

Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 12–24.

Show markup on the review tab to see my comments below on our interaction with these different areas on our trip.

Chapter Two

NATURAL REGIONS OF PALESTINE

Introduction

Having gained an overview of the geography of the Ancient Near East, we now focus on Palestine—the geographical epicenter of our faith. “Judea,” “Galilee,” and “Samaria” evoke vivid images of biblical events. The hills and valleys of this land heard the thunder of Amos’ prophetic voice. The deserts witnessed the courageous preaching of John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the Lamb of God. The cities echo with the memories of David, Solomon, and Herod the Great, from whose imagination great buildings sprang. Along the dusty roads of this land the disciples followed Jesus of Nazareth, whose words and deeds mark the decisive intervention of God in human affairs.

According to the biblical description, Palestine is “a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills” (Deut. 8:7; see also Deut. 11:10–17) and much more. Few areas on earth of comparable size contain more geographic diversity than Palestine. The small dimensions of the area makes the variety of landforms all the more striking. Ranging in width from 80 to 100 miles with a maximum length of 250 miles, Palestine is about the size of New Jersey. Yet within its borders, desert areas contrast with broad, fertile plains; mountain ranges and high plateaus tower above the lowest place on the earth’s surface—the Dead Sea. (See also “The Tribal Allotments of Israel,” p. 85)

Major Geographical Regions and Subdivisions

A study of Palestine’s geology shows that the main physical features of the land run north to south. A cross sectional view (see map 8) reveals four major longitudinal zones: (1) the Coastal Plain, (2) the Western Mountains, (3) the Jordan Rift, and (4) the Eastern Plateau. The Jordan Rift is the most pronounced feature of the landscape and divides the land into two parts: Cisjordan, the area west of the Jordan Rift, and Transjordan, the inhabitable land between the rift and the deserts to the east. Most of the geographic features in Palestine represent a subdivision of the four major zones; however, four features—the Jezreel Valley, the Shephelah, the Negeb, and the Southern Wilderness—cannot be fitted easily in these zones and are listed separately below.

THE COASTAL PLAIN

The Coastal Plain of Palestine extends from the Ladder of Tyre in the north, southward to the Sinai, interrupted only by Mount Carmel as it juts out into the Mediterranean Sea. Few natural harbors can be found along the coast, however, and the presence of sand dunes and hard limestone ridges (*kurkar*) prohibited most settlement directly on the coast. These conditions meant that the people living in Palestine were seldom great seafarers. The fertile soil and abundant water, characteristic of the Coastal Plain, did ensure dense settlement in most periods.

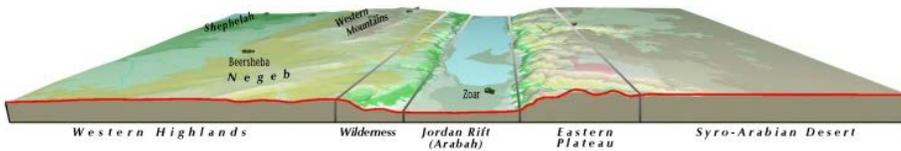
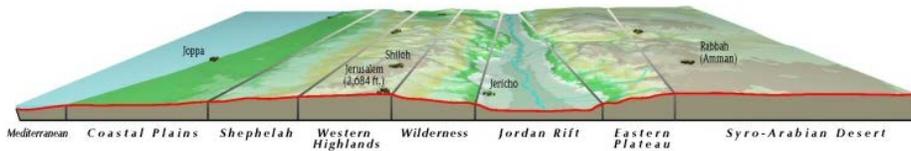
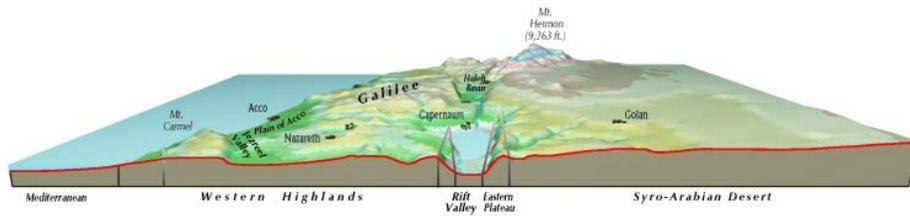
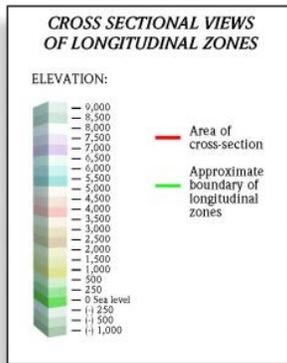
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The Plain of Sharon viewed from Aphek. The headwaters of the Yarkon River emerge from springs beside Tel Aphek.

