

PASSPORT TO ISRAEL GOLAN HEIGHTS

The Golan Heights is a high area in northern Israel that borders Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. It is very important because it gives whoever controls it the “high ground,” which is helpful for defense and watching over the area. On the west side, the land suddenly drops 1,700 feet down to the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. The south is bordered by the Yarmouk River, the north by Mount Hermon, and the east by a flat area called the Hauran. The Sea of Galilee at the base of the Golan Heights provides about 15% of Israel’s water.

In the Bible, the Golan Heights was called Bashan. The name “Golan” comes from the ancient city of Golan in Bashan (Deuteronomy 4:43, Joshua 21:27). The land was given to the tribe of Manasseh (Joshua 13:29-31). In early Bible times, the northern kingdom of Israel and the Arameans of Damascus fought over the area. King Ahab of Israel (who ruled from 874–852 B.C.) defeated Ben-Hadad I of Damascus near where Kibbutz Afik is today. The prophet Elisha later said that King Jehoash of Israel (801–785 B.C.) would defeat Ben-Hadad III of Damascus in the same area. After the Babylonian exile, Jewish families returned and lived in this region during the late 500s B.C.

When Israel was founded in 1948, Syria controlled the Golan Heights. Because it was higher ground, Syrian forces often fired down at Israeli farmers living below. In 1965, Palestinian terrorists also used the Golan Heights to launch attacks into Israel. During the Six-Day War in 1967, Syria increased its attacks on Israeli towns. To protect its citizens and stop the attacks, Israel captured the Golan Heights. Israel’s control of the area prevents enemies from using the high ground to fire down on Israeli communities, as Syrian forces had done for many years.

FOR THE TEACHER

Description:

In this activity, students will work in small groups to create a short “News Flash” about an event that took place in or around the Golan Heights in Bible times. Each group will receive an event prompt with a brief description and a Scripture reference. Students will look up the verse(s), quickly read what happened, and then prepare a 30–60 second news report as if they were reporters covering the event live.

Students may choose roles such as news anchor, field reporter, or eyewitness, depending on group size. They should explain what happened, who was involved, and why it was important. After 5-7 minutes of preparation, each group will take turns presenting their “News Flash” to the class.

Resources Needed:

- Printed and cut-apart event prompt cards
- Blank notecards for students to write their news reports on

Instructions:

- Put students in pairs or trios.
- Cut apart the prompt cards on the following page. Give each group one card featuring a biblical event from the Golan/Bashan region.
 - *Prompt cards may be used by more than one group if needed.*
- They have 5-7 minutes to create a quick “News Flash!” announcement explaining what happened.
- Students may read relevant Scriptures to help create their report.
- Each group performs a 30-60 second mini-report.

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“BREAKING NEWS: LAND ASSIGNED TO MANASSEH!”

*Report on how the tribe of
Manasseh received the region of
Bashan (the Golan Heights).*

SCRIPTURE: JOSHUA 13:29–31

“BATTLE IN BASHAN! KING AHAB DEFEATS BEN-HADAD!”

*Explain how King Ahab of Israel
defeated the Aramean king near
today’s southern Golan.*

SCRIPTURE: 1 KINGS 20:26–30

“CITY SPOTLIGHT: GOLAN IN BASHAN NAMED A CITY OF REFUGE!”

*Report on Golan being chosen
as a city of refuge where
people could flee for safety.*

SCRIPTURE: DEUTERONOMY
4:43; JOSHUA 21:27

“GEOGRAPHY UPDATE: BASHAN’S FAMOUS HIGH GROUND!”

*Explain why the high ground in
Bashan was important for
protection and farming.*

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 68:15;
DEUTERONOMY 3:1–17
(DESCRIBES THE REGION OF BASHAN)

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“PROPHECY ALERT! ELISHA PREDICTS VICTORY FOR KING JEHOASH!”

*Tell how the prophet Elisha said
that King Jehoash would win a
victory over the Arameans.*

SCRIPTURE: 2 KINGS 13:14–19

“BORDER TENSION: ISRAEL VS. ARAM!”

*Describe how Israel and the
Arameans fought over the Golan
Heights region in early Bible times.*

SCRIPTURE: 1 KINGS 20; 2 KINGS 13

(GENERAL CONFLICTS)

“MOUNT HERMON WEATHER REPORT!”

*Explain how Mount Hermon’s
high elevation and snowfall
would help provide water to
the surrounding regions.*

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 133:3;
DEUTERONOMY 3:8–9