Biblical Geography

Lesson Plan

NOTE: Reading assignments are to be completed before you watch the video. Maps are given out the week before the corresponding video so that students may study them in preparation for the weekly quiz. ie: Map 2/27 is given to the student at the end of the class for week 1.

Week 1 – Introduction: Topography, regions and transportation routes of the Biblical Period.

1. Required reading:
   a. The New Moody Atlas of Bible Lands: pp. 29-56 (beginning from “Historical Terminology” at the Bottom of page 29), pp. 64-67
   b. The Holy Land: pp. 2-7

2. Label map 1/8 – page 43; the 5 costal planes, the jezreel valley, upper and lower Galilee, Mts. Gilboa, Ebal, Gerizim, Carmel and Hermon, Bashan, Giliad, Mishor, Moab, Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, Dead sea, W. El-Arish, Besor and Zerod Brooks, Jarkin, Kishon, Yarmuc, Jabbok and Arnon rivers the cities of Tyre, Dan, Acco, Caesarea, Megiddo, Beth Shan, Aphek, Jericho, Jerusalem, Hebron, Engedi, Beersheba and Gaza.

3. Quiz

Week 2 – Geography of the Patriarchs

1. Required reading:
   a. Genesis 12-38
   c. The Holy Land:
      i. Tel Beer Sheva pp. 497-499
      ii. Dead Sea pp. 260-264
      iii. Hebron pp. 311-314
      iv. Mamre pp. 370-371

2. Label map 2/27 – page 85; coastal road, the great trunk road, the king’s Highway, the central ridge road, Amman road, Jericho road, way of the sea, Bequa valley road, Acco valley road, rift valley road, Beersheba bay road, Guvrin valley road, Sorek Valley road, Ephraim lateral road, road to Moab, Arabah road, road of the wilderness.


4. Quiz

Week 3 – Geography of the Exodus

1. Required reading
a. Exodus 13:17-19:2; Numbers 10:33-20:13; Deut. 1; Deut. 4:44-49; Deut. 32: 48-52
c. The Holy Land:
   i. Tel-Arad pp. 489-491
   ii. Avdat pp. 199-203
d. Wood Bryant handout


3. Label map 5/35 – page 114; Cities of Kadesh Barnea, Azar-addar, Azmon, Beersheba, Hebron, Salem (Jerusalem), Bethel, Schechem, Beth-shan, Capernaum, Hazor, Lebohamath (Lebweh) and draw in the route of the spies.

4. Quiz

Week 4 – Geography of the Conquest
1. Required reading
   a. Numbers 20:14-25:18; 32; Deut. 2-3; Deut. 4:44-49; Deut. 32:48-52; Josh 1-8:29; 9-11
   c. The Holy Land:
      i. Gezer pp. 290-294
      ii. Jaricho pp. 327-331
      iii. Hazor pp. 306-311
      iv. Jib pp. 331-333

2. Label map 6/36 – page 115; Cities of Mattanah, Jahaz, Dibon, Medeba, Heshbon, Shittim, Beth-peor, Jazer, Edrie, Astharoth, Jericho, draw in the rout of the Transjordan occupation and locations of battles, identify the vicinity of Moses’ death.

3. Label Map 7/37 – page 117; Cities of Shittim, Adam, Gilgal, Jericho, Ai, Bethel, Shiloh, Schechem, Giveon, Jebus, Bethlehem, the planes of Moab, draw in the movements and place the map notes of events in the appropriate locations.

4. Label Map 8/38 – page 119; Cities of Gilgal, Gibeon, Upper Beth-horon, Aijalon, Azekah, Libnah, Lachish, Makkedah, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, Beth-zur, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Beeroth, draw in the movements and place the map notes of events in the appropriate locations.

5. Label Map 9/39 – page 121; Cities of Beth-shan, Chinnereth, Merom, Hazor, Hedesh, Achshaph, Acco, Dor, Shimron, Tyre, the Valley of Mizpah, draw in the movements and place the map notes of events in the appropriate locations.

6. Quiz

Week 5 – Geography of Israelite Settlement in the Land
1. Required reading
a. Genesis 15:18-21; Joshua 8:30-35; Joshua 12-25; Numbers 34; Ezekiel 47:13-23  
b. The New Moody Atlas of Bible Lands: pp. 24-29; 120-126  
c. The Holy Land:  
   i. Shiloh pp. 478-479  
   ii. Tel Balata pp. 494-497  
   iii. Tel Miqne pp. 511-513  
   iv. Philistines pp. 432-433  
   v. Ashkelon pp. 194-198  
2. Label map 10/40 – Page 123; Tribal allotments of Simeon, Judah, Ruben, Dan, Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh, Gad, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, Nephtali, East Menasseh.  
4. Quiz  

Week 6 – Geography of the Judges  
1. Required reading  
   a. Judges 1-21  
   c. The Holy Land:  
      i. Tel Dan pp. 500-504  
   d. Rainey and Notley: The sacred bridge handout  
   e. Rainey and Notley: Excursus 10.1 handout  
2. Quiz  

Week 7 – Geography of the United Kingdom: Samuel and Saul  
1. Required reading  
   a. 1 Samuel; 1 Chronicles 10-22; 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-11; 2 Chronicles 1-9  
2. Label map 12/56 – page 149; Saul’s kingdom, areas nominally or temporarily controlled by Saul, heartland of the domain of Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, during his short reign, Cities of Gibeah, Beth-Shan, Mahanaim, Jabesh-gilead.  
3. Quiz  

Week 8 – Geography of the life of David  
1. Required reading  
   a. 1 Samuel 17 - 2 Samuel  
2. Label map 13/61 – page 157; cities of Gaza, Beersheba, Bozrah, Hebron, Jerusalem, Bahurim, Jericho, Aroer, Medeba, Jazer, Manahaim, Ramoth-gilead, Halem, Damascus, Ashtaroth, Dan, Sidon, Tire, Ushu, Acco, Hazor, Kadesh, Megido, Aphek, Shechem, Gezer, Aijalon, Gath, draw in the movements and place the map notes of events in the appropriate locations.  
3. Quiz
Week 9 – Spring Break

Week 10 - Geography of the life of Solomon
1. Required reading
   a. 1 Kings 1-11
   b. The New Moody Atlas of Bible Lands: pp. 159-167
2. Label map 14/65 – Page 167; Judah, number and give the name of the administrator 1-Ben-hur, 2-Ben-Deker, 3-Ben-hesed, 4-Ben-abinadab, 5-Baana, 6-Ben-geber, 7-Ahinadab, 8-Ahimaaz, 9-Baana, 10-Jehoshaphat, 11-Shimei, 12-Geber.
3. Quiz

Week 11 – Divided Monarchy: the Northern Kingdom up to the Assyrian captivity
1. Required reading
   a. 1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings; 2 Chronicles 10-36
   c. The Holy Land:
      i. Mt. Carmel pp. 402-406
      ii. Megiddo pp. 386-390
      iii. Samaria pp. 459-462
      iv. Tel el-Farah pp. 504-508
   d. Aharoni, The Carta Bible Atlas handout
3. Quiz

Week 12 – Divided Monarchy: The southern Kingdom up until the Assyrian Captivity
1. Required reading
   b. Beitzel, The Carta Bible Atlas handout
3. Quiz

Week 13 – Judah from the fall of the Northern kingdom to the Babylonian conquest
1. Required reading
   b. The Holy Land:
      i. Lakhish pp. 356-361
c. Rainey and Notley, the Sacred Bridge handout
2. Label map 16/78 – page 187; label the districts Philistia, Judah, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Samaria, Dor, Megiddo, Tyre, Sidon, Mansuate, Damascus, Karnaim, Gilead and Hauran.
3. Quiz

Week 14 – The Return to Zion: Persian and Hellenistic Periods
1. Required reading
   b. The Holy Land:
      i. Beit Guvrin pp.
      ii. Dor pp.
      iii. Mt. Gerezim pp.
   c. Rainey and Notley handout
2. Label map 17/81 – pages 195; cities of Susa, Ur, Avva, Hamath, Uruk, Sepharvaim, Nippur, Cutha, Babylon, Sippar, Tadmor, Qatna, Hamath, Riblah, Sidon, Hazor, Samaria, Shechem, Jerusalem, Manahath, Rabba, Aleppo, Rezeph, Harran, Gozan, Halah, Nineveh, Hara, Achmetha, draw in the movements and place the map notes of events in the appropriate locations.
3. Quiz

Week 15 – The Geography of the Hasmoneans and the Herodians
1. Required reading
   b. The Holy Land:
      i. Herodion pp.
      ii. Masada pp.
      iii. Caesarea pp.
      iv. Jerusalem Jewish Quarter: Herodian Houses
      v. Jerusalem Western Wall plaza: the Western Wall Tunnel, the South-West corner pp.
   c. Bahat handout
2. Label map 18/92 – page 218; fortresses of Malatha, Masada, Beth-zur, Herodium, Docus, Gezer, Jamnia, Adida, Alexandrium, Gamala, Amathus, Machaerus, districts of Idumea, Judea, Samaria, Galilee.
3. Quiz

Week 16 – The Geography of the gospels
1. Required reading
   b. The Holy Land:
Week 1

1. Required reading
   b. The Holy Land:
      i. Bethlehem
      ii. Shepherd’s Fields
      iii. Jacob’s Well
      iv. Mt. of Temptation
      v. Mt. Tabor
      vi. Jerusalem sites
         1. St. Anne’s
         2. Gethsemane
         3. Via Dolorosa
         4. Holy Sepulcher
         5. Mosque of the ascension
         6. Pool of Shiloam
   c. Bahat handout
   d. Rainey Notley handout

2. Label Map 21/95 – 227; Gethsemane, Gordon’s Cavary/Garden Tomb, Fish gate, Traditional Galgotha, Traditional tomb, Bethesda’s pools, Sheep gate, Antonia Fortress, Solomon’s Portico, Royal Portico, Court of the Gentiles, Gate Beautiful, Women’s court, Men’s court, Holy alter, Inner Court, Temple, Herod Antipas’ Palace, Harod’s Palace, Pratorium, High Priest’s House, Upper Room, Traditional, Mount of Olives, Kidron Valley, Golden gate (Eastern gate), pinnacle of the temple, Water gate, Essene gate, Gennath gate.

3. Quiz
Week 18 – Geography of Paul

1. Required reading


3. Quiz
Biblical Geography Vocabulary Words
Aqueduct: a conduit or artificial channel for conducting water from a distance, usually by means of gravity.

Bashan: “a fruitful/smooth land” Stretched from Mt. Hermon southward about 35 miles to the Yarmuk River and from the Jordan River eastward to Mt. Hauran.

Basin: a region that has a unifying characteristic.

Bay: large body of sea water that cuts into land and has a wide opening.

Behind: West

Branch: small part of a river that flows into the main part.

Canal: an artificial waterway for navigation, irrigation, etc.

Caravan: a group of travelers, as merchants or pilgrims, journeying together for safety in passing through deserts, hostile territory, etc.

Cisjordan: The West side of Jordan, primarily four districts for north to South which are Phonecia, Galilee, Samaria and Judah/Judea.

Cistern: a reservoir, tank, or container for storing or holding water or other liquid.

Dam: a barrier to obstruct the flow of water, especially one of earth, masonry, etc., built across a stream or river.

Decapolis: a league of ten cities, including Damascus, in the northeast of ancient Palestine: established in 63 bc by Pompey and governed by Rome

Delta: triangular shaped land that forms at the mouth of a river.

Desert: a region so arid because of little rainfall that it supports only sparse and widely spaced vegetation or no vegetation at all:

Divide: highest point on land that causes water to flow in opposite directions.

Dome: A steep-sided mound that forms when very viscous lava is extruded from a volcanic vent. An uplifted area of sedimentary rocks with a downward dip in all directions; often caused
by molten rock material pushing upward from below. The sediments have often eroded away, exposing the rocks that resulted when the molten material cooled.

**Edom:** also known as Seir or Mt. Seir. The area atop the long slender ridge of mountains that extend southward from the Zered brook about 70 miles most of the way to the Gulf of Aqaba.

**Exile:** an exile was someone who had been forcibly uprooted or disenfranchised from his own land and obliged to live in another place.

**Fertile Crescent:** refers to the arc of agriculturally viable land extending northward from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, eastward across northern Syria, and then into southern Mesopotamia.

**Fords:** a place where a river or other body of water is shallow enough to be crossed by wading.

**Forward:** East

**Forward Sea:** The Dead Sea

**Fountain:** a spring or source of water; the source or head of a stream.

**Galilee:** From the Litani River and the site of Dan in the north as far south as the Jezreel valey. This measured about 50 miles north-south and some 25 miles east-west.

**Gilead:** occasionally is used to refer to all of occupied Transjordan. Specifically the high, mountainous oval-shaped dome that is an eastern extension of the Samarian elevation. From the Yarmuk to just above the Dead sea, it did not include the land of Ammon on the eastern side.

**Harbor:** part of a city where ships dock to load or unload goods.

**Inlet:** a narrow body of water that sticks into a land mass.

**Judah:** also called the hill country of Judah. Went from Geba down to Beersheba. It is approximately 50 miles north-south and 20 miles east-west.

**Latter sea:** The Mediterranean or Great sea

**Left:** North

**Mediterranean climate:** A climate characterized by moist, mild winters and hot, dry summers.

**Mesopotamia:** comes from the Greek term "between the rivers" and refers to the land mass between the Tigris and Euphrates that is modern-day Iraq.
**Mikveh:** Ritual Bath

**Mishor:** “tableland: South of Gilead from Heshbon southward about 25 miles to the Arnon River.

**Moab:** From the Arnon River southward to the Zered brook.

**Mouth:** the name for the end of a river

**Negreb:** South

**Nomad:** a member of a people or tribe that has no permanent abode but moves about from place to place, usually seasonally and often following a traditional route or circuit according to the state of the pasturage or food supply.

**Oasis:** place in a desert in which water rises to the surface.

**One day journey:** 17-23 miles

**Pastoral:** land used for pasture.

**Peninsula:** an area of land almost completely surrounded by water except for an isthmus connecting it with the mainland.

**Phonecia:** a slender tract of coastland that stretched some 125 miles from the el-Kabir River to Mt. Carmel and was flanked on its East by the mountains of Lebanon and Galilee.

**Plain:** an area of land not significantly higher than adjacent areas and with relatively minor differences in elevation, commonly less than 500 feet (150 meters), within the area.

**Plateau:** a land area having a relatively level surface considerably raised above adjoining land on at least one side, and often cut by deep canyons.

**Refuge, city of:** Six cities designated in Israel for judicial use in cases of manslaughter including the three Cisjordan cities of Kedesh, Shechem and Hebron and the three Transjordan cities of Golan, Ramoth-gilead and Bezer.

**Reservoir:** a natural or artificial place where water is collected and stored for use, especially water for supplying a community, irrigating land, furnishing power, etc.

**Rift Valley:** a large elongated depression with steep walls formed by the downward displacement of a block of the earth's surface between nearly parallel faults or fault systems.
Right: South

River of Egypt: the W. el-Arish river

Samaria: Formerly known as the hill country of Ephraim, Samaria stretched from the edge of the Jezreel valley as far south as Jericho, Ophrah, and past Bethel to the coastal plain area. It is approximately 40 miles north-south and 30 miles east-west.