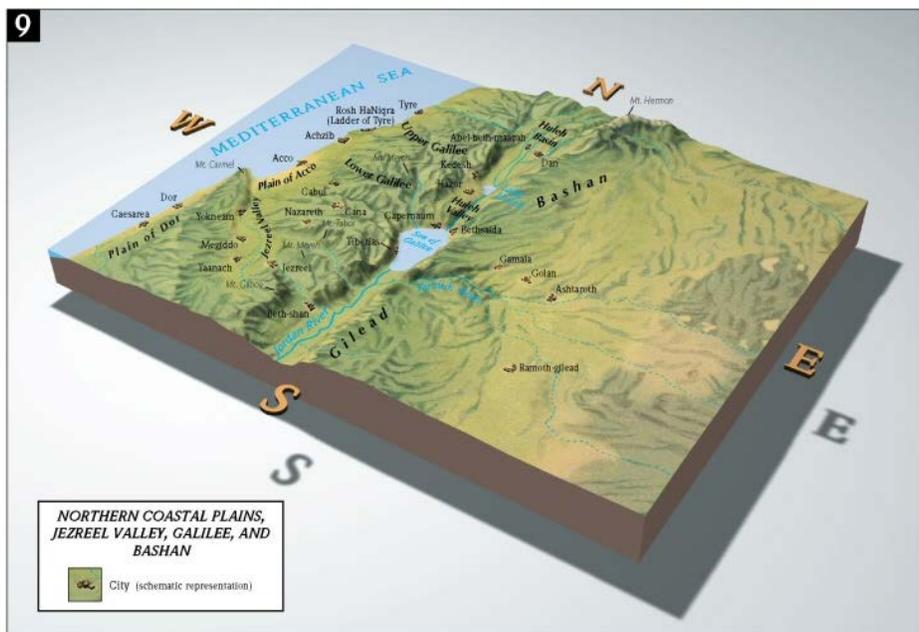
Israel controlled portions of the plain only in times of political and military strength. More frequently, powerful foes like Egypt or Assyria dominated this region. The Philistines and Phoenicians encroached upon the plain throughout much of the first millennium B.C. The Coastal Plain consists of three sections: the Plain of Acco, the Plain of Sharon, and the Philistine Plain.





Plain of Acco (see map 9). The Plain of Acco occupies a narrow strip between the Ladder of Tyre in the north and Mount Carmel to the south. In Joshua's division of the land, the tribe of Asher received the Plain of Acco, but historically and culturally, the small cities of the region were closely related to their Phoenician neighbors to the north. Most of these cities clustered along the

eastern portion of the Acco Plain, but the city of Acco (later, Ptolemais) and Achzib were along the coast.



The Sharon Plain (see map 10). The Sharon Plain extends south of Mount Carmel to the Yarkon River. Until New Testament times the Sharon Plain was sparsely inhabited. Because of the deposition of sand along the coast, numerous streams of the region had a tendency to dam at their mouths. As a result, marshes and swamps formed in the western sector where dense undergrowth and oak thickets flourished. The lush vegetation of the Sharon inspired biblical poets (Song of Sol. 2:1) but discouraged settlement. The International Coastal Highway skirted the Sharon eastward where the few cities of the plain were located. Aphek, at the head of the Yarkon River, was the region's most important city in the Old Testament period. By New Testament times the marshes had been drained. Herod built the impressive port of Caesarea on the coast, giving to Palestine a much needed major harbor.

The Plain of Dor (see map 10), tucked beneath the western slopes of Mount Carmel, is sometimes considered a part of the Sharon Plain. Other geographers consider the plain a separate geographical entity. One of the most important harbors of Palestine, Dor gave the plain a strategic importance.

The Plain of Philistia (see map 11). By 1150 B.C. the Philistines settled the southern coastal region of Palestine, and, eventually the broad plain stretching south to the Sinai bore their name. The major international trade route, the International Coastal Highway, split into two branches as it crossed the Philistine Plain. The key cities of this region—Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron—play important roles in biblical history and are located along the International Coastal

Highway. Unlike the Sharon Plain, drainage was not a problem, and the rich alluvial soil provided abundant grain crops for the large population inhabiting the region.

