

Galilee

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(Joshua 20:7, John 7:2)

Jesus spent about six months of his Ministry in the Galilee:

"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him."
(John 7:2)

"And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali..." *(Joshua 20:7)*

The Galilee is a hilly region in the north associated with the life of Jesus, Crusader battles and Jewish settlement following the destruction of the Second Temple. It is bordered by the Litani River in Lebanon, the Jordan Rift Valley to the east, the Jezreel Valley to the south, and the Coastal Plain (also known as Galilee Coast) to the north.

It is divided into two regions, Upper and Lower Galilee. The **Upper Galilee** abounds with valleys, gorges, basins, water sources and rich vegetation. It was settled for most of ancient times. During the Israelite conquest it was allotted to the tribes of Asher and Naphtali, and later also to Dan. It had a minor role during the periods of the Judges and the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, when the center of Biblical activity was in Judea and Samaria. It had a sizeable Jewish settlement during the Hasmonean Period, and a vital community during the Revolt against Rome and after the Bar Kokhba Rebellion. Even after the destruction of the Second Temple, the region supported a dense Jewish population, which only decreased as a result of persecutions during the Byzantine Period.

After the Arab conquest (7th century) the situation of the Jewish population worsened and later, Crusaders expelled Jews from Upper Galilee. In the 16th century Safed was a Kabbalah center and attracted many Jews to settle here.

Lower Galilee: This hilly region also abounds with water sources and fertile soil. During the Israelite conquest it was occupied by the Asher, Naphtali, Issachar and Zebulun tribes. After the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah it became a spiritual center of the entire people. Its population was active in the Revolt against Rome in the 1st century AD. Jewish presence severely eroded during the Crusader Period (11th century) and all but disappeared. It was only renewed at end of 19th century with Baron de Rothschild's villages.

Many of the cardinal events in Jesus life took place in the Galilee. Some salient quotes are:

And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee

(Matthew 21:11)

"Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee."

(Matthew 27:55-56)

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away." Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (*Matthew 26:69-75*)



View of the Galilee from Mt. Arbel. Photo: Samuel Magal.