Seawards: West

Sluice: an artificial channel for conducting water, often fitted with a gate (sluice gate) at the upper end for regulating the flow.

Sojourning: A sojourner was a resident-alien who did not belong and could not settle down to enjoy the privileges afforded the citizen.

Springs: an issue of water from the earth, taking the form, on the surface, of a small stream or standing as a pool or small lake.

Tell: an artificial mound consisting of the accumulated remains of one or more ancient settlements (often used in Egypt and the Middle East as part of a place name).

Topography: The physical features of a place; or the study and depiction of physical features, including terrain relief.

Transjordan: The East side of Jordan, specifically the stretch of geography between Mt. Hermon and the Gulf of Aqaba, and from the Jordan valley to fringes of the Eastern Desert.

Valley: an elongated depression between uplands, hills, or mountains, especially one following the course of a stream. An extensive, more or less flat, and relatively low region drained by a great river system. Any depression or hollow resembling a valley.

Wadi: the bed or valley of a stream in regions of southwestern Asia and northern Africa that is usually dry except during the rainy season and that often forms an oasis.

Wandering: A wonderer was someone en route to nowhere. He was not just between stops, but actually had no specified destination or home.

Well: a hole drilled or bored into the earth to obtain water.

Wilderness: a wild and uncultivated region, as of forest or desert, uninhabited or inhabited only by wild animals; a tract of wasteland.
Biblical Geography
Maps

2 copies of each map should be printed out. One copy of the map is given to the student the week before that lesson and the second copy of the map is to be used as a part of the weekly quiz. Ie: Week 1, the student should be given the map ahead of time so that they may study the map and be ready for the quiz on Week 1. Then, when the student takes the quiz for Week 1, they are given a clean copy of the map as a part of the quiz.
Map #5
The Journey of the Spies
ISRAEL'S OCCUPATION OF TRANSJORDAN

MAP #6
Map #7

The Battles of Jericho and Ai/Bethel

DEAD SEA
MAP 8
The Battle of Gibeon
Map #9
The Battle of Hazor
Map #10
The Tribal Distribution of the Land
The Levitical Cities and Cities of Refuge
Map #12
The Kingdom of Saul
Map #15a
The Monarchy Divides
Map #16
Palestine after the Fall of the Northern Kingdom
Map #18
The Maccabean Kingdom
Jesus Ministry in Galilee #19
What Do Mt. Horeb, The Mountain of God, Mt. Paran and Mt. Seir Have to Do with Mt. Sinai?

by Bryant G. Wood PhD (2008)

EXCERPT The short answer to our title question is that the Mountain of God, Mt. Horeb, Mt. Sinai and Mt. Paran are all names for Mt. Sinai, and Mt. Seir is important for determining the location of Mt. Sinai. The long answer, which is the subject of this article, is that each of these names provides important clues for determining where Mt. Sinai is located. The location of Mt. Sinai is one of the major mysteries in Biblical research. Yohanan Aharoni has stated, “To-day the problem of identifying the route of the Exodus and Mount Sinai itself is one of extraordinary difficulty, far more than any other problem of Palestinian Biblical topography” (1962: 118).

Gebel Khashm et-Tarif, a mountain explored by the Associates for Biblical Research in 2007. Located ca. 22 miles west-northwest of the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba/Elat, it is the only site thus far proposed that meets all of the Biblical requirements for Mt. Sinai.

Mt. Sinai: The Site of Important Biblical Events

Mt. Sinai occupies an important place in human history, as well as in the history of God’s people. Most significantly, it was the place where God appeared in person to Moses and gave him the law. Earlier, at the end of Moses’ 40-year exile in Midian, God appeared to him in a burning bush at
the base of the Mountain of God and called him to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites to freedom (Ex 3:1–4:17). When the Israelites first arrived at Mt. Sinai, Moses struck a rock at Horeb to provide water for the multitude (Ex 17:6). They then spent 11 months at the holy mountain before breaking camp and moving on to Kadesh Barnea.

Shortly after arriving at Mt. Sinai, Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, visited Moses and advised him on how to govern the people (Ex 18). Moses then ascended the mountain and received the law from God, as well as instructions for constructing the Tabernacle (Ex 19–31). This was followed by the sin of the golden calf and its aftermath (Ex 32–34). Skilled craftsmen among the Israelites constructed the Tabernacle and its furnishings under Moses’ supervision (Ex 35–40). The first Passover was celebrated exactly one year after leaving Egypt (Nm 9:1). Before departing, more laws were given (Lv 1–27) and a census was taken (Nm 1–10).

When the Israelites left Mt. Sinai, God’s presence went with them and the mountain no longer was a significant religious center. Mt. Sinai appeared in recorded Biblical history only one more time. Nearly six centuries after the Israelites were at Mt. Sinai, Elijah fled to “Horeb, the mountain of God” to escape the wrath of Queen Jezebel following his encounter with the priests of Baal at Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 19:1–21). All told, some 63 chapters of the Old Testament are devoted to events that took place at Mt. Sinai. This amounts to 14 percent of the 436 historical narrative chapters from Genesis to Esther. After Elijah’s visit, Mt. Sinai dropped out of Biblical history, and its location faded from the remembrance of God’s people.

Panoramic view of the plain east of Gebel Khashm et-Tarif. The area could have accommodated many thousands of people. For
Mt. Horeb

The first reference to Mt. Sinai in the Bible uses the designation “Horeb” (Ex 3:1). Of the 17 times this name appears in the Old Testament, mainly in Deuteronomy, only once is it given the designation “Mt. Horeb” (Ex 33:6), otherwise it is simply “Horeb.” It is apparent from the many times the term is used in reference to events that occurred at Mt. Sinai (Ex 33:6; Dt 4:10; 5:2; 9:8; 18:16; 29:1; 1 Kgs 8:9), that Horeb is an alternative name for Mt. Sinai and not another mountain or area near Mt. Sinai.

The Mountain of God

“The mountain of God” is the name used for Mt. Sinai in the burning bush account (Ex 3:1), the meeting place of Moses and Aaron (Ex 4:27), the location where Jethro visited Moses (Ex 18:5) and Elijah’s hiding place (1 Kgs 19:8). The fact that the burning bush theophany occurred at Mt. Sinai indicates that it was within grazing distance of Midian, since Moses was “pasturing the flock of Jethro” when he met God at “Horeb, the mountain of God” (Ex 3:1). Midian was located east of the eastern arm of the Red Sea, the modern Gulf of Aqaba or Gulf of Elat. The reference to the meeting place of Moses and Aaron following Moses’ call is very important for locating Mt. Sinai.
Map of Sinai desert, according to Uzi Azner. From *Tel Aviv*, 11:116.

When Moses set out from Midian to return to Egypt, he would have taken the most direct route, the Trans-Sinai Highway, which traversed central Sinai from the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba/Elat to the northern end of the western arm of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Suez. Aaron, whom God had told to meet Moses in the wilderness (Ex 4:27), would have taken the
same direct route in travelling from Egypt toward Midian. Therefore, their meeting place, The Mountain of God, must have been located somewhere along this road. Furthermore, in order to be within grazing distance of Midian, it must have been near the eastern end of the road. Gebel Khashm et-Tarif, the mountain visited by an ABR team in 2007, is located in precisely this area, on the Trans-Sinai Highway ca. 22 mi west-northwest of the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba/Elat (Wood 2007).

Burial cairns on the summit of Gebel Khashm et-Tarif indicate that the mountain was considered a holy mountain in antiquity.

Mt. Paran

Mt. Sinai is twice referred to as Mt. Paran in the Old Testament. In Moses' blessing upon Israel prior to his death, he made a clear connection between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Paran:

*The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shown forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; at His right hand there was flashing lightning for them (Dt 33:2; all Scripture quotations are from the NASB unless otherwise indicated).*

In his closing prayer, Habakkuk made a similar connection between Mt. Sinai (implied) and Mt. Paran:
God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise. His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from his hand. And there is the hiding of His power (3:3–4).

The name Paran most often occurs in the Old Testament as “Wilderness of Paran” (Gn 21:21; Nm 10:12; 12:16; 13:3, 26). The Wilderness of Paran was the area encompassed by the Wadi Paran and its tributaries, extending from approximately the midpoint of the Arabah Valley between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba/Elat, southwest to the Trans-Sinai Highway. That the Trans-Sinai Highway went through the Wilderness of Paran is evident from 1 Kings 11:18. When Hadad, heir to the throne of Edom, was taken to Egypt for safety during David’s reign, his retinue followed the same route Moses took centuries earlier. Starting from Midian, they travelled to Paran then on to Egypt.

The use of Mt. Paran as an alternate name for Mt. Sinai leads to the conclusion that Mt. Sinai should be located in the Wilderness of Paran. Gebel Khashm et-Tarf is located on the Trans-Sinai highway on the southern edge of the Wilderness of Paran.

An example of one of the many stone structures found scattered around the base of Gebel Khashm et-Tarf. These stone structures suggest that a large number of people camped in the vicinity of the mountain in antiquity.
Mt. Seir

Mt. Seir is mentioned 15 times in the Old Testament and Seir 14 times. The most significant reference for our purposes is Deuteronomy 1:2: "It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road" (NIV). There is general agreement among scholars that Kadesh Barnea is located at Ain el-Qudeirat in northern Sinai. Most likely, the Mt. Seir road was a north-south road leading from Kadesh Barnea to Horeb/Mt. Sinai and then on to Mt. Seir. If the route of the Mt. Seir road could be ascertained, the location of Mt. Sinai could be fixed at the intersection of the Mt. Seir road with the Trans-Sinai Highway. Although Kadesh Barnea provides a northern location on the road, where was Mt. Seir, the southern terminus?

Several Biblical passages indicate that Mt. Seir was in the Wilderness of Paran in the vicinity of Mt. Sinai:

*Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and defeated...the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness (Gn 14:5–6).*

*Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir (Gn 36:8, KJV). Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan...also Basemath, Ishmael's daughter (Gn 36:2–3). He [Ishmael] lived in the wilderness of Paran (Gn 21:21).*

*The Lord came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran (Dt 33:2).*

There is a mountain named Gebel esh-Shaira 55 miles northwest of Elat which Har-El believes is the Mt. Seir of the Old Testament:

*The "eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir into Kadesh-Barnea" (Deut. 1:20)—with Mount Seir identified as Jabal e-Seira, northwest of Eilat—also helps to locate Mount Sinai (1977: 80).*

The problem with identifying this mountain as Biblical Mt. Seir is that it is too far west to be considered part of the Wilderness of Paran. But there is another mountain named Gebel esh-Shaira just six miles south-southwest of Gebel Khashm et-Tarif which is within the Wilderness of Paran. It is feasible, therefore, that the Mt. Seir Road went from Kadesh Barnea south past Gebel Khashm et-Tarif to Gebel esh-Shaira. In fact, there is an ancient track that follows that very route. If this reasoning is correct, Gebel Khashm et-Tarif would be at the intersection of the Trans-Sinai
Highway and the Mt. Seir Road as required by Exodus 4:27 and Deuteronomy 1:2.

Stone-made animal figurines at the base of Gebel Khashm et-Tarif. Scholars have no explanation for this “desert art” (Avner 1984: 122). Could the figures have been made by people who had a lot of time on their hands?

The Acid Test

There is a way to test our proposed identification of Gebel Khashm et-Tarif as Mt. Sinai. If it fits the time-space conditions set forth in the wilderness itinerary preserved in the Biblical record that would add credibility to the theory. The Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai “in the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day” (Ex 19:1). Since they left Egypt in the first month (Nm 33:3), it took them two months, or 60 days, to reach Mt. Sinai. The travel distance from the starting point at Rameses (=Tell el-Daba) to Gebel Khashm et-Tarif is approximately 290 miles. Allowing for Sabbath rest, the Israelites would have travelled 52 of the 60 days of elapsed time. This results in an average rate of travel of 5–6 miles per day, a reasonable rate for a large group of people travelling with animals (Wood 2000).

Deuteronomy 1:2 states that it was an 11-day journey from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh Barnea. We shall assume in this case that the 11 days was the total number of travel days, rather than an elapsed time. The road
distance from Gebel Khashm et-Tarif to Ain el-Qudeirat/Kadesh Barnea is about 78 miles. Traveling an average of 7 miles per day, the Israelites could have made the journey in 11 days as required by Deuteronomy 1:2.

Conclusion

The Bible provides a complex matrix of specifications for the location of Mt. Sinai. It must be toward the eastern end of the Trans-Sinai Highway and along the Mt. Seir road. In addition, Mt. Sinai should be found in the Wilderness of Paran a 60-day journey from Rameses and an 11-day journey from Kadesh Barnea. Gebel Khashm et-Tarif is the only site thus far proposed for Mt. Sinai that meets all of these requirements.

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Avner, Uzi

Har-El, Menashe

Wood, Bryant G.

Biblical Geography Handout – Week 3
The Exodus Route:

Migdol "Watchtower"

Exodus Route home page

Overview map
(Click on photo for high resolution)

Satellite map
(Click on photo for high resolution)

Goshen
Succoth
Migdol

Migdol "Watchtower"

Introduction:

1. The word "Migdol" in Hebrew means "watchtower".
2. It refers to one of many Egyptian military lookout posts scattered across Egypt.
3. The existence of the Egyptian migdol's is confirmed by archeology.

A. Bible texts where Migdol's are mentioned in the Bible:

1. Remember, there were many Migdol's and it is likely that the one's mentioned in Jeremiah and Ezekiel are not the same one as mentioned in the Exodus. On the other hand, given the importance of the Exodus Migdol, being at a three way intersection of ocean, all the references below may refer to the same Migdol.
2. Exodus 14:2: "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.
3. Numbers 33:7: They journeyed from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which faces Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol.
4. Jeremiah 44:1: The word that came to Jeremiah for all the Jews living in the land of Egypt, those who were living in Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis, and the land of Pathros Jeremiah 44:1
5. Jeremiah 46:14: "Declare in Egypt and proclaim in Migdol, Proclaim also in Memphis and Tahpanhes; Say, 'Take your stand and get yourself ready, For the sword has devoured those around you.'
6. Ezek 29:10; 30:6: therefore, behold, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene and even to the border of Ethiopia.
7. Ezekiel 30:6: 'Thus says the Lord, "Indeed, those who support Egypt will fall And the pride of her power will come down; From Migdol to Syene They will fall within her by the sword," Declares the Lord God.

B. The Migdol at the Straits of Tiran of Tiran:

1. The elevation of the Migdol is 500 meters. The Migdol located at the three way intersection of the Red Sea, gulf of Suez and gulf of Aqaba was one of the most important. From the vantage point on the ridge of mountains near the sea, you could get a view for 30 miles each way. It was of huge military and defensive importance.
2. Homing pigeons had been used for communications in Egypt since 2500 BC, a full 1000 years before the exodus. Large numbers of pigeons were taken to each Migdol and kept captive, until they were needed to fly back "home" to
Pharaoh in Egypt. Homing pigeons fly at a cruising speed of 100 km per hour. It would take less than 5 hours for a pigeon to send a message back to Pharaoh.