JEZREEL VALLEY (VALLEY OF ESDRAELON) (SEE MAP 9)

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Considered by some an extension of the Coastal Plain, the beautiful Jezreel Valley is a major feature of Palestine's geography, possessing historical and economic importance. The valley runs from the northwest to the southeast, connecting the Plain of Acco to the Jordan Rift near Bethshan. The valley consists of two distinct parts: western Jezreel and eastern Jezreel. The city of Jezreel ("God sows") was located in the valley where the two parts meet. The western Jezreel is a broad triangle of land tucked between Mount Carmel on the south and lower Galilee to the north. The eastern Jezreel is much narrower. Mount Tabor, the Hill of Moreh, and Mount Gilboa intrude on the Jezreel Valley in the east as it descends to the Jordan Rift. Routes radiated through the Jezreel in all directions, giving the valley a strategic importance. Key cities—Megiddo, Yokneam, and Ibleam—guarded passes through Mount Carmel. The International Coastal Highway entered the Jezreel at Megiddo. This important city guarded the main pass leading to the valley and was the scene of many battles. The name Armageddon ("Mountain of Megiddo") used in Revelation 16:16 recalls the numerous conflicts fought over control of this strategic valley.

Fertile soil and abundant water supplies made the valley agriculturally productive, especially for barley and wheat crops. Numerous springs in the valley fed two small streams flowing to the east and west. The Kishon drained the western Jezreel, while the Harod (Jalud) emptied to the east. This abundance of water created marshes at times. Heavy rains occasionally caused these streams to flood, as described in Deborah's victory over the Canaanites recorded in Judges 4 and 5.



A general view of the Jezreel Valley viewed from near Megiddo.

THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

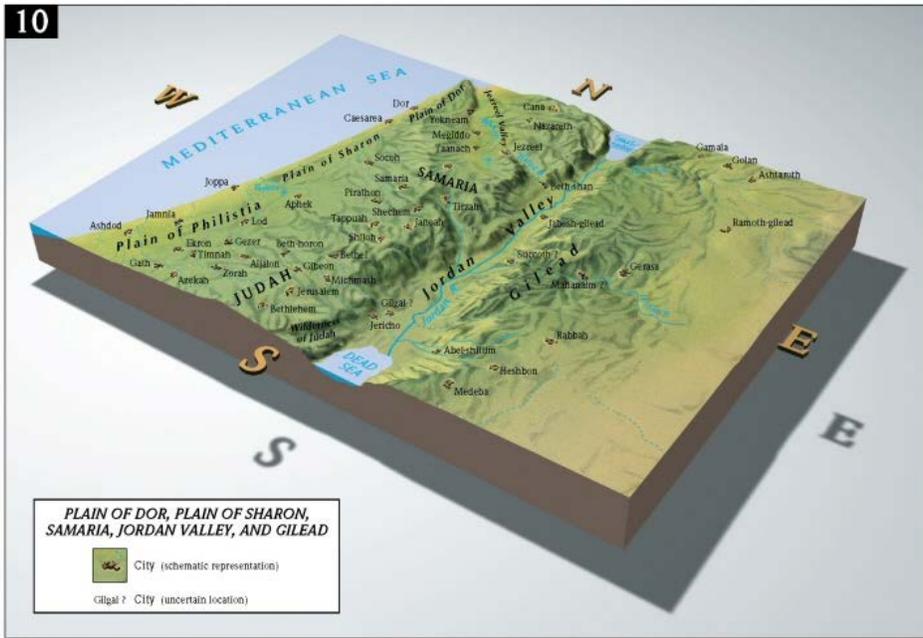
This central spine of mountains ranging from 1,500 to 4,000 feet in altitude runs the length of western Palestine, broken only by the Jezreel Valley. The Israelite tribes originally settled here and began clearing the forests natural to the region (Josh. 17:14–15). The Western Mountains with their three major divisions—Galilee, Samaria, and Judah—played the major role in biblical history.

