in Biblical times
3. Mention three of the animals kept on Israeli farms in Biblical times and at least one use of each animal.

3.3 Building, Masons and Carpenters

Skills in building was slow in developing in Israel. As slaves in Egypt, they made bricks, but on entering Canaan showed little interest in building. The large and well fortified cities in Canaan (Nu. 13:28) were destroyed and replaced by not very impressive structures.

Some skill acquisition and use started during the time of David and Solomon, perhaps under the Phoenician influence (1Chr. 14:1); other cultures which influenced Israel were the Persian, Greek and Roman, as observed above.

The material available for building were mud, stones and boulders, limestone and wood. Bricks (often mixed with straw (Ex. 5:7-15) were widely used where stone was not plentiful.

The building work in Biblical Israel meant mainly constructing houses and city walls and digging wells, cisterns, water tunnels and grain silos. In Nehemiah 3-6 there is no evidence of skilled craftsmanship at professional expertise, although one could imagine the slow growth of skill in masonry, carpentry, etc., which definitely showed up in the construction of Herod's temple.

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Name three of the cultures that positively influenced/taught Biblical Israelites in the area of building
2. Give two reasons why building skill developed slowly in Israel.

3.4 Clothes Making

The main materials used for clothes-making were linen (from flax), sheep's wool, goat's hair and animal skins: cotton was not used in Israel until they began to import it, probably after the exile.

Israelites loved to decorate their clothes with brightly coloured fringes, borders and tassels. Gold thread was used to embroider very special clothes - e.g. for the high priest (Ex. 39:3).

Dyeing was a common practice (Gen. 30:32), the most common dyes (colours) in the Bible being blue, scarlet and purple; the last dye was a sign of royalty and wealth. The best purple came from Tyre and so was very expensive.

Dyeing was important in places with good water supply and good grazing, e.g. Gezer, Bethshemesh and Debir.

Spinning and weaving were usually done by women on a simple hand spindle, two types of which existed, viz: vertical and horizontal

When the Bible talks about embroidered cloth (Jer. 5:30; Ex. 26:16), it may refer to different cloths sewn together, or woven patterns.

Self Assessment Exercise 4

1. Name 3 common materials used for cloth-making in Israel and the source of each. Cite a Bible reference for each one.

2. Name three popular dyes and the category of people who used at least one of them. Buttress your answer with appropriate Bible sources.

3.5 Mining and Metalwork

In the book of Deuteronomy 8:9, Moses added another description of the land of Israel thus: “a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.” As it turned out, these are the only two metals native to the region of Israel (a revelation of which (to Moses), without any personal knowledge) can only be divine; gold, silver, lead, tin, mentioned in the Bible were imported.

Gold and silver were perhaps made available to Israelites at the point of their leaving Egypt. Also when they entered Canaan gold and silver formed part of the spoils of war, and when Solomon needed gold and silver for the temple and other buildings he employed experts from Phoenicia and imported gold from ‘Ophir’.

Copper was the most plentiful, found in the Sinai Peninsular, the Arabah and the Dead Sea, but since the Hebrew words for copper and bronze are the same, it is not always clear which one is meant or referred to at times.

Some have suggested that the Israelites learned the art of smelting and working copper from the Kenites (or Midianites), but there are other views as well.

Like building, the use of iron spread very slowly in Israel. When they entered Canaan, the Canaanites already had iron chariots (Jo. 17:16) and when the Philistines defeated the Israelites in the days of Samuel and Saul, they would not let them have blacksmiths of their own in case they made strong swords and spears

In NT times, there was a smith’s bazaar in Jerusalem and in the temple that Herod built in Jerusalem,

- the double gate, threshold and lintel were over laid with gold plating
- there were gold and silver lamps and bowls
- there were even spikes of gold on the roof to keep the birds away
- thousand priests were trained for the work, as no one else was allowed to enter the sacred temple area.

Self Assessment Exercise 5

1. Mention 2 native and 2 imported metals in use in Biblical Israel

2. Mention two places from where gold and silver were imported to Israel in Biblical times.
3. Describe the use of gold on Herod's temple

3.6 Pottery

Again, compared to their neighbours, Israel's pottery was poor and not very artistic, possibly because the Israelites were more concerned with usefulness. However, there was progressive improvement from the time of David. Nevertheless, in NT times a good deal of fine pottery was still being imported.

The potters of Israel would appear to work together, with their apprentices and sons, supplying pots fit for sacrificial meals in the temple courts. There also seemed to be evidence of a royal guild of potters in the service of kings (1Chr. 4:23), producing large water jar for the kings' estate. In other words, pottery was largely carried out at one site where the following were in place:

- stream or cistern water
- wheels for shaping the clay
- kilns for firing

thus Jeremiah speaks of the 'Potsherd Gate', presumably close to potter's house. Also in Nehemiah 3¹¹, and 12:38, we read of the 'Tower of the Ovens' or 'Tower of the Furnaces', all referring to pottery kilns in Jerusalem.

The commonest pottery articles were bowls, lamps, jars or pitchers, water bottles, juglets for perfume, dolls, to mention a few.

Sometimes notes or letter were written on pieces of broken pottery, e.g. the "Lachish Letters" from the commander of garrison to his superior at Lachish during king Nebuchadnezzar's final attack on Judah.

Self Assessment Exercise 6

1. List the facilities usually found in a pottery factory or place
2. Name five common pottery articles in Biblical Israel

3.7 Other Jobs (works) carried out in Biblical Israel/Bible land

3.7.1 Leatherwork

Bible references to articles made with leather (from sheep and goat-skin) include *clothes*, *belts* and *footwear*. The complete hides of small animals

were sewn together to make *bottles* for wine, water and milk. *Tents* were originally made of leather covering, but later felt or woven goats' hair was used. Leather was also used as *writing material* (e.g. the Isaiah manuscript of the Dead Sea Scrolls).

The processing of leather involved three trades

- skinning with knives
- tanning – who normally lived outside the town because of the smell (cf. Simon the tanner in Peter's encounter with Cornelius)
- shapping and sewing (cf. Paul, Agula and Priscilla (Ac. 18)

3.7.2 Fishing

In view of its prominence in the Gospels, it may be surprising to include fishing among other jobs. However, the Israelites were not much involved in it until NT times.

There is only one Hebrew word for fish, to cover everything from the smallest toddler to the great fish that swallowed Jonah. Fishing in OT times was carried out mainly by Phoenicians, the "Fish Gate" in Jerusalem indicating a market for imported fish.