3. Scripture says that Israel came to a dead end at Etham, then God told them to turn back and retrace their steps and camp directly beside the "Migdol" in order for pharaoh to say, "Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea. "For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' "Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." And they did so." Exodus 14:1-4

4. Israel spent 8 days camped beside the Red Sea waiting for Pharaoh to arrive. It would take only five hours for the message to get to Pharaoh that Israel was back tracking. Then it took the army only

5. So God was deliberately baiting Pharaoh who knew the terrain. Etham was the end of the 200 mile long coastal plain. When Israel started back towards Egypt, Pharaoh chased towards them with his 600 chariots.

6. Pharaoh's Migdol (one of many military watchtowers located on top of mountains) sent a homing pigeon to Egypt. The first known use of passenger pigeons in Egypt was 2400 BC. They fly at 60 miles per hour for up to 600 miles. It is 250 miles back to Egypt from the Migdol and a pigeon would have got there in 5 hours travelling at a casual 50 miles per hour. The army need only travel 35 miles per day on return. total time: 8 days. The sandy coastline would make travel easy and fast.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Total days</th>
<th>Daily rate of travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Message from Pharaoh's military &quot;Migdol&quot; to Egypt by homing pigeon at 80 km/hour: &quot;They are moving aimlessly and the wilderness at Etham has shut them in.&quot;</td>
<td>380 km</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
<td>80 km/hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharaoh's army pursued Israel with horses and 600 chariots from Egypt to where the pillar of fire stopped them.</td>
<td>435 km</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54 km/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Travel times, distances, days of the week**

C. The positioning of the camp of Israel:

1. Exodus 14:2: "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.

2. Numbers 33:7: They journeyed from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which faces Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol.

3. Pi-hahiroth means a "mouth of water" in Hebrew. Notice that "Pi-hahiroth faces Baal-zephon" in Num 33:7. If you look at the "mouth" it indeed faces Baal-zephon!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic reference</th>
<th>Israeliite Camp: Exodus 14:2,9</th>
<th>Israeliite Camp: Num 33:7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pi-hahiroth &quot;mouth of water&quot;</td>
<td>before Pi-hahiroth</td>
<td>turn back to Pi-hahiroth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migdol &quot;watchtower&quot;</td>
<td>between Migdol and the sea</td>
<td>camped before between Migdol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baal-zephon (idol Baal)</td>
<td>camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it</td>
<td>Pi-hahiroth faces Baal-zephon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Photos
Migdol "Watchtower"
Straits of Tiran, Egypt
Elevation: 500 m
3 way view
Message sent to Pharaoh by pigeon: 5 hours
www.bible.ca
E. Prophecy against Egypt:

1. Up to this time, Egypt was a dominant world power. They ruled from Migdol to Syene, down to the border of Ethiopia. If Migdol is the southern most military watchtower beside the Red Sea crossing point at the Straits of Tiran, then this verse makes a full sweep of Egyptian territory on both sides of the Suez Canal.

2. "The land of Egypt will become a desolation and waste. Then they will know that I am the Lord. Because you said, 'The Nile is mine, and I have made it,' therefore, behold, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene and even to the border of Ethiopia. "A man's foot will not pass through it, and the foot of a beast will not pass through it, and it will not be inhabited for forty years. "So I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated lands. And her cities, in the midst of cities that are laid waste, will be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands." For thus says the Lord God, "At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered. "I will turn the fortunes of Egypt and make them return to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin, and there they will be a lowly kingdom. "It will be the lowest of the kingdoms, and it will never again lift itself up above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will not rule over the nations." Ezekiel 29:9-15

F. How the traditional choice for Migdol fails:


1. In the traditional exodus route, Migdol would be placed on the Egyptian side of the crossing. It is important to remember that they went past the Migdol to Etham, then back tracked to camp at the Red Sea. For the Bitter lakes, such is impossible.

2. For the Port of Suez crossing, there is a nice mountain range that would work well for a Migdol watch post. In fact we believe it is likely one existed there, but the other serious problems with the Port of Suez disqualify it as a candidate for the Red Sea crossing. For example there is no logical place for Etham past the crossing point, since it opens up into a huge flat plain.
Exodus Route Map
Steve Rudd
March 11, 2007

Egypt

Delta
(Lower Egypt)

Land of Goshen
Goshen, Rameses
Teotihuacan
Avarua
Nile River

Land of Pathros
(Upper Egypt)

Syene
(Ezek 29:10, 30:6)

Scale in Miles

0 25 50 75

Mediterranean Sea

Delta

Lake Sirbonis

Way of the Pharaohs
(Way of Rome)

Way of the Philistines

Bitter Lakes

Egyptian copper & turquoise mines at Timna

Egypt controlled the Sinai
until 105 AD when the
Romans annexed it.

Wilderness of Egypt
(Sinai Peninsula)

Wilderness on the land of Egypt (Ex 15:26)
Way of the Wilderness to the Red Sea (Ex 15:26)
Way of the Wilderness to the Red Sea (Deut 1:48)

Wilderness of Sinai (Num 33:13)

Burning bush

Strait of Tiran
(Israel crossing)

Strait of Tiran are 18 km wide with a natural underwater land bridge less
than 200m deep and 800m wide. Over the years coral reefs that mark the
channel; the water is less than 1km. The six lane shrimp trawler is 200m

Mont Musa
(St. Catherine Monastery)

Moabites

Zered River

Arkites

Ambrites

Amon River boundary between
Moab and Amorites. Num 21:13

Moabites

Zered River

Amorites

Egyptian copper & turquoise mines at Timna

Egypt controlled the Sinai
until 105 AD when the
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channel; the water is less than 1km. The six lane shrimp trawler is 200m

Exodus Route

The Date of the Exodus: 1446 BC
- Pharaoh who killed Hebrew children: Amunhotep IV (1547-1527 BC)
- Pharaoh's Daughter who adopted Moses: Hethpesut (1527-1526 BC)
- Pharaoh of Moses' flight to Midian: 1466 BC
- Thutmose IV, Hethpesut: 1466-1455 BC
- Pharaoh of the Exodus, Thutmose III: 1455-1446 - 1431 BC
- route crossing: Stratus of Tiran on the gulf of Araba on day 25
- Mt. Sinai, Jebel M. Lawz in Saudi Arabia arriving on day 45 spending 11 months
- Kadesh Barnea at El Beidha beside modern Petra spent two years.

Crossing the Jordan in 1446 BC, 40 years to the day they left Egypt.

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Steve Rudd 2006

Biblical Geography Handout – Week 6 Excursus 10-1
EXCURSUS 10.1

HAROŠHETH-HA-GOIM

"FARMLAND OF THE GENTILES"

From the following passage:

And YHWH sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goim (יוֹד הָגִין = לְוַךְ אָפָאֹר תָּבָא אֶדְוַאֲדָו). So the sons of Israel cried to YHWH, for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years.

(Judg 4:2-3)

It is learned that Sisera dwelt in Harosheth-ha-goim (יוֹד הָגִין = לְוַךְ אָפָאֹר תָּבָא אֶדְוַאֲדָו). It has often been assumed that this is some fortified town, possibly in or near the plains leading from the Plain of Acco to the Jordan Valley, e.g. Kibbutz el-Harutz (first century B.C.E., Siana 1935:28-38), or Tell el-Amarna (eleventh century B.C.E., Siana 1935:28-38). However, the site of Sisera is not a real town although it was occupied from the Neolithic to the Byzantine and Arab periods (Mazar 1961:209-212, 1967:205-206). This site is known by the name of its ancient inhabitants as the site of the Pharaoh's headquarters (Josh 13:22, cf. Joel 4:4, and jehoshaphat, "the districts of the Jordan" (Josh 13:19-18)). Therefore, Sisera was not part of the territory, but the site of the coalition of tribes that eventually overthrew the Canaanites. The site is not mentioned in the Hebrew text, but it is known from other sources. It is therefore, synonymous with "At Taanach on the waters of Megiddo" (יוֹד הָגִין וְעַל תַּאֲנַךְ, Judges 5:19) and also "the district of the foreigner" (יוֹד הָגִין וְעַל תַּאֲנַךְ, Judges 5:23).

But what does the Hebrew term "Harosheth-ha-goim" really mean? Those who interpreted the term as "forest" applied it to Lower Galilee as the "hill country of northern Bethel-Israel" (Gesenius 1835:94, 1938:189). The term means "harosheth," which is a form of the verb הָרָשַׁה, "to scatter" or "to disperse." This idea was based on the fact that the town was located near the forest in which Sisera's chariot was hidden. However, there is no connection between the Hebrew word and the modern site of Sisera. It is more likely that Sisera means "the place of the forest" (יוֹד הָגִין וְעַל תַּאֲנַךְ, Judges 5:19) and also "the district of the foreigner" (יוֹד הָגִין וְעַל תַּאֲנַךְ, Judges 5:23).

EXCURSUS 10.2

TRIBAL AND CLAN MOBILITY AND STABILITY

The picture presented in the Book of Joshua is a complex one. It is clear that the Israelites were not a static people, but rather a nomadic group that moved from place to place in search of pasture and food. The Book of Joshua itself is a complex text that reflects the history of the Israelites. The text is divided into two main parts: the conquest of Canaan and the settlement of the land. The conquest of Canaan is described in the first part of the book, and the settlement of the land is described in the second part.

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Biblical Geography Handout – Week 6
The Sacred Bridge
of land between modern-day Raml and Latrun. The "House of Joseph" here must be the tribe of Ephraim, as indicated by the reference to the Ephraimites in relation to Gezer (Judg 1:29). Some clans from Benjamin also migrated to the same area (1 Chr 8:12–13; 2 Sam 4:3–4).

In these passages the institution of mas (mas, forced labor," has been emphasized. It should be obvious that through the period of the Judges and till the end of Saul's reign, Israel did not have control over the Canaanite population in those unconquered towns. Israel did not have a political infrastructure that could facilitate the establishment of such an administrative institution as forced labor or corvée. The main surviving Canaanite enclaves were in the Valley of Jezreel, and along the Phoenician coast. The Assemblies gained acceptance among the Phoenicians (Sidonians), apparently as client farmers for a society whose manpower was heavily committed to maritime activities (Judg 1:31–32). No tradition exists about the conquest of Shechem, whose situation may have been like Gezer (Judg 1:19), a Canaanite population living in symbiosis with the Israelites. Ebusus-Jerusalem, Gezer and the Amorite towns that resisted the Danites were in the center of the country. Very early traditions reveal that the Ephraimites came into early contact with the indigenous population of the area where the Danites were driven out (1 Chr 7:20–24; Judg 1:35).

The dichotomy between Canaanites on the plains and Israelites in the hills characterizes the narratives throughout the books of Judges and Samuel. This reflects the archaeological settlement patterns of villages in the hills vis-à-vis the town sites on the plains.

THE JUDGES

The ensuing catalog of tribal heroes contains much geographic material. Some of the details are obscure but wherever they can be understood, they elucidate important aspects of the society and the mentality of this period. There are relatively few "miraculous" elements such as shepherds (Gideon's "call" and Samson's birth narrative are exceptions; they belong to a special genre). The collector/editor has arranged them in what he considered a chronological order; his archeological matrix of apostasy, oppression, repentance and deliverance was discussed above. There are no contacts with non-biblical sources that might assist in establishing some dates for these accounts. The sequence of narratives starts in the south and then progresses to the center and the north, reflecting the author/editor's Judean orientation.

Othniel son of Kenaz (Judg 3:8–11). The first example brought is Caleb's nephew (1 Chr 4:13). Othniel son of Kenaz. He is credited with winning Caleb's daughter Achsah by capturing the town of Debir (Josh 15:15–19; Judg 1:11–15). Othniel is also a clan eponym (1 Chr 27:25).

Then the anger of YHWH was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim (Og), king of Aram-naharaim, and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. Then the sons of Israel cried to YHWH and YHWH raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel and He delivered them, viz. Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. Then the Spirit of YHWH came upon him, and he assumed leadership (1099?) over Israel and went forth to war. Then YHWH gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram into his hand, and his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

As a Kenazite, he represents one of the southern tribes that became joined to Judah. Therefore, it would make sense if the enemy against whom Othniel prevailed also came from the south. The full title, "king of Aram-naharaim" obviously points to North Syria/Mesopotamia, the area of Laban in the ancestral tradition. This would strengthen the connection with the Aramean tribes along the Euphrates. On the other hand, the name Cushan evokes associations with the Midianites: I saw the tents of Cushan (1797) under distress; the tent curtains of the land of Midian (1797) were trembling.

It would make more sense if this particular enemy had posed a threat to the tribal elements in the southern part of the country. His epithet, "rishathaim," literally "doubly evil," derives from the epic tradition and his title, "king of Aram-naharaim," remains enigmatic.

Shamgar son of Anath (Judg 3:31). The reference to this personage seems intrusive in the sequence of hero stories. The venue of his activity is not given. The name of possibly Hurrian origin and the epithet "son of Anath" just might indicate membership in a warrior guild or clan bearing the name of the warrior huntress goddess of North West Semitic tradition (Cragoe 1972).

After him came Shamgar, the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel.

(Judg 3:31)

In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of the Jael, the highways were deserted, and travelers went by roundabout ways.

(Judg 5:7)

Because of the mention alongside Jael, it has also been suggested that Shamgar's activity represented conflict with the Sea Peoples' enclave in the north (Ahriman 1978a). However, the reference to Philistines and an oxgoad (anticipating...
theme in the Samson story) plus the place in the series (after Othniel) indicate that a southern venue must be sought. The detailed legend was either unavailable to the editor of Judges or else it was so fraught with "heretical" features that he preferred to skip over it. The hero was just too well known to be ignored altogether. None of these conjectures can be substantiated and the role of Shammuram remains a mystery.

Ehud (Judg 3:12-30). Attention now moves north to the tribe of Benjamin where a hero named Ehud son of Gera delivered his people from Transjordanian aggression. Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of YHWH. So YHWH strengthened Ehud the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of YHWH. And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel, and they possessed the city of the Palms (טונקנוה ת"ע), the sons of Israel served Ehud the king of Moab eighteen years. But when the sons of Israel cried to YHWH, YHWH raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, an ambichristian man. And the sons of Israel sent tribute by him to pay the king of Moab. The various geographical allusions in the passage, e.g. Gilgal and the hill country of Ephraim strongly suggest that the City of Palms is, in fact, Jericho, e.g.

And the men of the tribe of Benjamin (גזרה) and the men of the tribe of Judah ( jäjud) and the men of the tribe of Simeon (זימן). The city of Ephraim (טונקנוה ת"ע), as far as Zoor (זוז). (Ov. 34.6)

And they brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees (טונקנוה ת"ע).

A misunderstanding of Deuteronomy 34:3 evidently led to the talmudic application of the term "City of Palms," to Zoor (m. Yebam. 16:7; contra Almomi 197:214).