Galilee (see map 9). North of the Jezreel Valley lies Galilee, a region with two distinct characteristics. Upper Galilee is a high, uplifted plateau isolated by its height from surrounding regions. Mount Meron, the highest point, rises to an elevation of 3,963 feet. Well watered and heavily forested in antiquity, Upper Galilee played a less prominent historical role due to its relative isolation. By contrast, the gentle hills and broad, fertile valleys of Lower Galilee are more familiar to biblical students. The rolling hills, oriented east and west, do not exceed 2,000 feet and often are much lower. Bisecting valleys (Beth Kerem Valley, Beth Netofa Valley) made travel easy. Vineyards, olive trees, and wheat flourished in the favorable climate and soil. Villages and towns like Nazareth, Cana, and the provincial capital, Sepphoris, dotted the landscape.

Samaria (Hill Country of Ephraim) (see map 10). The regions of Samaria and Judah constitute the Western Mountains south of the Jezreel. These mountains, composed of soft sedimentary rock, have been scoured by rainfall forming *wadis* that penetrate the mountains from east and west. The term *wadi* refers to gullies formed by runoff erosion. Normally dry, wadis can become raging torrents, especially in semidry regions. Some of these wadis are wide, allowing easy travel; others are narrow, steep, and easily defended. An important road—the Ridge Road—following the crest or watershed, links Samaria and Judah. Many biblical cities lie along or near this route: Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Bethel, Mizpah, Shiloh, and Shechem.

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The two sides of the Western Mountains are noticeably different. The western side of the mountains catches the rain from the Mediterranean Sea, but the area east of the crest receives little rain as it plunges down into the Rift. As a result, the lands east of the crest are increasingly desertlike, especially as one moves south.



The Valley of Shiloh in the hill country of Ephraim.

Samaria, or the Hill Country of Ephraim, begins with the Gilboan Mountains (about 1,600 feet) and rises in altitude to more than 3,300 feet near Bethel. The northern part of Samaria, the tribal area of Manasseh, is lower and more accessible than the southern sector. Here a softer limestone eroded more easily, creating extensive valleys; convenient roads followed these valleys. The Wadi Farah, an especially important conduit, links Samaria with the Transjordan (Gilead) by way of the Wadi Jabbok across the fords near Adam. All the capitals of the Northern Kingdom, Israel (Shechem, Tirzah, and Samaria), were located in north Samaria. Shechem lies between Mount Ebal (3,083 feet) and Mount Gerizim (2,890 feet), scene of the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 27–28. The Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim, later destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 128 B.C.

South of Manasseh a harder limestone withstood erosion, producing a high, more isolated plateau (3,000 feet) with steep slopes on both sides. The tribe of Ephraim settled here. Shiloh, Bethel, and Mizpah, located along the Ridge Road, appear frequently in Old Testament history. Settlers took advantage of the exceptionally rich soil to produce abundant crops. They farmed the valleys and built terraces on the hillsides, reaping a bounty of wheat, barley, and olives.



The Judean Mountains northwest of Jerusalem.

Judah (see map 11). The gentle depression called the “Saddle of Benjamin” separates Samaria from Judah. Judah, or Mount Judah, is a mountainous highland; altitudes range from 2,000 to 3,400 feet with the higher elevations found near Hebron in the south. The major cities—Jerusalem, Beth-zur, and Hebron—are located along or just off the Ridge Road that follows the crest of the mountains.

Judah is one of the most protected regions in Palestine. The Wilderness of Judah, a dry, desolate area stretching down to the Dead Sea, functions as a formidable barrier to the east. The mountains plunge precipitously more than 3,500 feet from Jerusalem down to Jericho in the Rift below. The few settlements of this desert region clustered just east of the watershed. Brigands, outcasts, and Jewish freedom fighters sought refuge in this barren region, known as Jeshimon in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 23:19). The Shephelah (see below) restricts access to Judah from the west, while the Negeb and deserts protect the region to the south. Judah is more rugged and somewhat drier, with less available agricultural land than Samaria. However, the soil is fertile, and terrace farming provides ample space for the cultivation of vines, fruit trees, and grain crops.

SHEPHELAH (SEE MAP 11)

The Shephelah is a strip of foothills along the western flank of Judah. The term means “Lowlands” and must have been given by inhabitants living in the higher elevations of Judah. These rolling hills form an effective barrier separating Judah from the Philistine Plain. Four valleys (wadis) cut through the Shephelah giving access to the cities of Judah: the Aijalon, the Sorek, the Elah, and the “Way to Hebron.”