By the time of Jesus, a flourishing fishing industry had developed on the sea of Galilee, with families working in family groups and hired helpers (Mt. 4:18-22; 13:47-52) Tarichaea (meaning pickling), a lakeside town probably indicated that it was a centre for settling and preserving fish.

3.7.3 Government Service

It would be an exaggeration to talk of a 'civil service' in Biblical Israel, but throughout Bible history, there was always a need for people to serve as administrators, tax collectors and secretaries. From the time of Moses, and even before, leaders were appointed to serve the community, e.g. census in the desert; service in the tabernacle; assistance in sharing the Promised Land among the 12 tribes; settling cases, etc.

Solomon organized the country into 12 administrative districts and officers made responsible for collecting tax due to the king while another department dealt with drafting men for enforced work (task masters in Egypt)

The Romans sold to the Jewish agents the right to collect certain tax (cf. the tax collectors of Jesus' day who were bitterly resented by most of the Jews, but loved by Jesus (Lk. 19:1-9).

The collecting and recording of the tax was probably a specialized occupation, just as that of secretaries who wrote letters and took dictations (cf. Baruch, Jeremiah's Secretary (Jer. 32:11-12; 36:4))

3.7.4 Trade and Commerce

In OT times, trade and commerce took the following forms:

- **Land sale:** Abraham purchased a field and cave from Ephron the Hittite. Other examples included Jeremiah (Jer. 32); Joseph in Egypt during the 7 years of farming (Gen. 47); rich men buying up the land of those who were unable to pay their debts.
- **Local trade:** As shown above, farming in Israel was mainly subsistence farming. There were, however, a few items they could not produce, e.g. pottery, metal tools and weapons (see above). Travel and transport were also difficult (see below). So for a long time, local trade was very simple, giving way to markets later on at the gates of towns and cities where farm produce, sheep and goats were sold. Potters and smiths also made and sold their goods, including outside the country.
- **International trade:** Three factors led Israel to international trade at the time of the kings.
 - growth of industries (see above under work), which needed imported raw materials, especially metal working and clothes making (see above)
 - Israel's conquest of new territories on international trade routes
 - The kings had their eyes on creating wealth and buying luxury goods
- The fact that traders were popularly called Canaanites suggests the Israelites did not feature in international trade to start with (Is. 23:8). But when they joined, they were not different. Thus, Amos (12:8) says: "The people of Israel are as dishonest as the Canaanites; they love to cheat their customers with false scales" in spite of the several warnings to the contrary.

The 'Roman peace' provided ample opportunities for trade. Consequently, in NT times, in Palestine, the profession of merchant was held in great respect and even the priests engaged in commerce.

In spite of Jerusalem's remote highland position, no fewer than 118 different kinds of luxury goods were being sold there. There were 7 different markets, and there was a busy trade in goods required for worship at the temple, especially animals for sacrifice (Mt. 20:20-28)

The Jewish rabbis had strict rules for business deals and there were market inspectors to see that these rules were carried out/obeyed, e.g:

- scales and weights had to be cleaned regularly
- buyers had the rights to complain
- no interest was to be charged
- personal belongings could be handed over as security against a loan, but essentials such as cloaks, ploughs and millstone were not to be sold in the event of non- payment (all rules traced to the OT, but especially emphasized at the time of Jesus).

3.7.5 War, Weapons and Warriors

3.7.5.1 Introduction

War was a dominant theme in the OT, in spite of the law against murder. However most Israelite wars were “holy wars” the ‘Lord’s war’.

After the exile, Israel changed from a belligerent to a peace-loving State, seeing war more as the work of Satan than of God. In addition, they hoped that God would send His own warrior – king to fight a “final battle” and bring victory and peace to His people, either in this world or in the next, i.e. the concept of the coming Messiah.

When Jesus came, however, He rejected this view of the Messiah, but rather came to bring God’s peace. Christians then came to be seen as “soldiers engaged in a spiritual war against evil” in which victory is certain, having been won for them by Jesus on the cross of calvary.

3.7.5.2 The Army

From quite early days of Israel’s history, every man was called to be a soldier. He could be summoned by a tribal leader, as Abraham did with his men against Lot’s captors.

Each tribe protected its territory but sometimes helped one another, e.g. in the resistance against Canaanites and Philistines

There was no standing army until Saul’s time as king, when he appointed 3000 men as a permanent army. David was a military genius who, under Joab, captured Jerusalem and taught Israelites new methods of warfare.

This continued until after the exile when, as noted above, the army was 'disbanded'; except for one short period when non-Jewish and Jewish soldiers were employed and paid wages.

Self Assessment Exercise 7

1. Write short notes on the following activities (jobs) carried out in Biblical Israel.
 - Leather work
 - Fishing
 - Government service
 - Trade and commerce
 - War, weapons and warriors,
 touching on at least 3 of these as appropriate
 - factors
 - features/attributes
 - products
2. State 4 of the rules governing business transactions in Biblical times
3. Comment on Jesus' teaching on wars, or contrast Jesus' idea of Messiah with that of the traditional Jew

3.8 Discussion

If you have followed this lesson, you would have discovered one very important feature, namely, that it overlaps with several of the others before it, especially units 11, 12 and 13. This is to be expected since work and working life do not exist on their own but hang on the people's culture (part-developed by the work the people do) religion, and social life. It will, therefore, pay you well if you study them (the units) together.

Indeed, this closeness does not stop with the human topics in this module, but extends to the physical as well, especially those on the natural resources of the country on which the culture, religion, social life and work and working life of the people hang.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This is the last unit on the human geography of Israel/Bible land and I hope you have found it to be an interesting one as I have done. It has served a major purpose of bringing the material in Module 2 and 3 together and, to a large extent, the entire course on the geography of the Bible land or Bible Geography.

It is my hope that you are able to discover some of these linkages, upon which the entire course rests. Note in particular that link among and between type of work; materials needed; source of the materials, operational rules in a religious nation; the culture and foreign influence.