What is being depicted here is evidently an act of extortion on the part of combined tribal elements from across the Jordan. They were forcing the residents of the central hill country (and perhaps from the central western Jordan Valley) to pay "protection" in the form of produce. Cisjordan enjoyed a higher average rainfall and was usually more productive than Transjordan so the rough tribes on the eastern side oppressed the villagers on the west.

The drama of the assassination story is built into the plot. Ehud's tribe (Benjamin, "son of the right hand") and his ambichristian ability to hide a weapon on his right thigh. Additional folk humor is injected by the allusion to Ehud's toilet. Ehud, a member of the Moabite enclaves, fled past the cult site at Gilgal to his home town, which is not an attested place name but is best understood as a toponymic feature with the meaning "the woody hills" (קタイプ). Ehud rallied support from his own area. It happened with his arrival, that he blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim (טונקנוה ת"ע); and the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was leading them.

The "hill country of Ephraim" is a generic geographical term for the entire block of hills that included the territory of Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh. However, it seems likely that the participants in this action would have been from Ehud's own tribe. By blocking the fards across the Jordan, the Israelites warriors trapped many of their enemies and brought an end to their intervention in Cisjordan.

Deborah and Barak (Josh 12:17-23; Judg 4-5). The link to the next pericope lies in the location of the prophetess Deborah. Now as for Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she was judging Israel at that time and she used to sit under the "Palm tree of Deborah" between Ramah (רגמ) and Bethel (בשלי) in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. (Judg 4:1-6)

Her influence was said to be more widespread so that she could intervene in the emergency being faced by the tribes living in Galilee. And YHWH sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-golim (רמש), the son of Abiniel, the commander of his army. So the sons of Israel cried to YHWH, for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years. (Judg 4:2-1)

Jabin, it will be remembered, is the ruler of Hazor in the conquest narrative pertaining to the upper Galilean "waters of Marom" (לเอกש).
"Behold, YHWH, the God of Israel, has commanded, "Go and draw out (your forces) to Mount Tabor (Ysph 70), and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariotry and his horse to the stream Kishon (Ysh), and I will give him into your hand." (Judg 4:6-7)

One of the geographical problems is the location of Kedesh-naphthal, the home of Barak (Judg 4:6). The assumption that combat was staged on the side of the valley near Taanach and Megiddo suggested an identification with Tell Abû Qudais (Tel Qedesh; Abel 1939:91), a small mound 2.5 miles (4 km) north of Taanach on the plain of Shebonah. However, it was clear from the prose narrative that the Kedesh in Judges 4:11 must be east of Mount Tabor, since it is associated with the Oak in Azannanim, which itself must be on the border between Naphtali and Issachar between Mount Tabor and the Jordan Valley (Josh 19:33; Aharoni 1979:203) near the lower Galilean Adami-nekeb (Kh. el-Tell ed-Dâmîyeh) and Jabel el-Na’am (Tel Yânâm) = Tel Yânîm). A suitable archaeological and geographical location for Kedesh-naphthal is thus Khirbet Qidish (I. Qedes) on the slope above the Sea of Chinnereth on the western side (Kedem 1953, 1963).

Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. Barak of Mount Tabor and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up with him; Deborah also went up with him. Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Azannanim (Ysph Jdp), which is near Kedesh. (Judg 4:9-11)

The battle itself is described in brief:
Then they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. So Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth-ha-golin (Ysph Jdp Ysr) to the river Kishon.

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Arise! Because this is the day in which YHWH has given Sisera into your hands; has not YHWH gone forth before you?"

So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him and YHWH routed Sisera and all the chariots and all the troops with the edge of the sword before Barak. But Sisera alighted from the chariot and fled away on foot.

And Barak pursued the chariots and the troops as far as Harosheth-ha-golin, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left. (Judg 4:12-14)

When Deborah gave the command to charge, the Israelite warriors rushed down the mountain slope, gathered around, and pursued them. Something happened to the chariotry and foot troops of the Canaanites and they broke into a frantic retreat back toward their campground at Harosheth-ha-golin. What made them break ranks and flee? The answer is supplied by a passage in the poem:

YHWH, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the field of Edom (Ysph), the earth quaked; the heavens also dripped, even the clouds dripped water, the mountains quaked before YHWH, the one of Sinai, before YHWH, the God of Israel. (Judg 5:4-5)

As in the Exodus traditions, the Edom here is most likely on the western side of the Arabah, which is supported by its parallelism with Mount Sinai. The approach of YHWH is expressed by the beginning of rain. Anyone who has seen the Kishon during a downpour will understand what happened to the chariots of Sisera. The plain turned into a massive flood of muddy water. The chariots sank in the quagmire and the crews dismounted and fled. The Israelites pursued them and pursued them until they were well beyond the point at which the fleeing Canaanites, most likely along the geological dike from modern Tel Adashim toward the present-day Megiddo junction. Deborah had read the weather correctly.

Against this background, a key passage in the poem becomes brilliantly intelligible:

The kings came, they fought; then fought the kings of Canaan. At Taanach on the waters of Megiddo, they took no plunder in silver. The stars fought from heaven, from their courses they fought against Sisera. The torrent of Kishon swept away the ancient, torrent, the torrent Kishon. (Judg 5:19-21a)

In the Masoretic verse division, "At Taanach on the waters of Megiddo" is linked with the fighting by the kings of Canaan. In the above arrangement, the ephah marker is ignored and the collection of spoil is associated with the geographical area. This is in line with the age-old tradition of military encampments at that spot (Rainey 1981a). "Taanach on the waters of Megiddo" is the poetic synonym of the prose Harosheth-ha-golin. The poem concludes with an ironic allusion to the intended division of spoil (Judg 5:30) that did not take place because of the resounding defeat.

The death of Sisera, who had sought refuge at the holy shrine maintained by Heber and Jael, is the classic story of a heroic woman who recognized that the death of a tyrant took precedence over the usual rules of sanctuary and hospitality (Judg 4:17-22).

The epitaph to this story, depicting the gradual defeat of Jabin, king of Hazor (Judg 4:23-24), shows, if nothing else, that this battle tradition was independent from that concerning the "Battle of the Waters of Maron" (Josh 11:1-15).

It remains to note some observations about the praises and rebukes in the poem concerning those tribes that did or did not take part in the battle. The prose narrative credits only Zebulun and Naphtali while the poem (Judg 5:14-15a) adds some from Ephraim, Benjamin, and Machir (prior to the consolidation of Manasseh). Others who did not take part were Reuben, Gilead (not yet subsumed under Gad), Dan and Asher. The first two, especially Reuben, were chided for not leaving their flocks to join the battle. Dan and Asher are derided for their connections with the Phoenician maritime society. Concerning Asher, this was clear from Judges 1:31-32 that they had found a niche in the coastal social regime (cf. discussion supra). The allusion to Dan, however, has led to much speculation. The theory that the Danites were originally Danunians of the Sea Peoples who had settled at Joppa has been summarily dealt with in the preceding chapter. The passage here says: הנני של אדר NAFTA . "And as for Dan, why does he abide in ships?" (Judg 5:17). The cryptic reference must be understood in terms of the Danite location at the former Laish. When they went to spy it out they had found:

... the people who were in it living in security, after the manner of the Sidonians (Ysph), quiet and secure; for there was no ruler disputing (with them) in the land, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no communication with anyone (Ysph).

(Judg 18:7)

The Septuagint had read οἱ (Aram) in this place: καὶ λόγος ὁ ὄλος ἡ ἱππος μετὰ Συρίας, "and they had no affair with Syria," but not in the later passage when the Danites arrive en masse. They found:

... a people quiet and secure, and smote them with the edge of the sword; and burned the city with fire. And
there was no one to deliver them, because it was far from Sidon and they had no communication with anyone, and it was in the valley which is near Beth-rehob. And they rebuilt the city and lived in it.

(Judg 10:25-28)

So the Danites had attacked an isolated people and took their city. Later they rebuilt the place. Now these people with their affinity to the Sidonians (Phoenicians) were independent but their agricultural abundance, extolled in the narrative (Judg 18:10), could have been sold to the Sidonians on the coast. As is now well known, there was a mountain route connecting Banias at the foot of Mount Hermon, with Tyre (the true "Way of the Sea" for discussion cf. Chapter 00).

When the Danites had established their new town, called Dan, they must have used the route to Sidon to sell their produce and by that means, their young men became enamored with the maritime society they found there and to which they became suppliers. They would have chosen not to jeopardize their lucrative commercial links with Phoenicia and thus did not come to the aid of the Israelites in their rebellion by the Song of Deborah takes on a realistic flavor in this light.

Meroz (Judg 5:23) is evidently a settlement, but its identity remains a mystery. It might have been a Canaanite or related enclave ostensibly allied with Israel (AH 1941 = 1993:1, 274-277).

Gideon (Judg 6:7-8; Ps 83:10-11). Three chapters are devoted to the career of a hero from the central hills of Ephraim, from the clan of Abiezer, a branch of the tribe of Manasseh. The core of the narrative has to do with a known phenomenon: the oppression of the agricultural villagers by the camel nomads of the desert. The raiders would come seasonally to plunder the crops collected in the harvest. The desert incursions may have been made possible by the weakening of the Canaanite forces in the area due to the disaster of Sisera's defeat (Abaroni 1979:262-263). This same situation prevailed in the nineteenth century when Ottoman rule from Damascus was largely ineffective. There are many witnesses to the domination of the Lower Galilee and the Jordan Valley by aggressive Bedouin tribes (evidence summarized by van der Steen 2002:76-97).

... and YHWH gave them into the hands of Midian (1779) seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed over Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the daggers which were in the mountains and the caves and the forts. And it came about that when Israel had sown, the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east. They would go against them and they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep, ox, or donkey, because they would come up with their own livestock and their tents. They would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were without number; and they came into the land to devastate it.

(Judg 6:1-5)

The reference to the Gaza area is linked to the Amalekites who must have invaded the Negeb from the south. The "sons of the east" (1779112) indicates that there were other nomadic elements on the desert fringe as well as the Midianites.

The manacle of deliverance falls on a youth from the Abiezer clan, Gideon, whose other name was Jerubbaal (which was probably the original name in the war narrative, cf. Judg 7:1). The need for deliverance from the nomads is intertwined with another genre, viz. the conflict of Yahwism with Baalism so crucial to the Deuteronomistic point of view. The literary composition of the early Gideon narrative is complex and cannot be dealt with here (cf. Kutscher 1990). Suffice it to say that Gideon's hometown, Ophrah, was the center of a cultic installation where pre-monarchical Baal elements were intertwined with Yahwism. This monarchical version must go to great lengths to make it a deliverance vouchsafed by YHWH as a reward for turning away from Baalism. The location of this Ophrah has to be somewhere in Mount Ephraim (as discussed with relation to Jotham, infra).

The highly embellished narrative about the assembling of the Israelite warriors takes place at "the spring of Harod," traditionally, the spring that flows today at Ain Jalud on the opposite side of the valley from the enemy encampments.

Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod (1779112) and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the Hill of Moreh (17791722) in the valley.

A poetic allusion to the battle indicates that the Midianites were mainly to the north of the Hill of Moreh near En-dor:

Do to them as with Midian, as with Sisera, as with Jabin at the torrent of Kishon, Who were destroyed at En-dor (177919), who became as dunghill for the ground.

(18:10-11)

The reference to the slaughter of Gideon's brothers at Tabor (Judg 8:18-19) is commensurate with the location of the Midianite camp north of the Hill of Moreh. Thus, the nomads would not have seen the assembly of the village farmers at the spring. After the surprise night attack, the nomads...

(Judg 8:21-24)

Warriors from Naphtali, Asher and Manasseh joined in the pursuit (Judg 7:23) and the Ephraimites were urged to seize the fords across the Jordan (Judg 7:24) and they managed to capture two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb (Judg 7:25). Gideon pursued the main force of the enemy eastward beyond Nobah (location unknown) and Jobagbeh (Jubelsh), 15 miles (24 km) southeast of Penuel. Karkor (Judg 8:10) should be in the Wadi Sirhan in the northern Hejaz, 150 miles (93 km) from Jubelsh and 50 miles (31 km) southeast of Azrak.

The punishment of the elders of Soco (Deir ‘Alla) and Penuel (Tell edh-Dhabah esh-Shargi) is illustrative of the age of violence and enmity that prevailed (Judg 8:13-16).

Gideon is said to have donated an ephod to the cult center at his hometown of Ophrah (Judg 8:27). Much of the Gideon narrative was probably from the oral legacy of that shrine.

Abimelech (Judg 8:30-9:57). There follows the story of Abimelech, the son of Gideon by a Shechemite woman. The narrative centers around Shechem and its surrounding hinterland. It has been noted (Robinson 1866) that there might be a sociological parallel between the behavior of the Shechemites here, inviting some strong man to rule them, and the story of Laban in the Amarna Letters (cf. chap. 7). Abimelech

The Kingdom of Abimelech, 12th to 11th centuries BCE.
persuaded the elders of Shechem to make him their king, in the manner of the Canaanite city rulers. He then proceeded to slaughter his siblings, the seventy sons of Gideon. Abimelech still maintained his home base at Arumah (Kh. el-Urmah).

Abimelech exercised his position of power by that of a band of ruffians, reminiscent of Laban’s recruitment of ‘apru men. Abimelech himself had to fight another attempt by a rival gang leader (Judg 9:23–49).

Ultimately Abimelech destroyed the city of Shechem and slew its leaders. He himself was killed during the siege of another town, Thebez (Judg 9:56). The identification of Thebez with Tubas is not attractive phonetically. Perhaps כּוּיָּה is an early corruption of כּוּיָּה (Tirzah; Aberson 1979:26).

The story of Jotham (Judg 8:7–21), the surviving son of Gideon, adds to the impression that Ophrah must be in the Manasseh area of the Samaritan Hills somewhere southwest of Mount Gerizim (recent Col 1982). Khirbet ‘Awfar, about 55 miles (6 km) southwest of Shechem, has been suggested (Epeli 1982). The Beer (Sheem) to which he fled is probably identical to the παια (unidentified) in the Samarian ostracon (cf. infra, chap. 10) which was also in the Manasseh territory.

More Hero Stories (Josh 10:1–5). There follow allusions to two other heroes whose stories would have been of exceptional interest. But also, the editor/author of Judges did not see fit to include them. Of course, they may not have been fully at his disposal.

Now after Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dochi, a man of Issachar (Josh 12:7), arose to save Israel; and he lived in Shamir (Josh 12:7) in the hill country of Ephraim. (Judg 10:1)

Tola was from Issachar, a tribe that might have lost its identity but for the reorganization during the early monarchy (cf. infra, chap. 11). But he is found living in the Ephraim area in a place the name of which might be related to Shemer, a leading eponym of Manasseh (1 Kgs 16:24; Aberson 1991:243–244).

The famous Jair, eponym from the tribe of Manasseh (Num 32:41), whose clan occupied a large section of Gilead, gave his name to “thirty settlements in Argob in Bashan” (Deut 3:14). No exploits are described but he is listed as one of the heroes.

After him, Jair, the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years. He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities in the land of Gilead that are called Heshbon-Jair to this day. And Jair died and was buried in Kamon (Judg 10:17).

He is not credited here with any special military exploit. His burial place is not located with any certainty (cf. Thompson 1992:26).

