

**GEOGRAPHY OF THE BIBLE
AAG SPECIALTY GROUP**

2007/2008 Report

I. Specialty Group Information

The Geography of the Bible was the foundation of geographic education in the United States and Canada, from the founding of the first institution of higher learning until the end of the eighteenth century. This specialty group is not a religious assemblage. Rather, it is a group of professional geographers who use the Bible as a source of geographic information and who study the geography of Ancient Israel. Those who are members of this AAG specialty group contend that geography impacted all aspects of life in Ancient Israel and is considered an invaluable way to study all aspects of the Bible.

II. Officers

Chairperson: William A. Dando, Director, 160A, Center for Remote Sensing and GIS, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809.
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Vice Chairperson: David A. Brockway, 1821 North 14th Street, Broken Arrow, OK 74012
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Treasurer: Samuel Hagadorn, U.S. Army (in Iraq), 5726 Cabinwood Court, Indian Head, MD 20640
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Secretary: Eva Wajntraub, Israeli Map Collectors' Society, 4 Brenner Street, Jerusalem, Israel, IL 92103. Phone: 561-1687 E-mail eva@actcom.co.il

Founding President: Dr. Jonathan Lu, Holy Light Theological Seminary, 2 Henan 2nd Rd, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Republic of China 80050.

III. A Brief History of the Specialty Group

The Geography of the Bible Specialty Group has sponsored forty-four paper sessions in the past thirty-two annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers (beginning at the New Orleans, LA meeting). All-day paper sessions were organized at three annual meetings, two paper sessions at eleven annual meetings and three at two of the annual meetings. Workshops were conducted, including: "Tools of the Trade" (1985) and "Making of a Biblical Atlas I" (1989). Recognition awards have been presented to Jonathan Lu, Bruce Crew, and Richard Cleave in the past. The "Amy Mather Award" is presented for the best student paper each year; Stephen Benzek of the University of Redlands was the 2008 recipient.

IV. Comptroller

The Association of American Geographers issued our financial report on January 31, 2008, stating a balance of \$301.27.

V. 2007/2008 Accomplishments

1. The Bible Geography Specialty Group organized an AAG-requested all-day session on "Religion, Unity-Disunity, and Geopolitics in the Middle East-2007" for the Annual Meeting of the AAG in San Francisco, California, April 18, 2007.
2. The Bible Geography Specialty Group organized two paper sessions for the AAG Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California, April 19, 2007.
3. An "Annual Report" and a "Call for Papers" were sent to all members in 2007 and 2008; e-mails and telephone calls were made to 62 members prior to the Boston meeting in 2008.
4. Our book, *The Geography of the Holy Land: Perspectives*, has received great reviews. More than 900 copies have been distributed to members at the AAG Annual Meeting in Chicago, San Francisco, or by mail. Estimated cost to develop and produce the book was \$35,000.
5. The Bible Geography Specialty Group organized a requested all-day session on "Climatic Change," with a focus on the Middle East/Holy Land, for the NCGE Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, October 18, 2007.
6. William A. Dando gave the inaugural lecture for the opening session of the new Geography of the Bible Program, funded by Dr. and Mrs. Jonathan Lu, at the University of Northern Iowa, September 9, 2007.

VI. Specialty Group News

After publication of the book, *Geography of the Holy Land: Perspectives*, and its distribution to AAG and NCGE members, newspaper editors, book and atlas publishers, private foundations, and libraries have created more professional opportunities for BGSB members. They include: (1) request that a second edition of the book be printed; (2) endowment of a program in the Geography of the Bible at the University of Northern Iowa; (3) establishment of scholarship(s) in geography of the Bible; (4) development in Israel of a new *Comprehensive Historical Atlas of Jerusalem*; (5) employment opportunities to teach geography of the Bible and the Bible as literature in private colleges and public institutions; (6) invitation from the National Council for Geographic Education to present all-day content sessions at their annual meetings; (7) opportunity to review grant and contract proposals; and (8) prompt more AAG members to present in BGSB sessions and attend BGSB sessions. The impact of publishing a specialty group book has had positive national and international impacts and numerous geography-enhancing professional ramifications. The Specialty Group has been asked to produce a book

based on the 2008 AAG session, entitled, “Warfare in Ancient Israel: Geographic Insights.” The request is being considered by the members.

VII. Attendance at Sessions

- A. AAG San Francisco (Wednesday, April 18, 2007)
 - 1. All-Day Mini-Panel Sessions on the Middle East – 165 attended
- B. AAG San Francisco (Thursday, April 19, 2007)
 - 1. Paper Session I – 42 attended
 - 2. Paper Session II – 56 attended
- C. NCGE Oklahoma City (Friday, October 19, 2007)
 - 1. All-Day Paper Session on Climate Change (with a focus on the Middle East/Holy Land) – 325 attended
- D. AAG Boston (Wednesday, April 16, 2008)
 - 1. Paper Session – 40 attended

VIII. Call for Papers: “2009 Annual Meeting of the AAG” in Las Vegas, Nevada, March 22–26, 2009. *

A. Potential Sessions:

- 1. Food Systems: An Introduction to Agroecosystem Sustainability
- 2. Urban Fortifications and Rural Defense Complexes in Ancient Israel
- 3. Early Jewish Diaspora: Jacob’s Family to the Destruction of Jerusalem
- 4. Cultural Antagonisms in a Conquered Land: Joshua to Herod
- 5. Application of Remote Sensing and GIS to Biblical Geography Research and Understanding
- 6. A General Session (a mix of papers reflecting BGSF membership interests)
- 7. A joint session with another specialty group?
- 8. A workshop on a specific topic?

* Contact William A. Dando at Indiana State University if you have interest in presenting or organizing a session at the Las Vegas AAG Annual Meeting.