5.0 SUMMARY

You must have discovered, as I have stressed all along that the Bible is a veritable source of information on people and their ways of life, especially the ordinary people. This is what this unit has presented for the work and society life of the people of Israel and Bible land in Biblical times. Among the topics covered are:

- Background information
- Examples of major work:
 - Farming
 - Building, Masons and carpenter
 - Clothes – malarig
 - Mining and metalwork
 - Pottery
- Examples of minor (other) work
 - Leatherwork
 - Fishing
 - Government Service
 - Trade and commerce
 - War, weapons and warriors

In doing this, I have drawn real life examples from the Bible, the major source of information, in an attempt to further stress *the truth and reality of the Bible, a book provided by God to showcase Himself as the Creator, Owner and Ruler of nations.*

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Certificate

1. Mention 3 examples of trades and crafts common in OT Israel/Bible land
2. Name 3 examples of the grains grown in Israel/Bible land in Bible times
3. Name 3 popular dyes in Biblical Israel and identify the category of people one of them represents.
4. Write short notes on three of the following jobs mentioned in the Bible:

(a) building (b) clothes-making (c) fishing (d) pottery (e) trade and commerce

Diploma

1. Mention 4 major problems faced by the Israeli farmer in Biblical times and discuss one of them briefly.
2. State 4 of the rules of trade and commerce in NT Israel and trace two of them to their OT origin.
3. Write short notes on 3 of the following, viz-a-viz biblical Israel
 - Mining and metalwork
 - War, weapons and warriors
 - Government service
 - Trade and commerce
 - Fishing

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

The Holy Bible (different versions)

The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible: Life and times, meaning and message a comprehensive guide, 1987: A Lion Book, Tring, Herts, England.

UNIT 5 A CREATED EARTH SACRED TO GOD

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 A sacred earth/creation
 - 3.2 Created man as God's image
 - 3.3 A created Earth and its implication
 - 3.3.1 Introduction
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- 3.3.3 Attractions or relevance creation theory to the concept of a sacred earth
- 3.4 Sacred earth – the core of Bible Geography
- 3.5 Sacred – Earth Ministry and Bible Geography
- 3.6 Discussion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The concept of a “sacred earth” is mentioned in many places in the Bible, particularly as the place where God’s people dwell. Examples include:

- **Mt. Horeb**, the Holy Mountain, the mountain of God (Ex. 3:1; 1 Kg 19:8)
- **Hill of God**, in Gibeah (1 Sam. 10:5)
- **Gilgal**, the camp of the Israelites while preparing to enter the Promised Land (Jos. 5:15)
- **Mt. Zion**, originally “the city of David,” later “the most significant of all sacred places to the prophets” (Is. 4:5; Jer. 31:6; Zec. 8:2-3); also applied to the whole of Israel, the holy land of the Bible.

Consequently, a concept of “holy land” has developed and applied to places where God’s people live (cf. Faniran 2001a: 2-4). This concept, however, seems to apply more restrictively to historical Israel or Palestine, i.e. the land promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (see units 4 and 5) and more generally to any place where God’s people dwell. Today, this can be taken to cover the entire earth, i.e. to all places occupied by all people “who accept the Bible as part of their cultural heritage (Hareuveni, 1980:6). Thus, it is not only Israel that is, today, referred to as “holy land” but also Saudi Arabia and a number of other “sacred” spots in various countries.

It is argued here, as elsewhere by your tutor and other people of like mind, that this is the way God views His creation generally and parts thereof in particular, as expressed in the Bible. It is the fundamental message of Bible Geography, which I shall use to wrap up the course.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Accordingly, this lesson/unit will address the following objectives, among others:

- i. Explore the concept of a sacred earth/creation
- ii. Explore the concept of humans as God's image and likeness
- iii. Recount and discuss the Biblical story of creation
- iv. Relate the idea of a created earth to that of responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship
- v. Present the concept of a sacred earth as the core of Bible Geography

In the end, it is hoped that some meaning will be breathed into the course that will make it real and relevant to contemporary issues in both religion (Christian theology), on the one hand and land and people (geography, on the other hand).

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 A Sacred Earth/Creation

The word "sacred", both from the dictionary and common usage, means:

- associated or dedicated to God
- regarded with reverence, awe, etc, on account of its connection with God
- dedicated to some people or cause
- connected with religion (i.e. not secular), sacrosanct, respected and, therefore, protected/secured from damage or violation

(The word "holy" is used in a similar sense as shown above)

On its own part, the word "earth", although used in various ways in the Bible as well as literally, is more generally understood in terms of the land or earth on which humans, animals and plants live, with special reference to planet earth's surface or near surface.

Consequently, the concept of a *sacred earth* connotes and basis on the principle that being part of God's creation, completely owned or possessed by Him (Ps. 24:1), humans as the earth's benevolent beneficiaries (Gen. 2:15; Ps. 115:16) should handle their land and the resources there in with care, caution, reverence, awe and fear of God, failure to do which will attract serious sanction, similar to, or even more serious than those, prescribed for breaking earthly laws. The way God used natural events to punish as well as bless are cases in point (see unit 10, among others), while Job puts it thus:

*God sends rain to water the earth
He may send it to punish men
to show them His favour.*

(see also Revelation 11:8)

The idea of a *sacred earth* is closely linked and tied to the story of creation, i.e. that God created the earth for His will and glory (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11). This is also the meaning and impart of God creating humans in His own image and likeness, to have dominion over the created earth (see Faniran 2001b, pp 6-8; 2004, chaps 1 and 2)

The message of *sacred earth* has also been extended to that of responsible living (see below), including:

- God's purpose for a good and perfect earth
- God's claim on the earth and all that is in it
- Divine view of nature generally,
which are all significant aspects of Bible Geography, which is at the interface between the Bible (theology) and the scientific study of the earth or geography.

Your tutor has been “preaching” the message of a *sacred earth* for more than a decade; some of the material of which are being used for this course. Three of the books written by him (your tutor) are particularly useful for this unit as much of the material has been taken from them (see Faniran 2001a, b, 2004)

Self Assessment Exercise 1

1. Define the words ‘sacred’ and ‘earth’ and the phrase ‘sacred earth’
2. Tell in brief the story of creation in Genesis 1. You can use the table on p. 10 of *Nature in the Bible*, used for Module 2 of this course; see also p.2 of *Tenants on Earth*, by your tutor (included under references).

3.2 Created Humans as God's Image

This is taken from the title of a book by your tutor (Faniran 2001b), which makes the following points, among others:

- It is God's own designation:
Then God said, “Let us create man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the cattles and over all the earth (Gen. 1:26)
- Other references include Genesis 9:6 and 1 Cor. 11:7, while John stott (1990:34) explains the concept as follows:

The Godlikeness of humankind emerges as the story (of creation) unfolds: men and women are rational and moral beings (able to understand and respond to God's commands) responsible beings (exercising dominion over nature,) social beings (with a capacity to love and be loved), and spiritual beings (finding their highest fulfillment in knowing and worshipping their creator).