Jephthah (Judg 10:6–12:7). After Jair, attention is still focused on Transjordan, with the legend of Jephthah, a hero whose life reflects a number of themes from this type of literature, not only in the Levant but in the eastern Mediterranean in general. He is of noble lineage through his father but a supposed outcast because his mother was a harlot. When he is ousted by his siblings, he gathers a band of outlaw warriors and establishes himself at Tob (Judg 10:6), identified with et-Taybeh. (Simons 1999:237; Aberson 1979:442, Alschaw 1984).

...the war narrative...
was a walled city in the Late Bronze Age, and extensively occupied during the Iron Age (Sixth 1992). Mentioned by Eusebius (Chron. 132.2-12) with a certain Mozao, Maanah, four milestones from Ebusus (Hesbon) as one goes to Philadelphia (Amman); Um el-Basatin is a likely candidate (Yacoub 1992).

The dispute with the Ephraimites took place at Zaphon, a town in the Jordan Valley: and in the valley, Beth-haram ( גֶּדֶר) and Beth-nannan ( גֶּדֶר) and Sodoth ( גֶּדֶר), and Zaphon (גֶּדֶר). (Josh. 11:23)

There are two main candidates for identification with Zaphon (Mittmann 1970:218-220; Tell Mezîr and Tell es-Sa‘idiyyeh (Ghose 1948:20-23; Abulafia 1979:209). The Ephraimites seem to have come too late to be of any assistance in the conflict with the Ammonites but were jealous of not sharing in the spoil. The “sibboleth” incident (Judg 12:6) testifies to dialectical differences among the tribes (the use of samach is only a graphic device because in the ancient, unpointed script, there was only one letter for ה and ה). The Hebrew text says that Jephthah was buried ‘אֶלֶף תּוֹרֶפֶת, “in the cities of Gilgal” (Judg 12:7), but the Septuagint says εν τη πόλει αἰετοίων Γαλαάς, “in his city, Gilgal”, where there is also textual evidence for עֵרוֹפֶת, i.e. Zaphon.

Three “Minor” Judges. The stories about these heroes may have been just as interesting as those recounted at length. Either the author/editor did not have them or he suppressed them because they contained pre-monarchical material unacceptable to him for religious reasons. From a literary and geographical point of view, we are the losers.

Now Ibzan of Bethlehem (גֶּדֶר) judged Israel after him. He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters (that) he gave in marriage outside, and he brought in thirty daughters from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem. (Judg 12:10)

The first is the story of a clan leader, Ibzan, who is surely from the Galilean Bethelosh (Jesh 19:19; Beit Lahm) of the tribe of Zebulon. He may have been an example of too close relations with the neighboring Philistines; therefore, his other anecdotes are suppressed.

The second hero was Elon, also from Zebulon (Judg 12:11-12). Nothing is recorded about him except his burial place. The Hebrew text has גֶּדֶר, “Aijalon,” but the Septuagint has Ἀἰαλόν and the original was more likely גֶּדֶר, “Elon,” which was a major clan in the tribe of Zebulon (Num 26:26).

The third was Abdon from Pirathon (פִּירהָת) in the territory of Ephraim. Only his status as patriarch of a great clan is mentioned, followed by his place of burial גֶּדֶר מֵמָרָא, גֶּדֶר מֵמָרָא (Judg 12:15). Why a hill region in the land of Ephraim was called “Ailekite” is unknown.

Samson (Judg 13-16). The Samson cycle of heroic legends concludes the circle of narratives about charismatic leaders in the pre-monarchical period. It is replete with all the features of a divinely chosen deliverer, e.g. a miraculous birth announcement, a conception by a previously barren woman, Nazirite restrictions on his mother during the pregnancy and on the child after his birth, imbement with the divine spirit in times of crisis. Above all, there are amazing, single-handed victories in combat, one with the “jawbone of an ass,” reminiscent of the enigmatic exploits of Shamgar, the son of Anath who used an oxgoad (אָגוֹד, Ayd; Judg 3:31).

The protagonists are Samson and the Philistines, in a period after which the latter had thoroughly established themselves as the dominant force in the southern coastal area.

Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. (Judg 14:4)

This supremacy entailed the extortion of agricultural produce from the Judean villages, no doubt especially in the Shephelah and the western hills. Although the hero and his family are Danites, they must represent a remnant of that tribe that had not migrated north.

There was a certain man of Zorah (גֶּדֶר), from the family of the Danites (גֶּדֶר הַכְּנֹסָי), whose name was Manoah (גֶּדֶר מַנּוֹאָה).

Zorah (גֶּדֶר) (Judg 13:25) is located on the ridge bounding the Sorek stream on the north, opposite Beth-shemesh, which is on the south side of the wadi. Popular folklore about “the stepped stone block” and “cup marks” (Haas 1997) in the vicinity of Kibyr Sarah as being Manoah’s altar can be safely ignored.

The venue for the hero’s inspired youth is said to be:

... in Manoah-dean (גֶּדֶר תּוֹרֶפֶת), between Zorah (גֶּדֶר) and Eshto’al (גֶּדֶר). (Judg 13:26)

Mahaneh-dean appears also in Judges 18:5 where it denotes a camping ground of the Danites on their migration north, it was west of Kirjath-jearim. It seems to be a folk epithet for places associated with the tribe of Dan within the territory of Judah. Eshto’al (גֶּדֶר תּוֹרֶפֶת) is evidently to be located at Kibyr Deir Shubeiba beside the village of Ilahwa, which may preserve a distorted echo of the ancient name, on a hill east of the ridge of Zorah. Eshto’al is an archaic name built on the infinitive of a reflexive verb stem that was no longer in use in biblical Hebrew (Burney 1912).

The first account of the conflict (Judg 14) takes place in a clear geographical matrix. It happened in the Sorek Valley (וּרי וּכְר), a relatively broad valley in the Sorek some 13 miles (21 km) west of Jerusalem. Actually, it is only mentioned in Judges 16:4 regarding Samson’s more famous paramour, Delilah. If it were not for Eusebius (Chron. 1602-4), we would not know that the Sorek was near Zorah whence Samson came. It is the western extension of the system which starts in Wadi Beit Hananah and includes the Rephaim and Chesalon valleys that join the Sorek to drain a 10-mile (16-km) section of the watershed from Ramah to Bethlehem. These wadis drop about 2,000 feet (610 m) through the Judean mountains, cutting deep V-shaped canyons into the hard limestone as they flow from east to west. As the Sorek reaches the softer limestone and chalk of the Shephelah, the valley broadens out and alluvial soil is deposited, making a rich fertile valley.

Then Samson went down to Timnah (גֶּדֶר) and saw a woman in Timnah, from among the daughters of the Philistines. (Judg 14:14)

Zorah was on top of the ridge; Timnah was below in the valley. Thus the statement is correct that Samson “went down.” The location of Timnáh is deduced from Joshua 15:10-11, the putative northern border of Judah.

And it (the border) . . . continued to the slope of Mount Jerim (גֶּדֶר) on the north, that is, Chesalon (גֶּדֶר), and went down to Beth-shemesh (גֶּדֶר) and passed by Timnah (גֶּדֶר). And the border proceeded to the shoulder north of Ekron (גֶּדֶר) northward, (Joshua 15:18-19).

Given the measurable distances between most points along this border and the fact that Timnáh is found in the south of Chesalon (Kealal = Kesalon), Beth-shemesh (Tel er-Rumeileh = Tel Bet Shemesh) on the east and Ekron (Khal el-Maqqatna = Tel Mirque) on the west—the logical candidate is Tell el-Batash (Tel Batash), located about equidistant from Beth-shemesh and Ekron. Archaeologically, it has all the requisite remains (A. Mezîr 1995). His inspired act of vengeance took him as far as Ashkelon (Judg 14:19). But his withdrawal to “the cleft of the rock of Etam” (גֶּדֶר בָּקָר) is something of a mystery. Is it near the Etam (Khal el-Khob) east of the watershed south of Bethlehem (2 Chr 11:6; Arar, Josh 15:59a LXX) or the Etam that belonged to the Simeonites (1 Chr 4:32) which must have been either in the southern Shephelah or the very northern side of the Negeb?

The location of a placed called Lehi (גֶּדֶר), where the Philistines formed a battle line with the view of capturing Samson (Judg 15:9), is not known though suggestions have been made, but none carry conviction. There must be some folkloric connection with Samson’s slaying of a host of Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.

He found a fresh jawbone of an ass (גֶּדֶר , גֶּדֶר) , so he reached out and took it and killed a thousand men with it. Then Samson said, “With the jawbone of an ass, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of an ass I have killed a thousand men. (Judg 15:15-16)

Another of his superman-like escapades has the only oblique allusion to the road from Gaza to Hebron:

And at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate, and the two posts, and pulled them up along with the bars; then he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron. (Judg 16:19)

 Appropriately, Samson was buried “between Zorah and Eshto’al in the tomb of Manoah his father” (Judg 16:31).
Concluding Stories (Judg. 17–21). The collection called the Book of Judges is concluded by two narratives about events which must have occurred chronologically at an early stage in the period. Both of them take place in the "hill country of Ephraim" which in this case refers to the territory of Benjamin (at least in the second story and most likely in the first also). Both narratives have to do with members of the tribe of Levi and both of them may have occurred with Bethel. This early connection between Levites and David’s home town may have something to do with the special status and function of the Levites during the newly established monarchy later on (cf. infra, chap. 11).

The Danite Migration. The account begins with a family in the Ephraimitic hill country which had enough silver to make expensive cult objects, viz. the silver image and molten image (Judg 17:4). The unnamed matriarch seems to have been the head of the family; her eldest son was Micah.

And there was a young man from Bethel (יווֹן אִישׁ בְּתֵל) of Judah, who was a Levite; and he was a sojourner of Bethel, and dwelt there with a Levite, and a Levite, and a sojourner with him. This man was Micah's son, And he lived there in Bethel, and sojourned wherever he might find a place, and he came to the hill country of Ephraim (יווֹן אִישׁ בְּתֵל) to the house of Micah. (Judg 17:4)

The young Levite was hired because of his cultic skills, to officiate at the family shrine on the estate of Micah and his mother. At this juncture, the scouts went out by the Danites to find a more suitable venue get an oracle from the same Levite and as a result, they recompensed the Levite (Judg 18:2–10), at the foot of Mount Hermon (discussed supra). The Danite fighting force came to the hill country on their way north. It may be significant that they were unable to travel by the coastal highway, double plain, or the Canaanite cities that would threaten any such tribal movement in their vicinity (cf. Judg 5:6; for map, cf. Excursus 10.2, infra).

So they (the Danites) went up and encamped at Kirjath-jearim (יווֹן אִישׁ בְּתֵל) in Judah. Therefore they called that place Mahanah-dan (יווֹן אִישׁ בְּתֵל) to this day; behold, it is west of Kirjath-jearim (יווֹן אִישׁ בְּתֵל). (Judg 19:2)

The Danite scouts, remembering the favorable oracle from the Levite, "recruit" him for the tribe and confiscate the cultic paraphernalia from Micah’s shrine (Judg 18:15–20). This episode was meant to explain the origin of the northern cult center at Dan. One is inclined to accept the Septuagint version ascribing the priests’ family connection to the Danites. The change to Manasseh looks like another late Hellenistic (or Herodian) emendation to satisfy pharisic sensibilities.

The sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh (LXX, "son of Moses") and he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up for themselves Micah’s graven image which he had made, all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh. (Judg 18:30–33)

The Outrage at Gibeah of Benjamin. The final pericope has to do with Gibeah in Benjamin. Its name appears in various formulations, e.g. "the Gibeah" (גבעת, Judg 19:13), "Gibeah belonging to Benjamin" (גֵּיאֵבָה בְּנֵי בָן, Judg 19:14), "Gibeah of Benjamin" (גֵּיאֵבָה בְּנֵי בָן, 1 Sam 13:2), "Gibeah of the Benjaminites" (גֵּיאֵבָה בְּנֵי בָן). The story of the concubine at Gibeah, 12th to 11th centuries BCE.

The story of the concubine at Gibeah, 12th to 11th centuries BCE.
be taken and where oracles can be sought. The officiating priest was said to be Phinehas the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son (Judg 20:28); so the story is ostensibly dated to the first generation of the conquest.

The conduct of the battle and the tactic of the feigned retreat and ambush (Judg 20:18–44) must have been a common theme and may even have been a common practice in the local conflicts of that time. The "rock of Rimmon" (v. 37; Judg 20:25) cf. also 1 Sam 14:2) must have been a prominent feature east (toward the wilderness/ steppe) of Gibeon. It could hardly be the village of Rammat, 5.5 miles (9 km) northeast of Jeab. It was once proposed (Randall 1879:319) that the "pomegranate (אֹּֽרְבַּ֣י) tree" might have stood near the el-jari' a cave in the Wadi es-Suweinit; 1.2 miles (2.5 km) east of Jeab. The cave itself, some 95 feet (30 m) high, pitted on the inside with hundreds of small caves and holes (thus resembling a split pomegranate), would be a more likely candidate for the Rock of Rimmon (Arnold 1992a). At least it would have made an ideal refuge for besieged warriors.

The theme of preventing a tribe from being entirely wiped out is reflected in the brutal measures taken to provide wives for the surviving Benjaminite warriors. The city of Jabesh-gilead is ravaged for not taking part in the general muster and their virgins are spared and given to the Benjaminites (Judg 21:6–15). Thus was formed a tie between that Transjordanian town, and Gibeah of Benjamin and (and of Saul) which bears fruit later on. The second act, kidnapping women from Shiloh, provides one of the rare examples of specific geographical description:

Behold, there is a feast of Yhwh in Shiloh (גִּבְעַת) from year to year, which is north of Bethel (בְּשֵׁלָל), to the east of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem (שְׁכֵם), and south of Lebanon (לֹּאָּה). Shiloh (Кв. Selun) is some short distance east of the main road. Soon after passing the gentle valley that leads from the foot of the tel to the highway, one comes to the descent towards Lebanon (el-Lubbân or Lubbân ash-Sherqiyyeh). The chaos and low moral state of life among the newly settled tribes and clans is condensed in this narrative pericope. The author, writing from the vantage point of the monarchy, has a vision of a twelve-tribe Israel with acknowledged cult centers and priesthood and a primitive "ethnic" of oaths, covenants and a sense of "brotherhood" among the tribes, all this in spite of bloody warfare and depraved violation of the accepted rules of hospitality.

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judg 21:25)

Such a view of the pre-monarchical society, though colored by later preconceptions, preserves a number of features that can be trusted as reliable:

1. The tribal settlements are almost entirely in the hills; hostile elements dwell on the plains.
2. There is no central leadership despite the generalizations in the editorial summaries linking the respective stories; each hero actually operates in a limited sphere with a particular number of tribal elements (Barak and Gideon have the widest believable following).
3. The hostile actions are conducted by the able-bodied warriors from the respective villages; there is no standing army.

The Battle of Ebenezer: the peregrination of the sacred Ark, mid-11th century BCE.

