



ROSE GUIDE TO GENESIS

Maps, Time Lines, and Overviews



Within the pages of Genesis, we meet the patriarchs and matriarchs of faith—people with names like Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, and Joseph. Their names and stories may be quite familiar to us today, but their world and daily lives could not have been more different. It is far too easy to read these beloved stories in Genesis and interpret them through our own place, culture, and language—often without even recognizing we are doing so. Take, for example, the names in our English Bibles. If we were to travel back in time and call out to “Jacob” instead of “Ya’akov” in a crowded marketplace, he would not have turned around to answer. If such differences are found in the mere pronunciation of names, how much more might we discover about the stories in Genesis by reading them with a deeper understanding of the geography, culture, and daily life rhythms of the patriarchs and matriarchs.



Ruins in Mardin, Turkey
(ancient Mesopotamia)

ANCIENT EASTERN WORLDVIEW	MODERN WESTERN WORLDVIEW
The world is static, stable.	The world is always changing.
Agricultural/livestock	Industrial
Values land, place, tradition	Values exploration, travel, independence
Limited resources	Limitless resources
Household/community centered	Individual centered
Elderly are wise, highly esteemed.	Elderly are burdens, out of touch.
Youth are foolish.	Youth are cutting edge.
Patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal	Egalitarian
Story centered	History/facts centered
Everything is religious; there are no atheists.	There is separation between sacred and secular.

FROM EMPIRE TO A LAND BETWEEN

Where are you right now? Where were you born and where do you live? Those of us who live close to nature, in forests and on farmlands, experience daily rhythms differently than those of us who live in urban landscapes. Multicultural places where the world intersects, with many visitors and immigrants, differ from communities that are more remote, established, and culturally similar. A seemingly mundane detail such as “place of birth” follows us through our lives, shaping our national, cultural, ethnic, and religious identities. When meeting a new friend or colleague, we often ask, “Where are you from?” or “Where did you grow up?” It is not just data we seek, but this knowledge helps us understand one another.

Our place in this world shapes our view of the world—and also how we think about God and our relation to him. The same was true for those in the world of Genesis.

Mesopotamia and Egypt

What was Abraham’s homeland like? Originally from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:28), on the eastern edge of the Fertile Crescent, Abraham and Sarah move from the dominating international power of Mesopotamia to the modest land of Canaan.

The name *Mesopotamia* describes its very location: *meso* means “between” or “in the middle,” and *potamos* means “river.” Situated in the valleys between the mighty Euphrates and Tigris Rivers,



Nile River, Egypt

Abraham’s home was located in a vibrant and sophisticated civilization. The rivers provided fresh water, mineral-rich soil, and abundant crops, creating a fertile place for the birth of the Mesopotamian empire, bringing about wealth, resources, and international trade.

At the southwestern end of the Fertile Crescent, the Egyptian empire ruled from the banks of the lush, green Nile River. This northward

flowing river provided abundant crops, trade, transportation, and fresh water, serving as a trusted haven for the surrounding nations during famines. Abraham (and later Jacob) sought survival in Egypt during times of drought and famine but was warned not to remain there. (Indeed, by the first chapter of Exodus, we see that the Israelites ultimately become enslaved in the power hungry empire of Egypt.)

The Land of Canaan

Between the two powers of Mesopotamia and Egypt was the land of Canaan. This is the land that God called the patriarchs and matriarchs of Genesis to. But why *this* land? Canaan, quite literally meaning a “land between” and later known as Israel, was situated between powers and empires to the north and the south.¹ Stuck between the mighty Mediterranean Sea to the west and a massive desert to the east, the land served as a “sacred bridge” in the ancient Near East.²

The land was very small, yet the terrain drastically changes within very close quarters. Made up of a sandy coastal plain, lowlands and foothills, fertile valleys, tight mountainous regions, from the snow-capped heights of Hermon to desolate deserts, Canaan contained all the environmental and geographical diversity found in the state of California within an area smaller than New Jersey. When we read the stories in Genesis, the place and time of year greatly inform the situation in which the patriarchs find themselves.



Mt. Hermon and valley below



Compared to the expansive kingdoms of Mesopotamia and Egypt, the biblical land of Canaan was incredibly small and compact. The boundaries of the land vary depending on the historical period. The distance between Dan and Beersheba, the traditional northern and southern boundaries, was only 150 miles (240 km). Abraham traveled this distance and more to rescue of Lot, passing through the mud brick Canaanite gate at Tel Dan on his way toward Damascus (Gen. 14).



Tel Dan Canaanite gate

The dramatic elevations in the land affect climate, habitation, and ease of travel.

- ✘ Mount Hermon is 9,200 feet high (2,800 m), while only 25 miles south (40 km), the Sea of Galilee is 685 feet (209 m) *below* sea level.
- ✘ Jerusalem is 2,593 feet (790 m) *above* sea level while only 15 miles (24 km) east, the Dead Sea is 1,275 feet (389 m) *below* sea level, the lowest place on earth.