- Charles L. Birch, in his *Nature and God* made valuable observation on the concept, both of divine creation and of humans as God's image and likeness, as follows:
 - Creation is the concrete realization of what is potentially possible in the universe and illustrates the possibility of life when there was none, which can then develop to any level of complexity
 - Creation is the lifting of constraints on matter, or the physical by the spiritual, the realization of potentiality or possibility through God's power
 - In creation man is supposed to be aware of the process and attributes of creation its orderliness, perfection, efficiency, etc., which should be guideposts of man's activities (on and in relation to the earth)
 - Creation represents continued interaction, inter-relationship and interconnections between the creator and the creature (including humans as God's image and likeness [Faniran 2001b, pp. 7-8]).
- God gives specific injunctions to humans in the Bible, all of which are meant to guide their relationship with the earth and its resources, so as to bring about sustainable development, i.e. guarantee prosperous living for both the living and their descendants yet unborn. Among these injunctions are:
 - rule or have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26)
 - procreate (Gen. 1:28)
 - use plants and animals for food (Gen. 1:29 – 30)
 - dress and keep the earth (Gen. 2:15)
 - see physical things (creation) as God's handiwork which is precious to Him

All these and other injunctions are discussed in the book titled *Man as God's Image*, by your tutor (see under references)

Self Assessment Exercise 2

State 2 implications of human being created in God's image and likeness

3.3 A Created Earth and its Implications

3.3.1 Introduction

For a long time in history, virtually all humans had a supernatural explanation for the origin of the earth and all that is in it. One such explanation is the Biblical story of creation, which is subscribed to by Judaists, Christians and Moslems, among others. This situation changed radically with the debut of the *theory of evolution* in science, which offered a big challenge and has displaced the creation theory in many countries, especially among the scientific community. Yet the creation theory retains certain attributes which recommend it especially to those concerned about a sustainable earth in particular and healthy Christianity in general.

At least two points need to be made in defence of creation theory for today's people, namely that (a) the Bible has very strong points against or effectively counters the contending theory of organic evolution, (b) the attractions of the theory of organic evolution and (c) attraction of the creation theory to the sacred-earth idea generally and a sustainable earth in particular.

3.3.2 Biblical Objections to Evolution

The objections to the theory of organic evolution stem principally from the implications of its tenets for faith in God and His place in creation. Three of these implications are:

- *Belief regarding the Bible.* To Bible people, a contradiction of any part of the book, such as the organic theory evolution does, is unacceptable, an apostasy and unforgivable offence to God, more so when it has resulted in generations of Godless people, mainly in the western world. A world without God is one without purpose, a *raison d'être*.
- *Belief regarding Jesus Christ.* The Bible presents Jesus Christ as the Creator of the universe as well as the Saviour and Redeemer of humankind; any contradiction of this makes the Bible a falsehood and the Gospels meaningless and unnecessary:
For by Him (Jesus Christ) all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col. 1:16–17)
- *Belief in a Supreme Being/Intelligent Builder.* Perhaps the greatest support for the creation story, as contained in the Bible, is the case made in favour of a divine, supernatural builder/maker which explains the observed phenomena on earth, from our awesome universe; our uniquely designed (planet) earth; the amazing cell;

human's incredible brain; the unique blood system of humans and animals; the superbly designed eye of animals that no camera can duplicate; the way all body organs cooperate without our conscious effort; and the fantastic new and continuously growing creations by human in response to God's charge or injunction to have dominion over God's creation (see Faniran, 2004: 102).

3.3.2 Attractions or relevance Creation theory to the concept of a Sacred Earth

Perhaps the worst effect of the evolution idea, as noted above, is a life without God, with all its implications of an empty, boring, fleeting, repetitive and frustrating life (Ecc. 2:1-11).

Faithlessness has had its toll; in the way the "modern man", all over the world relate to the environment generally and the world resources in particular. Specifically, the tendency to "conquer" nature and arbitrarily exploit it to the point of destroying it is far removed from the position of God, which shows clearly in the Bible, that humans are:

- tenants on earth, having been so decreed by God who gave it to them (Ps. 115:16)
- to replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28a)
- to be under God's will and laws (Ps. 47:3; 1 Cor. 15:28)
- to work or cultivate and protect or take care of the earth (Gen. 2:15)
- to obey God's commands, will and purpose (Eph. 3:11)
- see themselves as His image and likeness

The Bible also, in addition to the specific injunctions for a sustainable earth, points to the "permanency" of the earth as the home of humans, as long as they live under His will, His laws:

- ... Never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done (Gen. 8:21)
- The righteous will inherit the land (earth) and dwell in it for ever (Ps. 37:29; Is. 60:21).
- Generations go, but the earth remains for ever (Ecc. 1:4)
- I will not destroy Israel again (Hos. 11:9b)

The divine purpose for the earth, especially that of "permanent inheritance" by humans:

For this is what the LORD say – he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth; he did not create it to be empty, but to be inhabited ... (Is. 45:18)

God also purposes to destroy those who destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18)

The Bible stresses that the earth is His footstool (1Chr. 28:2).

All these and more confirm the Bible generally and divine creation, as described in the Bible, in particular, as a veritable tool for advancing the concept of a *sacred earth*, with all its implications for sustainable development and consequently a sustainable earth, the permanent home of humans.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

1. Provide two implications of the concept of a created earth as described in the Bible
2. Read up material as the theory of organic evolution and state two major Biblical objections to the theory (Your textbook – *Tenants on Earth* – is useful here).
3. Mention three advantages of a sacred earth viewpoint vis-à-vis a sustainable world.

3.4 Sacred Earth – the Core of Bible Geography

Read units 1-3 again, with particular reference to the “definition” of Bible Geography as an interface discipline or course between the land (earth) and the people of the Bible land. As such, the concept of a *sacred earth* belongs to the core of the course. This is because the course focuses people of God, i.e. those who hold the Bible as the true word and mind of God and endeavour to live by its precepts.

As an interface discipline, the way people relate to their environment is very important, which the people of the Bible clearly show, especially in the way they observed and kept divine injunctions and regulations on created things. Examples include the regulations:

- against pollution of rivers (Module 2 Unit 2)
- against destruction of forest (Module 2 Unit 3)
- towards kindness to animals (Module 2 Unit 4)

The way religion permeated the entire life of the Israelites (units 13 and 14) is another pointer to the close link between God and His creation.