Ramathaim is the town of Ramah in Benjamin, here with an adverbial locative or directive suffix (homophonous with the dual suffix). Such suffixes may intrude into a construct formation (e.g. the -he directive); therefore the form in question is not ungrammatical and needs no emendation. It is Ramathaim of (the clan of) the Zuphites. The "hill country of Ephraim" is a geographical, not a tribal, term and include the territory of Benjamin (Manasseh) as well as that of Ephraim. Elkanah's ethicon, הַתְּוָא, is homophonous with the ethicon for a member of the Ephraimitic tribe (cf. Judg 17:2; 1 Kgs 1:25) but here it more moves sense to interpret as an Ephraimitite. If that be accepted, then the "area of the Ephraimite tribe" is limited to the tribal area of Benjamin, and associated with those Levites who lived in or around Bethlehen. There are, therefore, in line with the Levites who played a decisive role in the final two pericope of the Book of Judges. So the spotlight is on Levites operating within the topographical saddle between Mount Ephraim and Mount Judah. This provides another logical link between this book and the Book of Judges.

The focus of the Samuel birth narrative is the cult center at Shiloh. The high priesthood, the "tent of meeting" (tabernacle), and the ark of the covenant are all said to be there. Excavation at the site of Khirbet Seilun have uncovered a storeroom full of the "collared rim" storage jars so typical of Early Iron Age archeological contexts in Transjordan and Cisjordan (Flusseke 1993b:366) that might have been the storeroom o the cultic center itself. Otherwise, there were no traces of the cultic installations as such, probably due to later occupational levels.

A serious confrontation with the rival ethnic grouping, the Philistines, is said to have occurred near a place called Ebenezer, "The Stone of Deliverance" (בֵּית הָעֲפָר). And Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and encamped beside Ebenezer (בֵּית הָעֲפָר = אֶפֶם) while the Philistines encamped in Aphek (דַּבוּק). (1 Sam 4:1)

The ungrammatical use of the definite article on the first component (cf. the prepro construction, הַנַּוֶּפִּי in 1 Sam 5:1, 7:12 suggests some textual corruption (note the LXX transcription here: אֶפֶם = יִּבְּרָא). However, the contrastive combination of the two clauses is standard for biblical Hebrew (cf. Rainey 2003:67). Nevertheless, the Septuagint version makes the Philistines the initiators of the action:

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And Ben-hadad hearkened to King Aa, and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinnereth, with all the land of Naphtali.

(1 Kings 15:20)

THE CAMPAIGN OF BEN-HADAD I
895/894 B.C.

THE RISE OF OMRI
885/884 B.C.

Baasha's son Elah succeeded his father at Tirzah but soon found it necessary to renew the war at Gibbethon against the Philistines. In the second year of his reign he was assassinated by Zimri. The army at Gibbethon appointed Omri as king and one week later Zimri had been dispatched. However, a rival contender, Tibni, plunged the country into a six-year civil war until Omri and his followers gained the upper hand. For the next six years (880 to 874/873 B.C.) Omri vigorously went about the strengthening of his kingdom with an eye to the ultimate confrontation with Aram-Damascus.

Omri purchased the settlement of Shemer on a hill which he named Samaria (Heb. Shomron) and built a new capital (1 Kings 16:24). The choice of a westward facing site suited his diplomatic policy of renewing the partnership with Phoenicia. His son Ahab was united in marriage with Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of Tyre. A truce was arranged with Judah and Athaliah married Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat.

As a first step in the war for supremacy over Transjordan, Omri occupied Medeba and fortified the towns of Araroth (for the Gadites living there) and Jahaz facing the steppe land. He thus regained control over most of the tableland except Dibon in the south. The stage was set for the clash with Aram.
AHAB’S WARS WITH ARAM
855 TO 853 B.C.

Ahaz pushed ahead with the program launched by his father. The clash of interests with Aram-Damascus was inevitable. The Arameans took the initiative by invading Israel and besieging Samaria itself but their feudal social structure, a league of vassal kings, made it impossible to exercise a unified command; the kinglets were rusted in a surprise attack as they lounged in their pavilions (1 Kings 20:1-22). As a result, the king of Damascus reorganized his kingdom and replaced the kings with governors. However, the initiative had passed to Ahaz, who carried the battle to Azikiah on the heights above Chinnereth. His decisive victory won him political and trade concessions from the Aramean (1 Kings 20:23-43). There followed a three-year armistice between the two countries during which time all the states of the Levant banded together to face the invasion by Shalmaneser III at Qarqar (see Map 127). Afterwards Damascus issued another challenge to Israel and Ahaz appealed to Jehoshaphat to help him. Jehoshaphat agreed and appointed his son, Jehoram, as co-regent to protect the succession (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1; 8:16). The battle was drawn at Ramoth-gilead; Ahaz lost his life and Damascus gained the upper hand at Transjordan (2 Kings 22:1-40; 2 Chron. 18:1-34).
THE BATTLE OF QARQAR
853 B.C.

Twelve kings. They came up against me for a decisive battle. I smote 14,000 men of their armies with the sword. . . . And I crossed the Orontes over their bodies, before there was a bridge over it.

(Inscription of Shalmaneser III, Kirtha)

FORCES OF LEAGUE
ACCORDING TO INSCRIPTION OF
SHALMANESER III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allied Kings and Their Lands</th>
<th>Chariots</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Camels</th>
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<td>Hadad-ezor of Damascus</td>
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<td>Ahab the Israelite</td>
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<td>10,000</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byblos (?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iqanata</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matinu-balu of Arpad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isinata</td>
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<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adana-balu of Siannu</td>
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<td>10,000</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baasha son of Rehob of Ammon</td>
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1 Kings 22:1; Monument, Shalmaneser III — Calah; Other Inscriptions — Assyria

The states of the Levant were rudely shaken by the resurgence of Assyrian might in the ninth century B.C. About 1100 B.C. Tiglath-pileser I, king of Assyria, had reached the "Upper Sea" (the Mediterranean), but under his successors Assyria again reverted to a minor status. Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) inaugurated a new expansionist policy. His armies reached Syria and the coastal cities of Phoenicia—Arvad, Byblos, Tyre and Sidon—and extorted heavy tribute. His son, Shalmaneser III (859-824 B.C.), continued this aggressive policy; in his first year his army reached the Amanus Mountains.

The campaign of his sixth year (853 B.C.) saw him march forth from Nineveh to the ford of the Euphrates near Pethor, which he crossed in flood tide. He continued via Aleppo to the territory subservient to the king of Hamath, capturing and plundering. This time the Levantine states had ceased their local quarrels (1 Kings 22:1) and had banded together to stop the invader. They met him in battle at Qarqar on the Orontes and dealt the Assyrian army a heavy blow. Though Shalmaneser III claimed a victory, he did not return to this area for another four years.

The only detailed report of this battle is a provincial Assyrian stele the text of which is replete with mistakes. The list of the Levantine allies is probably quite authentic but the number of chariots and infantry supposedly brought by each is highly exaggerated. The 500 men from Byblos, the thousand men from Egypt, and the ten chariots from Iqanata may be correct (also the 30 chariots from Siannu, etc.). But the thousands of chariots and troops assigned to Hadad-ezer, Irhuleni, Ahab and others are patently false. This inscription should not be taken as evidence of some mighty chariot force at Ahab's disposal. In reality, he probably had about twenty chariots; compare the chariot forces of Iqanata and Siannu. Judah does not seem to
have taken part unless her forces are subsumed under those of Ahab.

Throughout the ninth century, the Assyrian army was making adventurous forays into Syria and other areas, far from their home bases. They were constantly facing a difficult logistic problem. Only by successfully plundering helplessness and their surrounding countryside could they keep up their momentum. There was always a chance that a well-supplied city could survive unscathed.

After the Assyrian army withdrew, the local states began once again to engage in their local wars. Such was the case between Damascus and Israel. Within a few months at most, Ahab was slain on the field of battle at Ramoth-gilead.

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**THE CAMPAIGNS OF MESHA KING OF MOAB 853-852 B.C.**

When Ahab died, Mesha king of Moab saw his chance to regain control of the entire Moabite plateau north of the Arnon. His first move was to attack the Israelite headquarters at Medeba. Then he established new forts at (Beth)-baal-meon and at Kiresh (Kiriathaim). The Gadite fortress at Aroer was now cut off from Gilead or the Jordan Valley. Mesha conquered it and slew the entire population. Its "altar hearth of David" was taken as spoil to the Moabite cult center at Kerioth. Mesha settled Aroer with his own people from Sharon and Maharath. Next he turned his attention to Nebi; Mesha approached it by night and launched his attack at the crack of dawn and by high noon, the place was captured.

The population was put to death and the cult vessels of Israel's Lord were taken to be presented as an offering to Chemosh. A king of Israel, most likely Ahaziah, attempted a counterattack from the frontier fort of Yahaz. Again Mesha was victorious.

The Moabite king recounts his building projects at key centers, including Aroer and the highway across the Arnon, Beth-barmoth, and Bezer. He also fortified Medeba, Beth-diblathaim and Beth-baal-meon. He carried out extensive building on the citadel of Dibon and saw to its water supply.
ISRAEL AND JUDAH INVADE MOAB; JEHORAM'S LOSSES
852, 848 B.C.

Failure of the Moabite attack left Jehoshaphat in control of the southern routes, including the base at Ezion-geber. In partnership with Ahaziah, king of Israel, he attempted to launch ships for trade with Ophir but they were wrecked (1 Kings 22:49; 2 Chron. 20:35-37). After the untimely death of Ahaziah, his brother Joram went with Jehoshaphat to invade Moab. The king of Edom, a vassal of Judah, also took part. The allies chose to invade Moab from the south, to avoid the possible danger of a counterattack by the Arameans or the Ammonites. They marched by the “way of Edom,” around the southern end of the Dead Sea. On the desert road they suffered from extreme heat and thirst until they were saved by a flash flood, a phenomenon not uncommon in the canyons of the Arhabah. Rain had fallen on the plateau above, causing a sudden run-off down below. The invaders wreaked havoc with the southern Moabite countryside. It may be their ascent by the “way of Horonaim” (Isaiah 15:5; Jeremiah 38:3, 5, 34) that Mesha refers to in his inscription, “Then Chemos said

2 KINGS 1:1; 3:24; 8:20,22; 2 CHRON. 21:2,17

MOABITES AND THEIR ALLIES ATTEMPT TO INVADE JUDAH

Mesha skips over his ill-fated invasion of Judah (2 Chron. 20:1-28). Jehoshaphat had a powerful, well-fortified kingdom, controlling the trade routes between Arabia and Philistia (2 Chron. 17:10-11). His support of Israel posed a threat to Ben-hadad. Mesha, an enemy of Israel, was a natural ally of Damascus. Mesha’s invasion force was made up of Moabites, Ammonites and Moabites (Greek version; probably the Meunites, 2 Chron 20:1), in western Mt. Seir, 2 Chron. 20:10, 23; they were among the Arabians paying tribute to Jehoshaphat for use of the caravan routes to Philistia, 2 Chron. 17:11. At the instigation of Aram (2 Chron. 20:2), they crossed the Dead Sea and established a base camp at En-gedi. Jehoshaphat and his people had come out to the steppe land of Tekoa when they discovered that the invaders were in a turmoil among themselves. The invasion attempt was a failure.
to me, 'Go down, do battle at Horonem, so I went down and fought..." (Moabite stone, lines 32-33). Whether or not, Mesha was forced to withstand a siege in his southern capital, Kir-hareseth. The young man sacrificed on the walls of the city was evidently the captured son of the Edomite ruler. This brought about a change in the course of the fighting and the allies were forced to withdraw.

Jehoshaphat died in 848 B.C., leaving Jehoram as sole ruler. His wife was Athaliah from the royal family in Samaria. Jehoram slew all his brothers who had enjoyed positions of authority in the kingdom (2 Chron. 21:2-4). Then Edom broke away and Jehoram tried unsuccessfully to force them back (2 Chron. 21:8-10; also 2 Kings 8:20-22). Because he also established cult centers in the hill country of Judah, in competition with the Jerusalem temple, Libnah the leading priestly-Levitical city in the Shephelah also declared itself in rebellion (2 Chron. 21:10-11). This left his southwestern flank unprotected, inviting an invasion by the Philistines and the Arameans, who sought revenge for the heavy tribute forced on them by Jehoshaphat. They plundered the royal treasury and slew all the king's offspring except the heir, Jehochaz/Ahaziah (2 Chron. 21:16-17), who became king when Jehoram died of an incurable stomach disease (841 B.C.; 2 Chron. 21:18-20).

**THE REBELLION OF JEHU 841 B.C.**

The hostility between Aram and Israel continued through the reign of Joram; the newly crowned Ahaziah of Judah went with Joram to confront the Arameans at Ramoth-gilead (2 Kings 8:28; 2 Chron. 22:5). Joram was wounded and returned to the royal winter headquarters at Jezebel. Ahaziah came down to visit him. Jehu's revolt, instigated by the prophets, resulted in the assassination of Joram and his mother, Jezebel. Ahaziah was also mortally smitten and died of his wounds at Megiddo. Jehu launched a wholesale extermination of the Baalistic infrastructure throughout his kingdom. Israel lost her Phoenician ally and was seriously disrupted internally.

**THE CAMPAIGN OF SHALMANEZER III 841 B.C.**

Shalmaneser III continued his campaigns in Syria in 849, 848, and 845 B.C., though he did not achieve his aims, for in each of these campaigns he came up against the armies of the league of Syrian kings under the leadership of Hadadezer (the son of Hadad) king of Aram-damascus.

Shortly before Jehu's revolt in Israel, Hazael revolted against Ben-hadad and founded a new dynasty in Damascus. In the year 841 B.C. Shalmaneser again came to Syria, this time successfully defeating Hazael at Mount Senir and subsequently laying siege to Damascus, but the city held out. He continued to the mountains of Hauran, destroying many cities, and proceeded westward, destroying Beth-arbel (Hosea 10:14) and probably Hazor (stratum VIII). Reaching the mountain "Baal-rasri" ("Baal-rosh"), on the coast, he set up his statue. The mountain is probably Mount Carmel, a center of the worship of Baal, known from the accounts of Elijah and other sources. In the Egyptian sources, the Carmel is called "Rosh-kedesh," and the meaning of the name "Baal-rosh" is probably "The Baal of the headland." In this period, the border between Tyre and Israel passed through Carmel, and thus it was here that Shalmaneser received tribute from Tyre and Israel. The kingdom of Israel was known to the Assyrians as the "Land of the House of Omni"; therefore, Jehu, too, is mentioned in their sources as a "son of Omni." He is thus called on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser. Shalmaneser moved northward from the Carmel along the Phoenician coast, having an additional victory monument carved into the cliffside at the mouth of Nahr el-Kalb (the Dog River, called the Lycus in Hellenistic times) alongside Assyrian and Egyptian monuments left there before him.
ARAMEAN SUPREMACY CA. 841-798 B.C.

The ensuing years saw Assyria becoming entangled in affairs far removed from the Levant. During the reigns of Jehu (841-814 B.C.) and Jehoahaz (814/813-798 B.C.), Hazael had free rein to conquer Transjordan. The Aramean brutality in Gilead was long remembered (Amos 1:3). Israel's borders were diminished and its military strength curtailed (2 Kings 13:7).

