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D. Bahat, *Israel: Past & Present.*

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D. Bahat, *Israel: Past & Present*. Rome: Vision, 1998.

Israel: Past & Present is a little book that introduces readers to several historical sites and the major time periods in the land of Israel. The book provides a helpful map behind the front cover and each site listed in the book is highlighted with a red dot on the map. Next to the map is a breakdown of time periods corresponding to the history of the land of Israel.

The book is divided in the following way. The opening chapter provides a high level overview of the history of the land of Israel starting with the most ancient evidence of human habitation in the area and ending with Zionism and its Realization. The other major periods covered include the Canaanite Period and the Israelite Settlement, the Israelite Conquest, the Hellenistic Period, Roman Rule, Christianity, the Arab Conquest, the Crusades, the Mamluks, and the Ottomans.

Because of the high level nature of treatment of each period, some major issues are given only cursory mention, not mentioned at all, or presented in black and white terms that do not convey the rich, variegated and nuanced approach that scholars would expect. But such is to be expected of an overview book that devotes a meager 22 pages to the entire history of Israel from the dawn of civilization down to the present day. The book presents the history of Israel with reliance on a positive view of the Bible as a reliable source of historical evidence and commentary.

The sites described and visually displayed in the book include The City of David (with additional pages devoted to the related topics of Jerusalem during the 2nd Temple Period, The Robinson Arch, and the Cardo in Jerusalem), Caesarea, Masada, The Church at Mamshit (in the Negev desert, southeast of the Israeli city of Dimona), Beit She'an (including the Cardo and the Theater), Belvoir (Kokhav Hayarden), Hammat Gader, The Church at Kursi, The Synagogue in Capernaum, Kala'at Namrud, Tiberias, and Megiddo. Colorful pictures are interspersed throughout the text of archaeological artifacts and locations. One of the unique features of this book, seldom found in other media on this subject, are artistic renditions of ancient sites that can be laid over modern day photographs of the same locations. This feature helps the reader to imagine what ancient sites would have looked like in their day from a modern vantage point.

With the advent of the internet, Wikipedia, and hand-held Internet devices, nearly all of the content of the book can be easily accessed online. What is the value of such a book when its content and so much more can be found for free elsewhere? Hence because of this book's encyclopedia-type entries on just a few select sites throughout the land of Israel, the utility of this particular book has become obsolete in the Internet age, unless you are a book purist.

Taylor Halverson