Perhaps the best and most relevant point regarding a sacred earth/creation is the way God uses all the elements for His purpose. This runs throughout the entire course with God of the Bible controlling both nature and humans. In other words, the concept of a sacred earth runs through Bible Geography, without which it (Bible Geography) loses its “soul”.

Self Assessment Exercise 3

1. Cite three statements in the Bible which seek to protect the earth from human indiscriminate use. Give a Bible reference for each
2. Cite two themes that run through both Bible Geography and Sacred Earth.

3.5 Sacred – Earth Ministry and Bible Geography

This is where we can cast a glimpse at the ongoing effort to preach the gospel of a sacred earth to Christians in particular and the world in general. The following are highlights of this endeavour/message

- The Sacred-Earth Ministry (SEM) started a few years back (as hinted above) in answer to a divine message to that effect (see Faniran 2001a, b)
- It has the following assignments:
 - *Vision.* To preach the sacredness of God's creation
 - *Mission.*
 - + To reach the world with the divine message of a created universe belonging to God
 - + To spread the message of responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship leading to the preservation, protection and proper management of the earth
 - + To raise a band of disciples ready to work for a harmonious God – human- nature relationship
 - *Strategy.*
 - + Search the holy books and related literature for information on
 - God's revelation in His creation;
 - God's injunctions, instructions and commands on and demands for the preservation of nature;
 - God's love for His creation in general and nature in particular;
 - God's expectations from His people to love for Him, other human beings and entire created things
 - + Rub minds with spirit – led people, such as scientists, philosophers, religionists, etc., regarding information on God, humans and nature.
 - + Disseminate the acquired knowledge through:
 - publications – books, etc.;
 - media (print and electronic, internet, etc.);
 - sermons (lectures, addresses, seminars, conference, etc.)

- + Train disciples to spread the message of a universe created by God and dear and sacred to Him.
- + Work with theological and other institutions with similar concerns and commitments to develop and disseminate the message of a divine universe sacred to the Lord.
- + Undertake environment – friendly development projects and humanitarian activities that focus God’s love and promote best practices of responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship.

This is, therefore, an invitation to you to join this vanguard of people committed to obeying God’s laws and injunctions for the responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship of God’s creation in general and our environment in particular.

Self Assessment Exercise 4

1. State the *vision* and the *mission* of (SEM)
2. Mention two strategies of SEM which are important and crucial to Bible Geography

3.6 Discussion

Your attention has been drawn to some of the books already published by your tutor on the topic or concept of *Sacred Earth*, which is fundamental to proper understanding of the message of the Bible generally and that of Bible Geography in particular. The list is contained under references, even though not all of them are directly needed for this course. However, they have been written with very important theological message in mind, especially about God, earth and humans, with God in the centre, controlling the events on earth as well as the affairs of humans, both collectively, as in the example of the Israelites (focused in this course) and individually (e.g. the various Biblical characters discussed).

You are welcome in the Ministry, which is already extending its operation to seminaries and Bible colleges, especially those belonging to the Baptist denomination. However, the message is universal and everybody is welcome, including non-Christians. The contact addresses are:

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- c/o Rev. Professor J.A. Ilori
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UI P.O. Box 9085

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○ Tel, 234: 02 – 8101822

0802 - 327 - 9491

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4.0 CONCLUSION

I hope you have got the message both of this unit and the entire course, i.e. that of a sacred earth in particular and harmonious relationship between humans and nature (under God) in general. That the earth is sacred to God and should be treated as such is well established in the Bible (Ex. 3:5; Jos. 5:15) while Israel, among other places where God's people live, are popularly called "holy land". God also decrees that because He is holy, His people and entire creation should be holy, inviolate undefiled and unpolluted (Lev. 11:44 – 45; Is. 2:2).

5.0 SUMMARY

I have discussed the following in this unit:

- The concept of a sacred earth/creation
- Created humans as God's image and likeness
- The created earth and its implications
- A sacred earth, the core of Bible Geography
- Sacred – Earth Ministry and Bible Geography

All the topics lead to one conclusion, i.e. that the concept of a sacred earth sums up the message of both the Bible and that of Bible Geography.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Certificate

1. Define the words "sacred" and "earth" briefly
2. Tell a brief history of the Biblical Creation
3. State the implication of the concept of humans as God's image and likeness

Diploma

1. Explain the concept of a sacred earth in relation to human use of the natural/resources of the earth.

2. State two implications of the concept of man as God's image and relate them to the purpose of God for His creation
3. Compare the merits and demerits of the theories of creation and evolution, vis-à-vis the future of the earth as the inheritance of humans
4. Discuss the vision and mission of the Sacred Earth Ministry in relation to Bible Geography.

TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS FOR CTH 111”

Certificate

1. Compare and contrast the two sets of definitions above – dictionaries and encyclopedias. Mention at least one thing that is common to both and one thing that separates them.
3. List the topics to be covered in this course (see course guide) and consider whether, in the light of the definitions, above, any one does not really belong.
 3. Compile a list of foremost geographers named above in this unit and write at least one important contribution made by each.
4. Justify in your own words, the inclusion of Bible Geography in your programme, based on what you have learnt in this unit.
5. Comment on the statement “in the beginning God,” vis-à-vis the theologians approach to working out the age of the earth.
6. Comment briefly on the view that the Biblical creation is just one of the fables speculating on the origin of the world.
9. Write out the terms of the new covenant(s) God made with Noah after the flood.
10. Try your hand at drawing a map showing the route taken by Abram from Ur to Beersheba (use a suitable Bible). You can also show Egypt and Assyria on the same map. It will help you have a clearer view of the reality of the Bible land.
11. Go back to your map under 3.1 and add as many of the nations and peoples under this section as possible.
10. Assemble the Bible references on this region (both cited here as well as others you can find) and from them comment on the way God sees the plain of Sharon as distinct from the way humans see the place in Biblical times.
11. Write down 3 things each you now know about (a) the land and (b) the people of the Philistines, which you did not know before.
12. Use a Bible text to define/describe the boundary of the Promised Land, preferably including the Canaanite nations to be incorporated into it.
13. Give at least two synonyms of the word “land” as from the Bible.