Given these significant altitude differences in such tight quarters, it is possible to experience wintery snow or rain in Jerusalem, while gazing to the east at sunny skies in places like Jericho, only 15 miles (24 km) away.

During the rainy season, the Jordan River may flood its banks as water rushes southward, but the mighty Jordan is nothing compared the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers of Mesopotamia or the Nile River in Egypt. The Jordan flows from the base of Mount Hermon to fill the freshwater Sea of Galilee, the northern harp-shaped body of water (Num. 34:11). In Hebrew, the word Jordan (*yarden*) means “to go down.” People in the ancient world understood geography and named this river in light of the massive elevation changes from the Jordan headwaters near Mount Hermon to the below-sea-level Galilee.

The Jordan River flows south in a winding fashion for about 65 miles (105 km) to the Dead Sea, where it ends. Jacob crossed this river on his return to Canaan (Gen. 32:10). This area may have looked to the ancient peoples enticing from a distance, but it lacked the sloping river banks and fertile soil necessary to create agricultural land or trade routes for either goods or people.

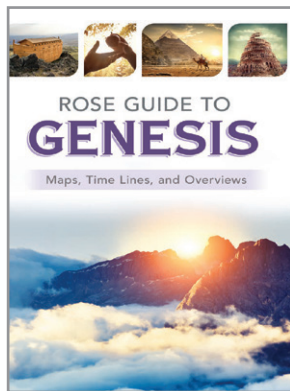
The Judean hills, on the other hand, were made of limestone and were characterized by steep slopes and very fertile soil, making this area excellent for growing fruit trees and vines in terraced hillsides. A north-south trade route ran along the eastern edge of the Judean hills. This trade route is commonly called the Patriarchal Ridge Route, because it was frequently traveled by the patriarchs when visiting Bethel and Hebron (Gen. 12:8; 13:18; 23:19; 35:6–7, 27). The route also served as a dividing line between the wet west and dry east. The moisture from the Mediterranean rises up from the sea, providing rain for the lowlands and the Judean hills, but once it moves past the ridge route to the Judean wilderness, the rugged terrain falls in the rainshadow, with the chalky limestone shedding off any water toward the Dead Sea.

Upon hearing the word sea in “Sea of Galilee,” many of us picture a large expanse of water with crashing surf. However, the Sea of Galilee is a small freshwater lake only about 13 miles (21 km) in length and 6.8 miles (11 km) at its widest point.

Jordan River flowing to the Dead Sea



As one moves south along that ridge route, the Judean hills fade away and the Negev comes into view. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spent much of their time in places like Beersheba in the Negev (Gen. 21:33–34, 22:19; 26:23–25; 46:1). About fifteen miles (24 km) north of Beersheba marks the northern border of the Negev, the “dryland” stretching toward the south.

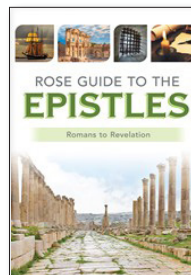


Rose Guide to Genesis

Rose Guide to Genesis will help you dig deeper into the most important people, places, and stories in the first book of the Bible as you delve into the world of the ancient Near East.

With pictures, charts, maps, and timelines, easily get overviews and practical insights of God's plan of redemption in the book of Genesis! The Rose Guide to Genesis is your quick-reference guide for exploring the fascinating people, places, and stories in the first book of the Bible.

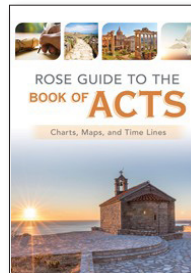
Softcover 978-1-4964-7799-6..... \$15.99



Rose Guide to the Epistles

There are hundreds of key people, events, and places within the Epistles, so how can you cover all of them in their New Testament contexts? *The Rose Guide to the Epistles* provides visual aids, charts, maps, and timelines to help you not only understand but see key concepts at a glance! From Romans to Revelation, you'll find the key facts and teachings of each epistle.

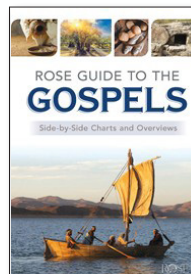
Softcover978-1-64938-022-7.....\$15.99



Rose Guide to the Book of Acts

With pictures, charts, maps, time lines, and a clear and outlined format, this introduction to the Book of Acts helps you explore the key people, places, and stories of the first Christians and Early Church. Packed with helpful resources, visual aids, charts, maps, and timelines to help you not only understand but see key concepts at a glance!

Softcover978-1-64938-020-3..... \$17.99



Rose Guide to the Gospels

This book is your quick-reference guide through the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. With over 100 pictures, charts, and timelines, this user-friendly introduction to the four Gospels helps you explore over 150 key people, places, and stories in the life of Jesus. Add depth to any Bible study with in-depth summaries, key people and events in each of the four books, and much more!

Softcover978-1-62862-811-1.....\$15.99



www.hendricksonrose.com | csresponse@tyndale.com
or call 1-855-277-9400



Money Back Guarantee!