Queen Athaliah of Judah had slain her grandchildren and seized power. One infant, Joash, was rescued and reared in secret by the high priest, Jehoiada. When the child was six (835 B.C.), Athaliah was assassinated during a coup d'état. After Jehoiada died (ca. 800), Joash allowed the princes of Judah to reopen local shrines in competition with the Jerusalem establishment. Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, denounced the king and was summarily executed (2 Chron. 24:17-24).

Near the end of Hazael's long reign but prior to the death of Jehoahaz in Israel and of Joash in Judah, the Aramean army made a foray down the coastal plain (ca. 798 B.C.) and conquered a town named Gath, possibly Gath of the Philistines but more likely Gath(-rimmon)/Gittaim. Hazael's forces then threatened Judah. Though outnumbered, their relatively small strike force defeated the Judean army. After paying a heavy ransom, Joash became desperately ill. Soon afterward, a palace intrigue led to his death (796 B.C.).
THE WANDERINGS OF ELLIAH
MID-NINTH CENTURY B.C.

I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant... (1 Kings 19:14)

Carved ivory from Samaria (Time of Ahab)

And Jehu, the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. (1 Kings 19:16)

THE ACTIVITIES OF ELISHA
LATE 9TH CENTURY B.C.

Prophets had played a role in the public life of Israel and Judah from the days of the united monarchy. After the division, there are numerous references to prophets as political advisors and critics, especially in Judah. During the dark age of Baalism under the Omrides, two prophets stand out as champions of the Lord of Israel against the influences of that Canaanite (Phoenician) religion, namely Elijah from Gilead and his disciple, Elisha from the Jordan Valley. The ties between the royal houses of Omri and Ethbaal of Tyre brought an influx of Phoenician cultural and political influences. The spirit behind Israelite law was beyond the grasp of Jezebel the daughter of the king of Tyre, and she decided to instruct Ahab on how to “govern the kingdom of Israel” (1 Kings 21:2). The murder of Naboth the Jezerelite through a perversion of justice provoked the wrath of Elijah, and his admonition “hast thou killed, and also taken possession?” (1 Kings 21:19) still reverberates in the world today. The activities and missions of Elijah and Elisha extended beyond the borders and included various peoples, for in the view of the prophets these, too, were to be considered a tool in the hands of the Lord.

1 KINGS 17:21; KINGS 1:2-2:18
THE CAMPAIGN OF ADAĐ-NIRARI III TO DAMASCUS 796 B.C.

The Lord gave Israel a saviour, so that they escaped from the hand of the Syrians...

(2 Kings 13:6)

MONUMENTS, ADAĐ-NIRARI III — CALAH AND SABAA

A new and energetic king arose in Assyria, Adad-nirari III, who once again turned his face westward. The Eponym Chronicle (list of the years, named after Assyrian governors, with significant events) records the following: (805 B.C.) “against Arpad,” (804 B.C.) “against Hazarti,” (803 B.C.) “against Ba‘ali,” (802 B.C.) “to the Sea.” The next campaign in the west was: (796 B.C.) “against Mansutae,” a province just north of Damascus. It must have been during that conflict that Damascus itself was besieged; “Mari” (the Ben-hadad III of 2 Kings 13:3) of Damascus was forced to pay a heavy tribute. Tribute was also received from Jehoash of “the land of Samerina (Samaria),” called “the land of Omri” in another inscription, as well as Edom and Philistia. Damascus was so crippled by this defeat that it also became embroiled in renewed conflict with its arch-rival, Hamath.

In his later years Adad-nirari III and also his successor, Shalmaneser IV, were fully occupied with a war against Urartu (Ararat), the neo-Hurrian kingdom in eastern Anatolia. This last respite from Assyrian pressure created a power vacuum in the west that permitted the vigorous rulers of Israel and Judah to exert their power and influence throughout the region.

THE WARS OF AMAZIAH AND JEHOASH CA. 793 TO 792 B.C.

Amaziah succeeded Joash in 796 B.C. and sought an alliance with Jehoash of Israel (2 Kings 14:9; 2 Chron. 25:18). Then he set out to conquer Edom accompanied by Israelite mercenaries, whom he dismissed before the battle. He was victorious over the Edomites and reestablished Judean control over it (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chron. 25:5-13). The angry Israelite troops ransacked Judean towns that had formerly been taken from Israel and Amaziah retaliated by challenging Jehoash to combat. Jehoash appointed Jeroboam II as co-regent before confronting Amaziah at Beth-shemesh (793 B.C.). He defeated Amaziah and took him prisoner. Part of Jerusalem’s defenses were torn down. The people in Jerusalem appointed the sixteen-year-old Azariah (Uzziah) as king (792 B.C.) in place of his captive father (2 Kings 14:21; 2 Chron. 26:2). Amaziah was not released until the death of Jehoash (792 B.C.); he outlived his former captor by fifteen years but died at Lachish (767 B.C.), the victim of a palace plot (2 Kings 14:19-20; 2 Chron. 25:27).
So Jehoash king of Israel went up, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah.

(2 Kings 14:11)

He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah...

(2 Kings 14:25)
A collection of more than sixty inscribed potsherds (ostraca) were found during the excavations at ancient Samaria. They were administrative notations of shipments, wine or oil, that had been sent in to various officials from their estates out in the hills of Manasseh. All of the sherds had been discarded and were found in a fill under the floor of a later building. The individual notations had probably been recorded in master lists on papyrus before being thrown away. The formulations on the texts have the same general format, beginning with the (king's) regnal year and listing the recipient of the shipment. However, the remaining details divide the inscriptions into two groups. One type names the commodity being sent, a jar of either "old wine" or "purified oil." The other group ignores the commodity (apparently all of this group were for either wine or oil) but lists the sender of the shipment. Both groups give the name of the town from which the commodity was being sent, but the same group that omits the commodity adds the name of the clan district in which the town is located. The two groups are also distinguished by their respective dates. Those texts listing wine or oil are dated to "the ninth year," or "the tenth year" (the ordinal number being written out), while those that list the sender are all from "the fifteenth year" (using Egyptian hieratic numerals). The form of the letters is so similar in both groups of texts that no chronological distinction can be made on the grounds of paleography. The relative date for the potsherds used as the writing material is in the first quarter of the eighth century B.C. The fact that the texts from the ninth, tenth and fifteenth years were all indiscriminately mixed up together in the same fill raises the question, "What about the eleventh to fourteenth years?"

According to the chronology adopted in this edition of the Atlas, Jehoash king of Israel came to the throne in 796 B.C. and his son Jeroboam II was appointed co-regent in 793 B.C. (on the eve of the war with Amaaziah). The tenth year of Jeroboam II would thus fall in 786 B.C., the same as the fifteenth year of Jehoash. Therefore, a reasonable conjecture that satisfies all the evidence would be to assign the ninth-tenth year docketts to Jeroboam II and the fifteenth year docketts to Jehoash.

The Samaria Ostraca provide some fascinating sociological and geographical insights. They contain a corpus of place names unknown from any biblical source but often identifiable with Arabic village names in the Samaria hills. In fact, all the known locations are within the tribal inheritance of Manasseh. The Bible does not give a list of the towns in Manasseh so the information from the Samaria Ostraca is welcome indeed. Furthermore, the clan districts mentioned in the "fifteenth year" docketts are all recognizable as members of the biblical Manasseh/Machir genealogy (see chart above). By means of the locatable towns associated with particular clans, the general locations of the clan districts may be determined. Five of the six principal sons of the tribe appear as districts in the ostraca. The missing son, Heper, is represented by two daughters of Hepher's son, Zelephchad, whose celebrated case was a precedent in Israel for the inheritance rights of daughters (Num. 26:28-34; 27:1-4[5-11]; 36:10-12 cf. 1-8); Josh. 17:1-6; 1 Chron. 7:14-19). The genealogical information about the tribe is seen to rest on a sociological reality as expressed in the settlement pattern of the towns and districts in Manasseh.

The dozen or so recipients of shipments were evidently living in the capital and having small quantities of wine and oil sent to them from their local estates. Those mentioned in the texts from the fifteenth year were probably serving the old king, Jehoash, while those from the ninth-tenth year texts were serving the co-regent, Jeroboam II. The system of clan districts was followed in the fifteenth year texts, perhaps following a venerable custom in the administration. The other texts ignore the clan system and may represent a departure from the time-honored respect for local social structure. That some recipients got shipments from more than one place suggests that they had acquired other estates in addition to their family patrimony, perhaps as royal grants (cf. 1 Sam. 8:14, "He [the king] will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants"). The proliferation of such awards to favored nobles and their ability to foreclose on unfortunate debtors may have been the cause of so much social injustice as denounced by the prophets (Amos 2:6-8; 3:10; 5:10-12).
Biblical Geography Handout – Week 10
Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. (1 Kings 12:1)

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM
931 B.C.

The deep-seated differences between the northern tribes of Israel and the southern alliance of Judah (with Caleb, Kenaz, etc.) were never truly resolved under David and Solomon. The heavy burden of the corvée ranked the people of the north, particularly those of the House of Joseph. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, failed to realize the gravity of their dissatisfaction. His succession in Jerusalem was acknowledged without apparent dissent, but he had to go to Shechem for ratification of his kingship by the tribes of the north. The latter had chosen as their spokesman the recently returned political exile, Jeroboam (who had formerly been in charge of the corvée work carried out by the House of Joseph).

The economic crisis brought about by the external troubles during the latter years of Solomon's reign had made life even more difficult for the citizens of Israel. When Rehoboam haughtily rejected their demands for an easing of their burdens, he foolishly sent an unpopular bureaucrat, Adoniram, to intimidate them. Adoniram was in charge of the hated levy, the forced labor imposed on the formerly non-Israelite enclaves. No wonder that the Israelites expressed their displeasure by stoning him to death! Rehoboam hastened to return to Jerusalem but was dissuaded by the prophet Shemaiah from trying to use armed force against the northern rebels. The population of Benjamin was closely linked with Jerusalem; within its territory there were crown lands, Levitical cities and the Gibeonites did special service at the temple. So Benjamin remained part of the Davidic kingdom.

Damascus and Edom had recently revolted, Ezion-geber was threatened if not lost already; the other neighboring countries were doubtlessly glad to break their ties with the weakened kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The Israelite monopoly over trade and commerce was broken.

Jereboam I began to organize his new government. Shechem was chosen as the first northern capital and a Transjordan headquarters was set up at Penuel (1 Kings 12:25). Royal worship centers were established at Bethel and Dan, two places with long cultic traditions, one at the southern and the other at the northern extremity of his realm (1 Kings 12:29-30). Other local shrines were also staffed with non-Levitical priests. Shiloh and Tirzah are mentioned (1 Kings 14:4, 17).

1 KINGS 11:26-12:33; 2 CHRON. 10

THE FORTIFICATIONS OF REHOBOAM
CA. 931 TO 925 B.C.

According to the Book of Chronicles, Rehoboam took steps to fortify a network of towns throughout the kingdom of Judah (2 Chron. 11:5-12). There is no reason to doubt the order of events in Chronicles, namely that this attempt to strengthen Judah's defenses came before Shishak's invasion. However, the list of towns in 2 Chron. 11:5-12 may not be complete. On the other hand, the actual work of fortification may not have proceeded at an equal pace at all the sites mentioned. Archaeological investigations at some of the identified towns, Azekah and Beth-zur, have not revealed extensive defense works from the late tenth century B.C. Yet Lachish (Stratum IV) does have a massive brick wall and triple gate like those at Gezer, Megiddo and Hazor. A certain geographical logic can be seen in Rehoboam's list: protection of the watershed route facing the eastern steppe, Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa and Ziph; guarding the western approaches, Lachish, Mastsarah, (Moreh), Lachish, Azekah, Zorah and Alalion; and securing internal lines of communication, Socoh and Adoraim. The Levitical cities and some key centers in the Negeb were already fortified.
The Campaign of Pharaoh Shishak

926 B.C.

Egypt was eager to break the Israelite monopoly over commerce and trade in the Levant. In 946 B.C. the twenty-second dynasty was founded by the Libyan Shishak (Shechem) I, who ruled from Tanis (Zoan) and Bubastis until 913 B.C. He had encouraged two of Solomon's enemies, Hadad from Edom and Jeroboam from the House of Joseph. Now, five years after Solomon's death, he launched a vigorous attack on the kingdoms of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The Bible speaks only of an invasion of Judah and of the heavy ransom paid by Rehoboam to save Jerusalem from destruction (2 Chron. 12:2-12; 1 Kings 14:25-28). The Egyptian army comprised Libyans, Sukki (from the cases of Kharga and Dakhla), and Cushites from Nubia. Only from Shishak's display inscription on the "Bubastite Portal" (which he built on the southwest corner of the Amon temple in Luxor) do we learn that his campaign took him through Jeroboam's realm as well as through the Negeb of Judah. The topographical names are arranged in an upper and a lower register; the upper consists of towns in Israel while the lower contains names from Judah, mainly.

1 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chronicles 12:2-12; Topographical List of Shishak -- Bubastite Portal, Karnak, Egypt
from the Negeb. The course of the campaign as suggested in Map 120 is tentative, based on one method of reconstructing the geographical order of the name (if such really was intended). Other interpretations are equally possible. In spite of the damaged state of the text, there does not seem to be any place where the principal towns of the Judean hill country could have been mentioned. Of Rehoobam’s fortified strong points, only Ajalon is named. Kirath-Jearim is based on an emendation of gq-d-irm but the name Gibeon is quite clear. It must have been while Shishak was there that he extorted the heavy ransom from Rehoobam. That the list is authentic, and not a copy from earlier pharaohs' inscriptions, is proven by the inclusion of many place names not known before in Egyptian texts and by the use of new spelling conventions for even the well-known places like Meggido and Beth-shan. At Meggido the fragment of a statue of Shishak was found showing that he really had occupied the city for a time. His advance into Transjordan against Succoth and Penuel show that he pursued Jeroboam as far as his eastern headquarters. The southern campaign, represented by the lower register of place names, is much more obscure. Few of the names can be identified. Eight places are defined as fortified centers by means of a Semitic term, ḫqr, corresponding to the late Aramaic ḫagram. Besides Pattush, only two other “forts” have identifiable names, both of them being Arad. The appearance of two Arads is surprising but not without precedent, especially in the Negeb. Arad Rabbah is most likely the biblical town at Tel Arad; the “Arad of the House of Jerahmeel” might be Tel Malhata but this is uncertain. The “fort” of ḥqrz is hardly a reference to Abram; most likely it is Abellim like the similar usage in Thutmose III’s inscriptions. Three areas bear the appellation “The Negeb” and the clans associated with two of these Negeb might be the Emrites (2 Sam. 23:8) and the Shuahites (1 Chron. 4:11). There is a reference to “The Fountains of Geber” which has been taken to represent Ezion-geber but the latter was probably in Edomite hands by now.

Shishak’s prime objective was to destroy the key fortified centers of both Israel and Judah. Thus he put an end to their ability to dominate the caravan routes passing through the Jordan and Jezreel Valleys in the north and through the Negeb in the south. Fortunately for Jeroboam and Rehoobam, Shishak was not strong enough to convert his raid into a conquest. Whatever had caused him to use force against Jeroboam, his former protege, is not known. It would seem that he had been encouraged to come by the Philistines who were weary of being subservient to the power of the united monarchy of Israel.