14. Find your previous notes or textbook on integrated science and list the physical properties of water, paying attention to properties not included in this unit.
15. With reference to Jacob's Well, examine the roles of wells in Biblical Israel.
16. Comment on the concept of Jesus as Living Water/Water of Life.
17. Comment briefly on the statement that the Bible is a veritable 'museum' for the trees and shrubs of Israel/Bible land.
18. Enumerate at least 5 possible uses of trees and shrubs
19. Compile a short/comprehensive list of the trees and shrubs mentioned in this unit.
20. Paraphrase the 'parable of the trees' as told in Judges 9 and give a succinct explanation of the parable
21. Mention 3 ways animals glorify God
22. Mention and discuss two important provisions God made for animals to survive.
23. Compile a short list, 5 each where available (in tabular form) of land, sea and air animals found in the Bible, cite one Bible reference for each mention.
24. Compile a short list (minimum 10) of the atmospheric elements included in this unit.
25. List at least 3 symbolic uses of the word 'cloud' in the Bible
26. Mention two ways in which drought is used to punish sin in the Bible.
27. State two ways each in which the sun and the moon are different
28. Compare the Biblical story of creation with any other story you know, e.g. the Yoruba mythology.
29. Cite two significant events in each of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges that shed light on the historical development of the Israeli people and nation.
30. State 2 important legacies left by each of the following:
 - (a) the Patriarchs
 - (b) the leaders/judges
 - (c) the kings
31. State one positive and one negative impact each one of the 5 nations/peoples studied in this unit made on the Jews of the Bible.
32. Mention three important personalities in the OT
33. Identify three major features of OT teaching and describe one of them briefly
34. Mention 4 OT legacies in the NT teaching and explain one of them
35. Highlight two of the Jewish practices adopted by the Christian church, showing one significant change made in each case

36. Mention 3 polygamists in the Bible. State the number of wives and concubines each one of them had
37. State three important duties of fathers in the OT
38. Enumerate two important features of the following aspects of family life in Biblical Israel:
 - (a) Hospitality
 - (b) Food and drinks
 - (c) Clothing, fashions and cosmetics
39. Mention 3 examples of trades and crafts common in OT Israel/Bible land
40. Name 3 examples of the grains grown in Israel/Bible land in Bible times
41. Name 3 popular dyes in Biblical Israel and identify the category of people one of them represents.
42. Write short notes on three of the following jobs mentioned in the Bible:
 - (a) building (b) clothes-making (c) fishing (d) pottery (e) trade and commerce
43. Define the words “sacred” and “earth” briefly
44. Tell a brief history of the Biblical Creation
45. State the implication of the concept of humans as God’s image and likeness

Diploma

1. Compare and contrast any two definitions of geography you have learnt in this unit.
2. Discuss the operational definition of “Bible Geography”
3. Justify the inclusion of bible Geography in your programme
4. What will you say is the core or holistic roots of geography and how this relates to the Bible?
5. Discuss the view that the Biblical creation story is not just one of the fables speculating on the origin of things but rather a statement of divine truth
6. Compare and contrast the terms of the covenants God made with Abraham and Noah.
7. Draw an annotated map of the Ancient World showing the location of all the nations and peoples mentioned in this unit.
8. Distinguish between Palestine and Israel in the Old Testament eras with special period.
9. Attempt a definition of the territories known as Palestine during the Old Testament times.
10. Turn to Psalm 48:1-2 and comment based on what you’ve learnt about Judah and Jerusalem in this part of the unit.

11. Use your Bible to find out at least two events that took place in each of the towns covered by Jesus around L. Galilee, during His early ministry.
12. Contrast the life in the 6 regions discussed above from life in the wilderness and dryland described in this section.
13. With reference to the geography of Israel, explain the epithet: “a land flowing with milk and honey”.
14. Discuss the importance of mountains in worship in Biblical times.
15. Consider the appropriateness of the analogy between, on the one hand, rock and rock fragments, and, on the other hand, Jesus and His followers.
16. Enumerate the various symbolic usages of the word ‘cloud’ in the Bible and explain one of them.
17. Discuss at least two uses of the phrase ‘day of the Lord’ in the Bible
18. Comment on the Psalmist view of the heavens and heavenly bodies.
19. Mention two examples of NT teaching which changed the OT status of women and children. Describe one of them in some detail
20. Cite two examples of the use of Israel’s family/society setting to communicate deep spiritual meaning/message and discuss one of them briefly
21. Mention 4 major problems faced by the Israeli farmer in Biblical times and discuss one of them briefly.
22. State 4 of the rules of trade and commerce in NT Israel and trace two of them to their OT origin.
23. Write short notes on 3 of the following, viz-a-viz biblical Israel
 - Mining and metalwork
 - War, weapons and warriors
 - Government service
 - Trade and commerce
 - Fishing
24. Explain the concept of a sacred earth in relation to human use of the natural/resources of the earth.
25. State two implications of the concept of man as God’s image and relate them to the purpose of God for His creation
26. Compare the merits and demerits of the theories of creation and evolution, vis-avis the future of the earth as the inheritance of humans
27. Discuss the vision and mission of the Sacred Earth Ministry in relation to Bible Geography.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Faniran, A. 2001, *Man as God's Image*. SEM Monograph 1, Man and Nature Study/Action Centre, Ibadan

——— 2001, *Nature in the Bible: A Commentary on God's Revelation in His creation* SEM Monograph 2: Ibid.

——— 2003, *Christian Love and Practice 1: General Principles and Discourse*. SEM Monograph 3: Ibid.

——— and N.T. Akinola, 2003, *Christian Love and Practice 2: Guide to Church, Social and Care Ministries*. SEM Monograph 4: Ibid

——— 2004, *Tenants on Earth: A Compilation of Sermons on God, Humans and the Earth*. SEM Monograph : Ibid

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The Holy Bible (different versions)

Stott, J. 1984, *Understanding the Bible*. (op. cit.)

