



Walking Through
**The Land
of the Bible**

Historical 3D Adventure



James H. Charlesworth | Michael Medina

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The Holy Land is a topographical wonder. It is a small land one can traverse, north to south, in nine hours by car, being less than 135 km (85 miles) wide at the broadest point and approximately 470 km (294 miles) long. Even the weary traveler is frequently astounded by such a menagerie of marvels: a snow-capped mountain, cascading waterfalls, a large fresh-water lake, a mystical river, majestic hills, shifting sand dunes, a lunaresque wilderness, the earth's lowest point, a lifeless sea, a foreboding desert, a large natural makhtesh (a pseudo-crater), the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. Within these natural wonders and from time immemorial, we and the likes of those who composed the Psalms and Isaiah have marveled over our Creator's imagination. God endowed "the Holy Land" with inspiring vistas. What enhances all experiences of the topographical wonders is the biblical recital of God's Mighty Deeds in this Land. These miracles and promises define the so-called Religions of the Book: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The miraculous biblical stories helped define the essence of western culture and fired vivid imaginations and shared dreams.

The Holy Land is part of the Fertile Crescent, the birthplace of civilization. The earliest humans

living near the Mediterranean Sea date back to 200,000 - 400,000 BCE. They left behind stone and flint tools. Near their remains are animal bones; these have cuts made by knives but no teeth marks. These common ancestors brought with them into world culture many advances, including stone tools and means of living together. Thousands of years later, others living in the Holy Land bequeathed to us a primitive language and then an alphabet. The earliest of these hunter-gatherers probably migrated from Africa; they were the first inhabitants of the Holy Land. Their environment was much more humid than it is today.

Yet, nourishing rain seasonally pours down on the Land. About 60-80 cm (2-2.5 feet) falls on the Galilee, one of the most verdant areas in the Holy Land. Rain falls according to the elevation of the land; while close to 60 cm (2 feet) pours down on the Judean hills, far less nourishes the Sharon Plain, and few rain clouds make it over the Judean mountains, defining the desert to the east.

From the rich soil in this land, also known as the Land of Milk and Honey, come some of the finest fruits and nuts. Grapefruit, oranges, apples, dates, lemons, limes, pomegranates, grapes, olives, and the seven species, milk from the goats and honey from dates (silan) and other produce have been cultivated for

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local consumption and export – and often grow naturally in anyone’s backyard. Long before the celebration of Hanukkah began in the middle of the 2nd century BCE, the author of the Letter of Aristeas provided this description of the golden table in the Jerusalem Temple:

Beneath the relief of the precious stones which made the (aforesaid) ovate border the craftsmen made a crown adorned with all sorts of fruit, preeminently conspicuous with grapes and ears of corn (actually wheat), also dates, apples, olives, pomegranates, and the like. (63. OTP 2.17)

God has also given us companions for a rich and challenging life. He has brought into the Levant diverse wildlife, including ibex, donkeys, rams, goats, sheep, bears, lions, hyenas, serpents, cattle, bulls, and camels. Today around 500,000,000 birds fly over Israel, often stopping for rest and nourishment in the Hula Valley in the Upper Galilee as they wind their way from Copenhagen to Cape Town or from Siberia to Sudan and back. When one stands on the edge of the Judean desert, as I did (in my late twenties when I first lived in Jerusalem), a question percolates within reflections. Then, I asked my colleagues: “What is the mysterious relationship between eloquent landscapes and perceptive theology?” By “perceptive theology” is meant the insight that arises when we develop a mature reflection of God’s continuing relationship with creation and a resulting deeper commitment that overflows into wonder and awe. For fifty years, I have been learning partial answers to that question. Perhaps this book will open your eyes to this question and focus your reflections upon it.