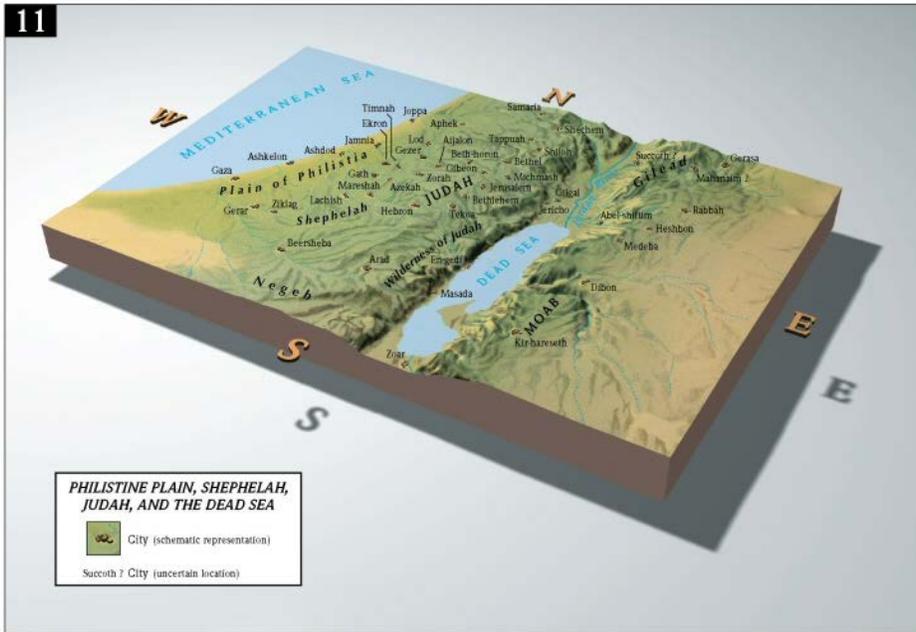
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The rugged terrain characteristic of the Wilderness of Judah.

Control of the Shephelah was vital to the security of Judah. Heavily fortified towns such as Lachish, Azekah, Socoh, and Timnah protected each valley. Frequently these cities bore the brunt of armies attacking Judah; the spade of the archaeologist has revealed evidence of their frequent destruction. Early on, the Philistines fought with the tribes of Israel for control of this vital region. Several of the battles fought between the Philistines and the Israelite tribes that are recorded in Judges and Samuel took place in the Shephelah. David fought Goliath in the Valley of Elah (1 Sam. 17). Earlier many of Samson's exploits took place in the vicinity of Timnah along the Sorek Valley (Judg. 14–15).

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NEGEB (SEE MAPS 11 AND 12)

Modern geographies apply the term *Negeb* to a triangle of land extending south from Judah to the Gulf of Aqabah. The biblical use of the term, however, is more restricted. Negeb refers to the region around Beer-sheba and Arad. Beer-sheba receives about ten to twelve inches of rain annually, an amount considered marginal for agriculture but adequate for grazing flocks. Abraham and Isaac sojourned in the Negeb with their clans and livestock. Water was a perennial problem for inhabitants of the Negeb, but scattered wells along the major wadis and, later, the use of cisterns permitted settlements. Nomadic tribes inhabiting the desert fringe, like the Amalekites, often raided settlements in the Negeb. David repulsed the Amalekites after an attack on Ziklag, a city of the Negeb (1 Sam. 30).