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL TEXTUAL ABBREVIATIONS

Ac	Acts	Ju	Jude
Am	Amos	Jud/Jdg	Judges
Chr	Chronicles	Kgs	Kings
Col	Colossians	Lam	Lamentations
Cor	Corinthians	Lev	Leviticus
Dan	Daniel	Mal	Malachi
Deut	Deuteronomy	Mic	Micah
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Mk	Mark
Eph	Ephesians	Mt/Matt	Matthew

Exo	Exodus	Nah	Nahum
Ez	Ezra	Neh	Nehemiah
Eze/Ezek	Ezekiel	Nu/Num	Numbers
Gal	Galatians	Oba	Obadiah
Gen	Genesis	Pe/Pet	Peter
Hab	Habakkuk	Phil	Philippians
Hag	Haggai	Prov	Proverbs
Heb	Hebrew	Ps	Psalms
Hos	Hosea	Rev	Revelation
Is/Isa	Isaiah	Rom	Romans
Jam/Jas	James	Ru	Ruth
Jb	Job	Sam	Samuel
Jer	Jeremiah	Song	Song of Solomon/Song of Songs
Jl	Joel	Thes	Thessalonians
Jn	John	Tim	Timothy
Jon	Jonah	Zech	Zechariah
Jos	Joshua	Zeph	Zephaniah