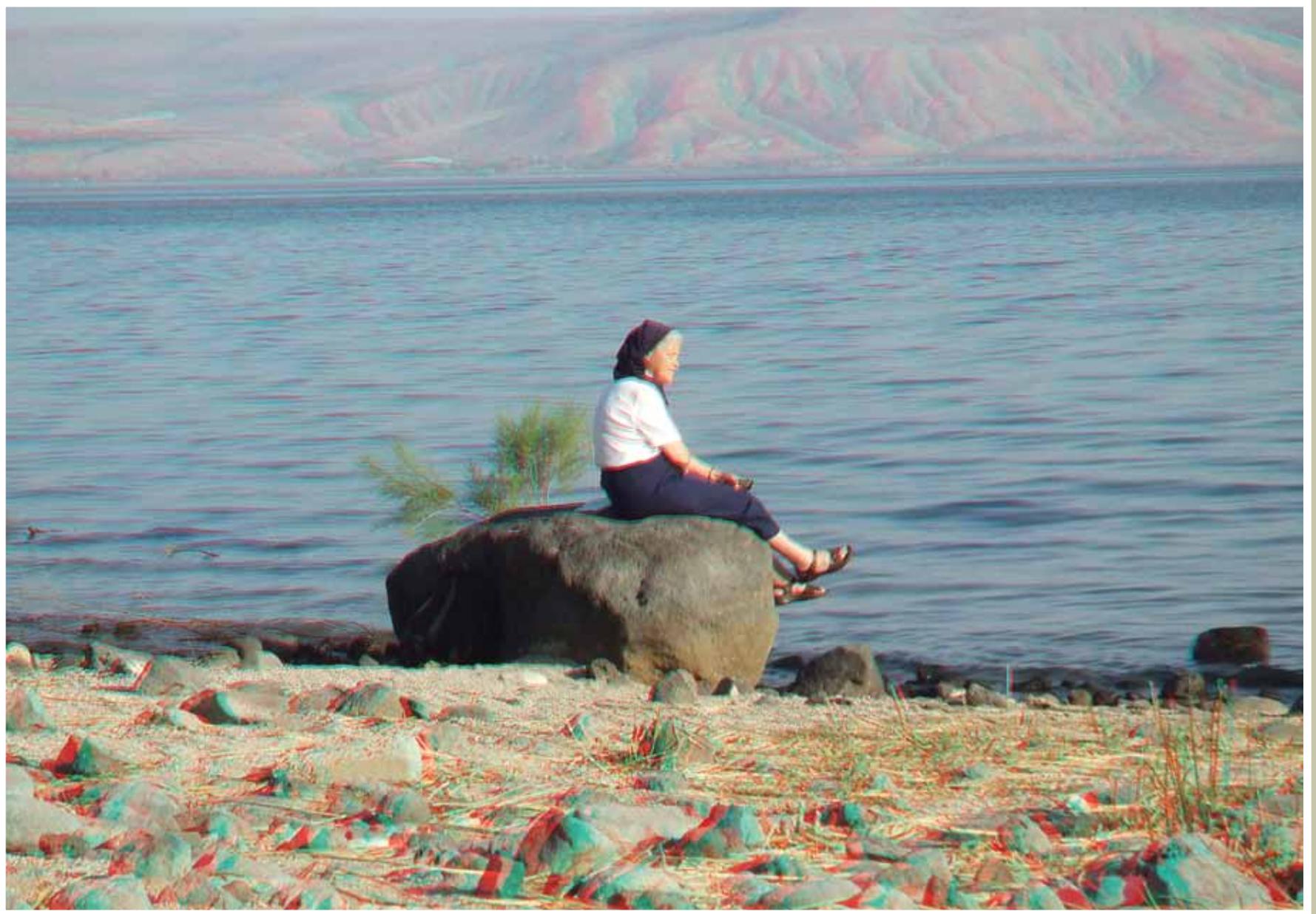
This book’s 3-D images and accompanying descriptions will pull you into a captivating world, immersing you in the visual and spiritual ambience that has stimulated so many writers, from biblical times until the present. The images, as you feel mesmerized within them, may create