In his twenty-fifth year (926 B.C.), Shishak issued orders to open a quarry for the production of stone used in building the Bubaste Portal on which he inscribed the proclamation of his successful campaign to Palestine.

Then Abijah stood up on Mount Zion above Jerusalem, and said, “Hear me, O Jeroboam and all Israel”
(2 Chronicles 13:4)

ABIJAH’S CONQUEST
CA. 911 B.C.

A state of belligerence between Judah and Israel continued throughout the reigns of Rehoobam, Abijah and Asa kings of Judah, and the dynasties of Jeroboam and Baasha in Israel. After Shishak’s campaign, both kingdoms were doubtless exhausted; the first open conflict we hear about took place in the short reign of Abijah (915-911/910 B.C.). After a bitter confrontation at Zemaraim the Israelites retreated, leaving the towns of Beth-el, Jeshanah and Ephraim (Ophrah) at the mercy of the Judeans. Abijah thus pushed the border between the two nations north of Beth-el, probably encompassing the district of Benjamin north of the “official” tribal border (see Map 73) as reflected in the tribal town list (Josh. 18:21-24).

Jeroboam I died shortly after this crushing defeat and was succeeded by his son Nadab who soon found himself at war with the Philistines. He was assassinated by Baasha son of Ahijah while he and the Israelite army was besieging Gibbethon. (1 Kings 15:27; 909 B.C.). Meanwhile, Abijah had also gone to his fate and had been succeeded by his son Asa (911/910 B.C.). Baasha evidently did not pursue the war with Philistia; he may have maintained a belligerent stance towards Judah but
interrupted in Asa’s sixteenth year, 895 B.C., the thirty-sixth year of the Judean monarchy (2 Chron. 16:1), when Baasha invaded the Benjaminite territory and established a strong point at Ramah. By seizing the junction between the walled road and the Beth-horon road, Baasha was able to cut Jerusalem off from its most important road link with the coastal plain (1 Kings 15:17; 2 Chron. 16:1). Asa preferred a political maneuver rather than risk another military confrontation with his northern neighbor. He sent a large bribe to Ben-hadad I (a dynastic name), “the king of Aram enthroned in Damascus.” The latter invaded northern Israel and occupied most, if not all, of eastern Galilee (1 Kings 15:20; 2 Chron. 16:4).

Baasha withdrew from Ramah and returned to his headquarters at Tirzah. Asa brought his people and dismantled the fortifications Baasha had built and used the building materials to fortify Mizpah, on the main trunk road to Bethel, and Geba, facing the secondary eastern road that skirts the steppe land. It would appear that most of Abijah’s territorial gains in the hill country of Ephraim were relinquished at this time. A logical border between Israel and Judah was established between Mizpah and Bethel; to the west some territory may have remained in dispute (cf. 2 Chron. 25:13).

**THE CAMPAIGN OF ZERAH THE CUSHITE CA. 898 B.C.**

And they smote all the cities round about Gerar...  
(2 Chronicles 14:14)

And they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah.  
(2 Kings 15:22)

**BAASHA’S ATTACK ON ASA CA. 895 B.C.**
He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken.
(2 Chronicles 17:2)

THE DISTRICTS OF JUDAH
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The settlement pattern of Judah is reflected in great detail by Joshua 15:20-63. That passage is the most detailed geographical text preserved in the Bible. The date of the original document incorporated in the Bible. The date of the original document is disputed. The references to administrative reorganization by Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:1-13) and his appointment of royal sons as local governors (21:3) have led some to suggest that the roster of Judean towns was compiled in the mid-nineteenth century. Others favor an eighth or seventh century date. In any case, the roster is defective as it stands; key towns like Beth-shemesh and Adoraim are missing along with other known settlements from the genealogies of Judah, Caleb and Simeon (1 Chron. 2:4). An entire district is missing from the Hebrew text but can be partially supplied from the Greek version (Josh. 15:59a).

The Joshua list is based on strictly topographical, rather than kinship principles. Comparison with the geographical distribution of clans and families in “Greater Judah” (1 Chron. 2:4) reveals that the pattern of kinship settlement is only partly commensurate with the topographical divisions of Josh. 15:20-63. Here the four principal ecological zones of Judah, namely the Negab, the Shephelah, the Hill Country and the Steppe ("Wilderness"), are the organizational basis for the list. The towns are grouped into geographical clusters indicated by subtotals; the Negab and the Steppe each have a subtotal. The Shephelah has three subtotals corresponding to three districts; the Hill Country has six (counting the district preserved in the Greek). This total of eleven may be supplemented by the southernmost district of Benjamin, which had remained under Judean control. Levitical cities are not distinguished. In the Shephelah and the southern Hill Country, the district boundaries correspond to watersheds between wadi systems. In district 2 the roster runs clockwise around the district; in district 4 it is counterclockwise.

UZZIAH’S SUCCESS 782 TO 750 B.C.

When Uzziah (Azariah) was twenty-six years old, Jehoash of Israel died; Amaziah was returned to Jerusalem, probably as a gesture of good will on the part of Jeroboam II. The two kingdoms embarked on their campaigns of expansion. Uzziah launched a victorious campaign against Philistia. He dismantled the fortifications of Gath, Jabneh and Askelon and built strong points of his own in the latter’s territory (2 Chron. 26:6). Then he warred successfully in the south, gaining the upper hand over the Philistines, the Arabians and the Meunites (2 Chron. 26:7). According to the Greek version of 2 Chron. 26:7, the Meunites (Minoeis) paid him tribute and his authority was recognized as far as the entry to Egypt. In other words, Uzziah gained control over the caravan routes from Arabia to Philistia and Egypt; the principal element in Sinai, the Meunites, now shared their caravaner and caravanserai profits with him. Eventually, he was able to rebuild the fortress at Elath, after the death of Amaziah in 767 B.C. (2 Kings 14:22; 2 Chron. 26:2).

This outside income was used to strengthen the internal prosperity of the country. Jerusalem’s fortifications were improved (2 Chron. 26:9); towers and water cisterns were constructed in the steppe land (“Wilderness of Judah”) for the royal flocks; cultivators farmed the royal holdings in the Shephelah and the coastal plain (especially those lands acquired by the conquest of northern Philistia); and husbandmen tended the royal vineyards “in the hills and in Carmel,” i.e. the northern and southern hill country of Judah (2 Chron. 26:10). The army was enlarged and well equipped (2 Chron. 12:11-15).

Jotham, son of Uzziah, became co-regent in 750 B.C. because the king was smitten with an incurable disease (2 Kings 15:5-7; 2 Chron. 26:16-23). Uzziah had attempted to usurp the prerogatives of the Jerusalem priesthood. Jotham continued the building projects of his father, in Jerusalem and throughout Judah (2 Chron. 27:4-7). His one noteworthy conquest was over the Ammonites, whom he forced to pay tribute for three years (2 Chron. 27:5). For the first time, Judah gained a foothold in Transjordan, formerly the exclusive domain of Israel.

Uzziah lived until 740 B.C. In 742 B.C. he is credited by Tiglath-pileser III with having led a coalition of western states in an attempt to stop the Assyrians’ advance into the Levant.
And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong.  
(2 Chronicles 26:15)
The kingdoms of Israel and Judah achieved their last zenith of real prosperity and power during the second quarter of the eighth century B.C. Together they once again dominated the major arteries of world commerce, the southern arm of the Fertile Crescent. The success of Jeroboam II was acclaimed by Jonah, son of Amittai, a prophet from Gath-hepher in Galilee (2 Kings 14:25). The prophetic schools of the ninth century continued to flourish in the eighth; their critique of ethical and moral affairs was directed at both the international and the internal scene. Amos, from Tekoa, issued his pronouncements at Beth-el, the royal cult center of Israel (Amos 7:10-17). In the name of the Lord of Israel he proclaimed judgment on Israel’s principal enemies: Damascus for its aggressions in Gilead (Amos 1:3-5), Philistia (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron) for helping the Edomites to enslave Judeans (vs. 6-8), Tyre for sharing in that enterprise (vs. 9-10), Edom for his cruelty against the Judeans (vs. 11-12), Ammon for its atrocities in Gilead (vs. 13-14), and Moab for desecrating the bones of a rival king (2:1-3). Then Amos turned his wrath upon Judah for not keeping the Law of the Lord (vs. 4-5), and upon Israel for gross violations of social justice (vs. 6-16).

Amos saw that the defense of walled cities (as practiced by Samaria and Damascus in the ninth century) would not succeed against a determined conqueror like Tiglath-pileser III, who would advance inexorably from province to province, never mounting a major campaign without adequate logistic support from an Assyrian governor close by (Amos 3:11).

Hoshea, whose city is unknown, reveals a deep love for the countryside of Samaria alongside an abhorrence for its religious corruption.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth ...  
(Deuteronomy 18:18)
Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, “Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabel as king in the midst of it’’...  

(144)

THE CAMPAIGN OF REZIN AND PEKAH AGAINST JUDAH

735 B.C.

The Kingdom of Israel began its disintegration with the assassination of Zechariah, son of Jeroboam II, after only six months in office (752 B.C.). His successor, Shallum, lasted only one month (2 Kings 15:8-14). Menahem, the new usurper, reigned in Samaria for ten years and was followed by his son, Pekahiah, for two more years (752-742 B.C.; 2 Kings 15:15-18). Meanwhile, Pekah, the son of Remaliah, began a twenty-year rule in Gilead (see Hosea 5:5-6); he apparently had a presumed reconciliation with Pekahiah but assassinated him and took power over all of Israel for another eight years (740-732 B.C.; 2 Kings 15:25-31). Jotham had taken advantage of the divided rule in the north to exert Judean military power against the king of Ammon, thus gaining a foothold in Transjordan.

However, Tiglath-pileser III renewed Assyria’s expansionist policy. Unlike most of his predecessors, he was not satisfied with the submission of local kings and the payment of tribute; rather, he initiated the annexation of conquered territories, reducing them to provinces under Assyrian governors. Opposition to Assyrian permanent rule was squelched by exiling the upper classes and resettling deportees from some other part of the empire. Tiglath-pileser III avoided long campaigns far from his supply bases. The newly appointed governors provided logistic support for the Assyrian army when it pushed out in the next step of conquest.

In 743 B.C., Tiglath-pileser III was faced by a coalition of western states surprisingly led by Azariah of Judah. The coalition was unsuccessful and Menahem of Israel paid tribute to the Assyrians (2 Kings 15:19-20). The heavy burden that this payment imposed on the nobility of Israel may have engendered the unrest that led Pekah to power in Samaria three years later.

While Tiglath-pileser III was engaged elsewhere, especially in Urartu (Ararat), Pekah made an alliance with Rezin, king of Damascus. They hoped to organize a strong united front against the Assyrians. Jotham apparently shared his late father’s anti-Assyrian bias but the leadership in Jerusalem did not. After sixteen years of reign, Jotham was effectively deposed in favor of his son, Ahaz (735 B.C.), who refused to join Pekah and Rezin against Tiglath-pileser III. Jotham actually lived to his twentieth year (732-731 B.C.; 2 Kings 15:30).

Pekah and Rezin immediately declared war on Ahaz in an attempt to depose him in favor of a certain Tabel (probably Tabel, from a Judean noble family recently settled in Transjordan, ancestors of the later Tobiah). Rezin assisted the Edomites in the reconquest of Elath (2 Kings 15:6) and the Edomites attacked Judah from the south (2 Chron. 26:17). Meanwhile, the Philistines invaded the western Negeb and occupied many towns on the key approaches to the hill country (2 Chron. 26:18). Pekah was unable to force his will upon Jerusalem and the prisoners taken during his foray were returned (2 Kings 15:8; 2 Chron. 26:17-19; Isaiah 7:1-6). Ahaz promptly turned to Tiglath-pileser III for help.
He placed fowlers in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken.

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THE CITIES OF THE PROPHETS
9TH TO 7TH CENTURIES B.C.

2 KINGS 14:22; 2 CHRON. 26:2-15
THE CAMPAIGN OF REZIN AND PEKAH AGAINST JUDAH

735 B.C.

The Kingdom of Israel began its disintegration with the assassination of Zechariah, son of Jeroboam II, after only six months in office (752 B.C.). His successor, Shallum, lasted only one month (2 Kings 15:8-14). Menahem, the new usurper, reigned in Samaria for ten years and was followed by his son, Pekahiah, for two more years (752-742/741 B.C.; 2 Kings 15:17-26). Meanwhile, Pekah, the son of Remaliah began a twenty-year rule in Gilead (see Hosea 5:5); he apparently had a presumed reconciliation with Pekahiah but assassinated him and took power over all of Israel for another eight years (740-732 B.C.; 2 Kings 15:25-31). Jotham had taken advantage of the divided rule in the north to exert Judean military power against the king of Ammon, thus gaining a foothold in Transjordan.

However, Tiglath-pileser III renewed Assyria's expansionist policy. Unlike most of his predecessors, he was not satisfied with the submission of local kings and the payment of tribute; rather, he initiated the annexation of conquered territories, reducing them to provinces under Assyrian governors. Opposition to Assyrian permanent rule was squelched by exiling the upper classes and resettling deportees from some other part of the empire. Tiglath-pileser III avoided long campaigns far from his supply bases. The newly-appointed governors provided logistic support for the Assyrian army when it pushed out in the next step of conquest.

In 745 B.C., Tiglath-pileser III was faced by a coalition of western states surprisingly led by Azariah of Judah. The effort was unsuccessful and Menahem of Israel paid tribute to the Assyrians (2 Kings 15:19-20). The heavy burden that this payment imposed on the nobility of Israel may have engendered the unrest that led Pekah to power in Samaria three years later.

While Tiglath-pileser III was engaged elsewhere, especially in Urartu (Anatolia), Pekah made an alliance with Rezin, king of Damascus. They hoped to organize a strong united front against the Assyrians. Jotham apparently shared his late father's anti-Assyrian bias but the leadership in Jerusalem did not. After sixteen years of reign, Jotham was effectively deposed in favor of his son, Ahaz (735 B.C.), who refused to join Pekah and Rezin against Tiglath-pileser III. Jotham actually lived to his twentieth year (732/731 B.C.; 2 Kings 15:30).

Pekah and Rezin immediately declared war on Ahaz in an attempt to depose him in favor of a certain Tabal (probably Tabel, from a Judean noble family recently settled in Transjordan, ancestors of the later Tobiade). Rezin assisted the Edomites in the reconquest of Edom (2 Kings 16:6) and the Edomites attacked Judah from the south (2 Chron. 28:17). Meanwhile, the Philistines invaded the western Negeb and the northern Shephelah of Judah and occupied many towns on the key approaches to the hill country (2 Chron. 28:5-15). Pekah was unable to force his will upon Jerusalem and the prisoners taken during his foray were returned (2 Kings 16:5b; 2 Chron. 28:17-19; Isaiah 7:1-9). Ahaz promptly turned to Tiglath-pileser III for help.