FIGURES AND MAPS

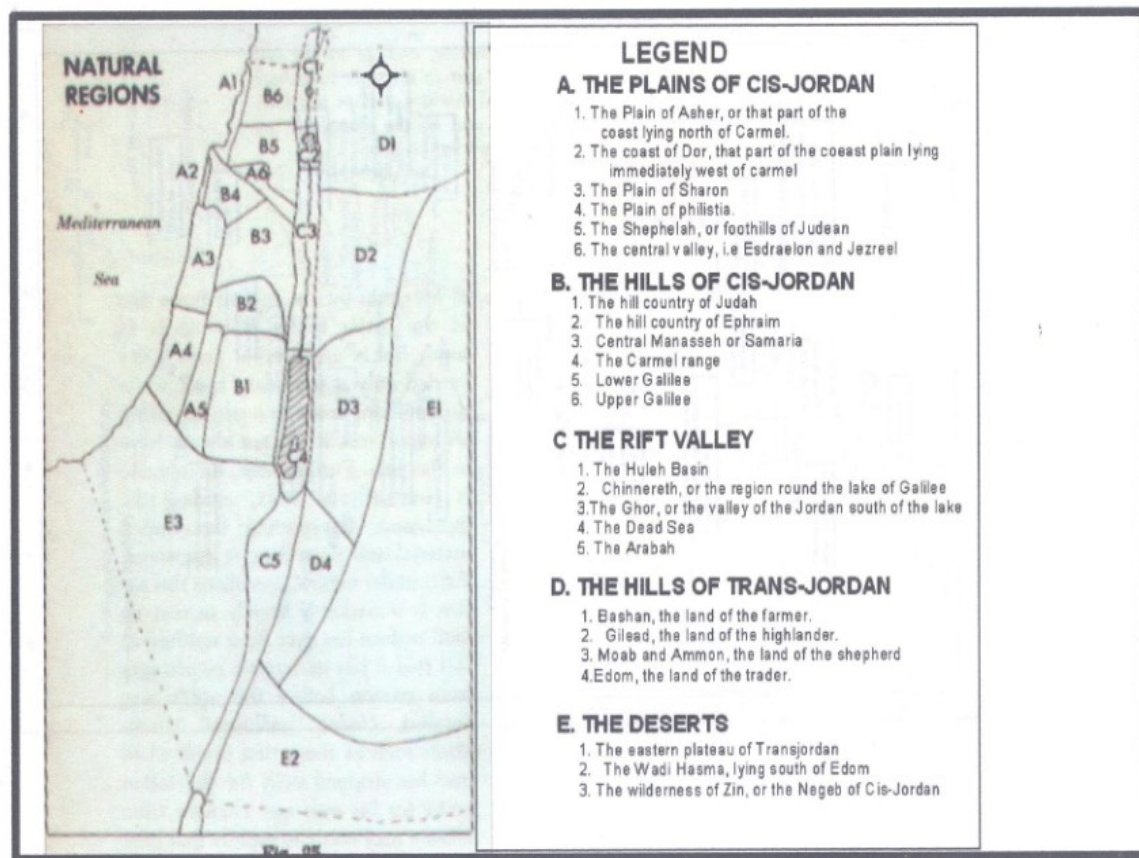


Fig. 5.1: The Natural Regions of Israel/Bible land

Fig. 5.2: Israel/Bible Land and Jesus Ministry

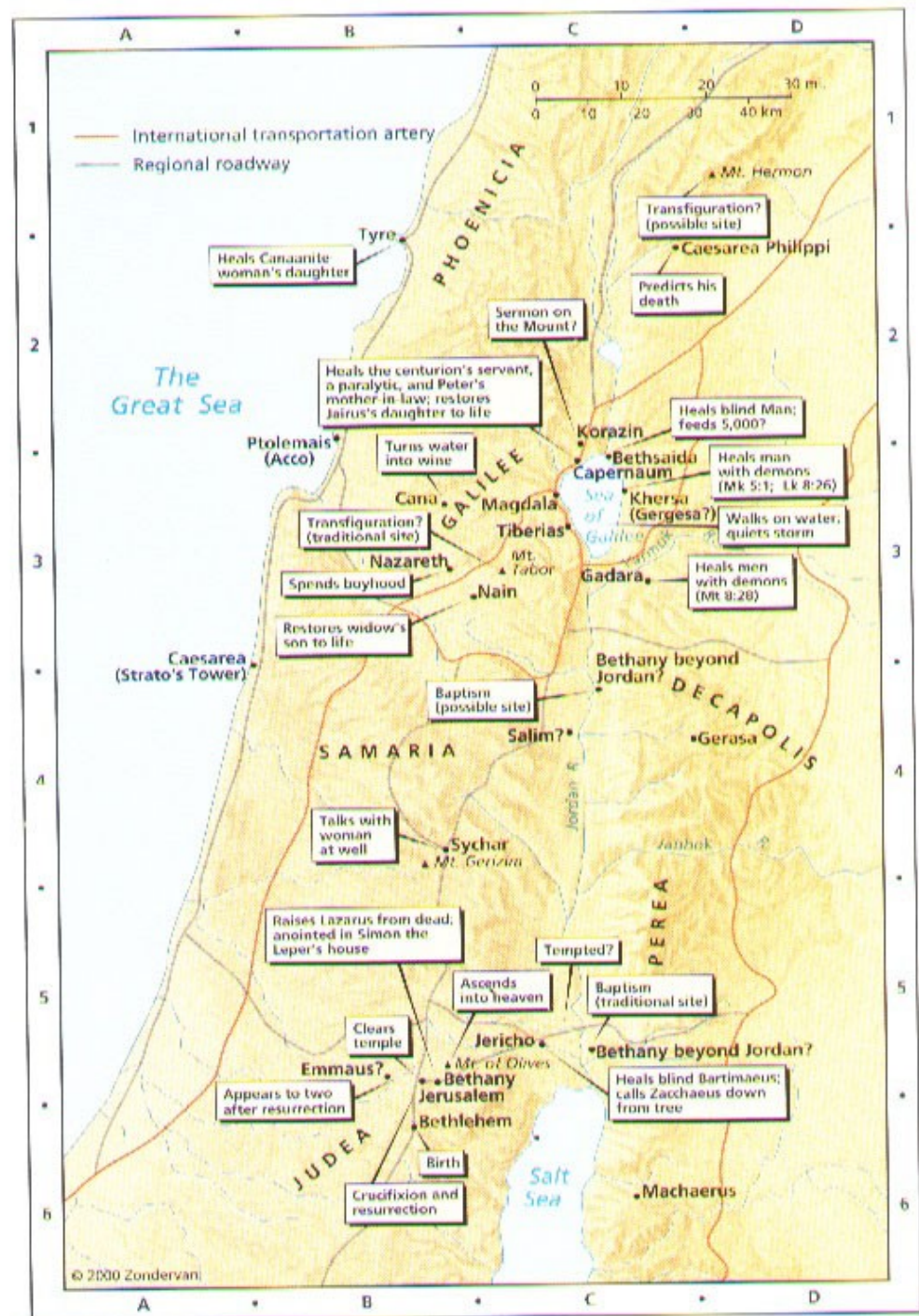


Fig. 5.3: The Land of Twelve Tribes of Israel

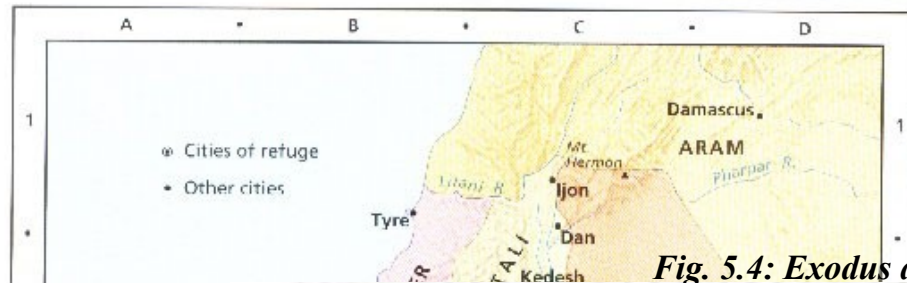


Fig. 5.4: Exodus and the Conquest of Canaan

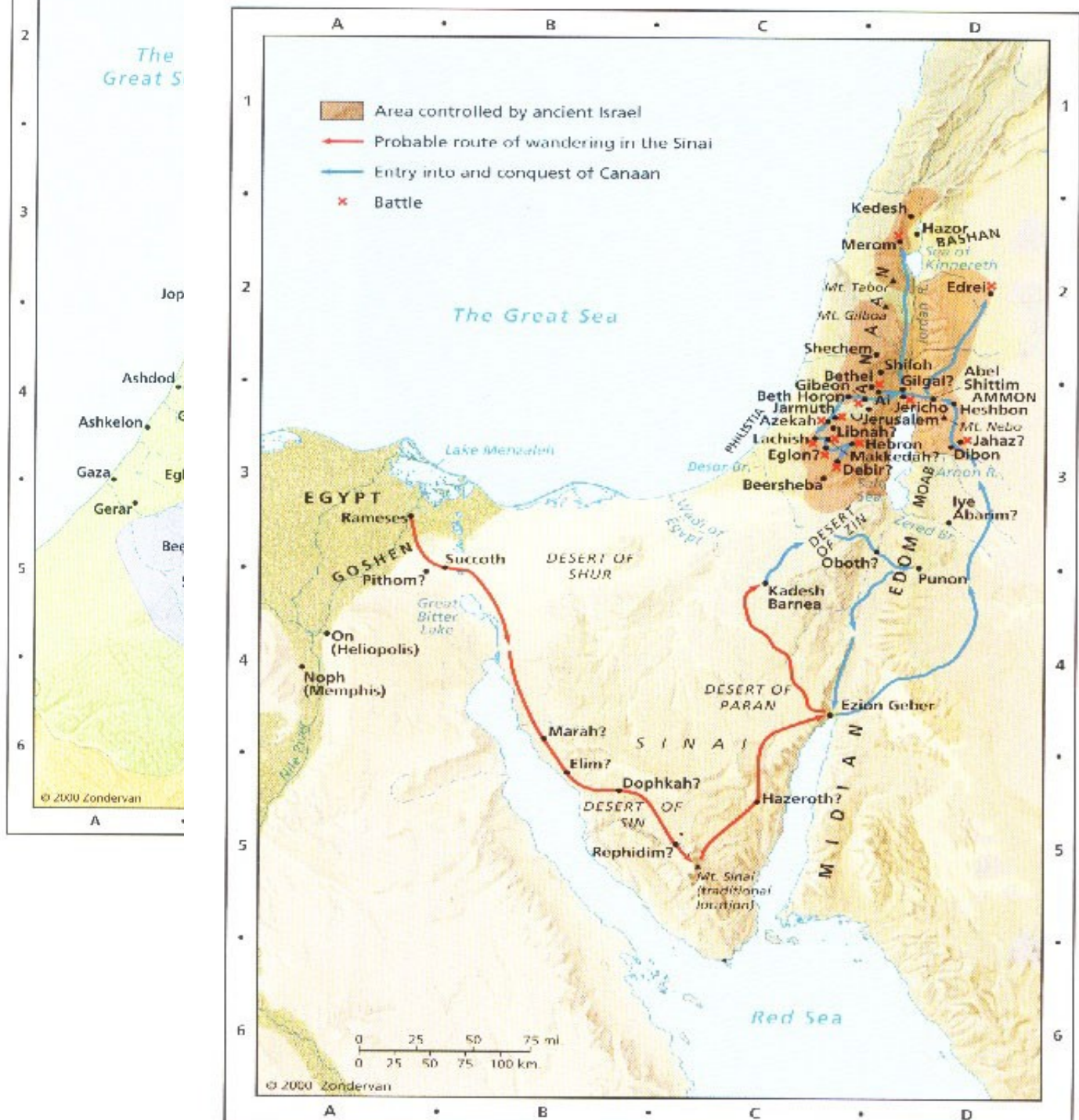


Fig 6.1: Kingdom of David and Solomon