Jerusalem aerial view

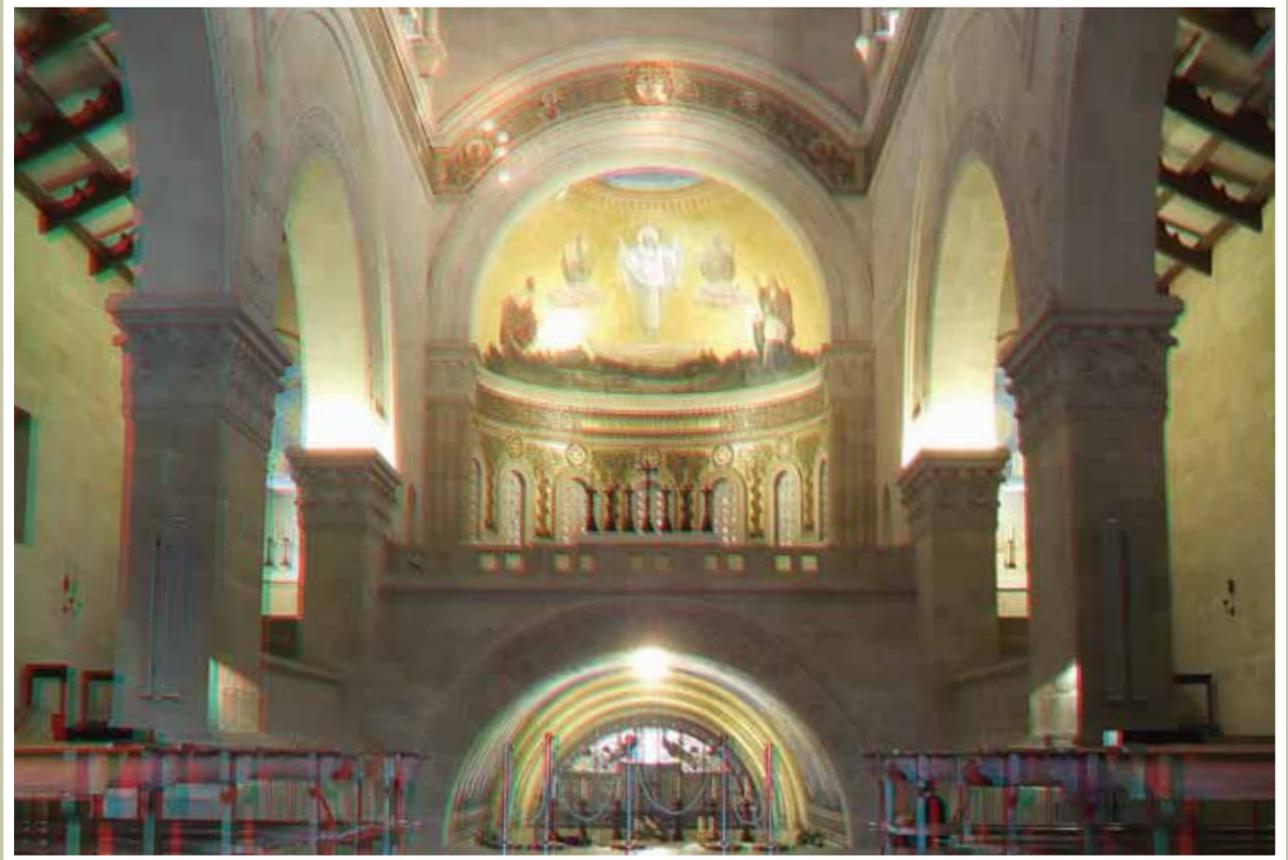


Church of the Annunciation



Meditating, near Tabgha, beside the Sea of Galilee where Jesus centered his ministry, emphasizing love: "A new commandment I give to you: 'love one another, even as I have loved you.'" John 13:34-35

You are looking at the church built on the top of this mountain that rises majestically (575 meters or 1,886 feet) above the Jezreel Valley. This church commemorates the site where many Christians believe Jesus was “transfigured.” That means Jesus was seen by his select disciples as a heavenly being with blazing white garments and speaking with biblical heroes who lived long ago:



“And after six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John. And he led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses. And they were talking with Jesus.” (Mark 9:2-4)



The water here at Yardenit is fresh and sometimes cold, especially in the winter. Many pilgrims take water from the area home to baptize their children or grandchildren.





The **Land of the Bible**, cradle of Judaism and Christianity, is a world of wonders. Here Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his first born son Isaac, returning from decades of exile in Egypt the Israelites established a nation, and Jesus with the Twelve Apostles founded what would be known as Christianity.

Due to its strategic position and spiritual significance, this small piece of land attracted kings, emperors, and sultans who throughout thousands of years claimed it in their quest to dominate the world.

It is also a land of unique topographical phenomena. Most notably the world's lowest spot The Dead Sea, the largest Makhtesh, the Great Rift Valley, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

Michael Medina's three dimensional photos accompanied by Professor James H. Charlesworth's descriptions walk you in Jesus' footsteps as well as through some of the Holy Land's most significant and spectacular historical, archeological, and topographical wonders.

James H. Charlesworth is the George L. Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature and Director of the Dead Sea Scrolls Project at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Michael Medina is a leading 3D photographer in Israel. This is his third 3D photography book.

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