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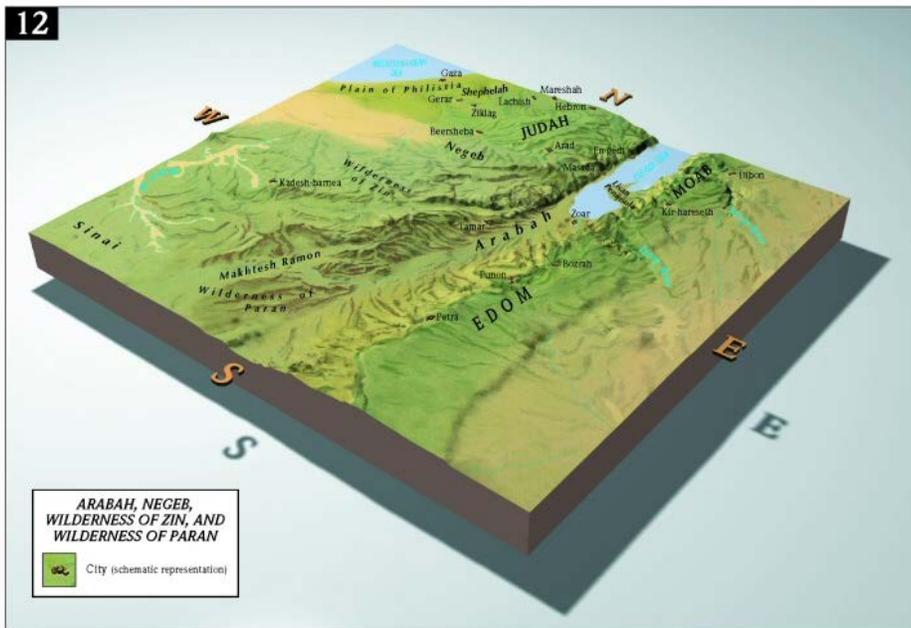
View of the Negev from Beer-sheba, the most important city of the Negev. Remains of the store facilities and gate complex dating from the Iron II Period (approximately 900–600 B.C.) are in view.

By New Testament times, the region of the Negev was known as Idumea. Herod the Great was an Idumean, a people despised by the Jews for their Edomite heritage.

THE SOUTHERN WILDERNESS (SEE MAP 12)

South of Beer-sheba, rainfall amounts drop sharply, and the landscape becomes increasingly rugged. The Bible refers to this area as “wilderness.” The Wilderness of Zin stretches southeast of Beer-sheba, while portions of the Wilderness of Paran intrude from the Sinai near Kadesh-barnea. Jagged peaks, desolate plateaus, and craterlike depressions punctuate this foreboding land. During New Testament times the Nabateans, an Arab people, inhabited portions of the Negev, the southern wildernesses, and the Transjordan. They controlled the Arabian trade routes from Petra to Gaza. The Nabateans were also adept agriculturalists in marginal desert regions. Their innovative irrigation techniques (e.g., dams, catch basins, etc.) made the southern deserts bloom.

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THE JORDAN RIFT

Nature has divided Palestine into two segments by a deep cleft, the Jordan Rift. This cleft in the earth's surface is part of a great fissure extending from eastern Turkey into Africa. In Palestine most of the Rift lies below sea level, reaching a maximum depth of 1,300 feet at the Dead Sea. The higher mountains and plateaus to the east and west of the Rift make the effect more dramatic. Most of the perennial rivers and bodies of water of Palestine are found in the Jordan Rift, which drains 70 percent of the land. Five divisions of the Rift should be noted: the Huleh Basin, the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, and the Arabah.

The Huleh Basin (see map 9). The Huleh Basin is a depression caught between Upper Galilee and the Eastern Plateau. Mount Hermon (9,232 feet) flanks the basin on the northeast. Numerous springs dot the area, fed by the melting snows of Mount Hermon. Principal springs emerge in southern Lebanon (Nahr al-Hasbani), Dan (Nahr al-Qadi), and near Caesarea Philippi (Nahr al-Baniyas) and are the source of the Jordan River. In antiquity, the waters collected in the southern end of the basin forming a marshy lake, Lake Huleh. Today the marshes have been drained, but in ancient times they hindered travel, promoted disease, and foiled settlement in the center of the basin. Yet the climate, refreshing springs, and fertile soil invited the establishment of cities, especially away from the marshes. Hazor, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and Ijon all were located along the perimeter of the basin. At the southern end of the basin the Jordan River begins a rapid descent southward. The name *Jordan* probably comes from a Hebrew verb meaning "to descend," appropriate for a river that drops forty feet per mile in some places.

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A view of the northwest portion of the Sea of Galilee at sunset. The Plain of Genneseret and the Horns of Hattin are visible in the distance.

The Sea of Galilee (see map 9). This famous body of water is a freshwater lake thirteen miles long and seven miles wide. The surface of the lake is 690 feet below sea level, surrounded on all sides by higher land. In the Bible, the lake bears several names: Sea of Galilee (Mark 1:16), Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1), Sea of Chinnereth (Deut. 3:17), Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1), or simply “the lake” (Luke 5:2). A branch of the International Coastal Highway skirted the northwest shore of the lake by the Plain of Gennesaret. Capernaum, Magdala, and Bethsaida were located along the north/northwest shore. Local towns and villages depended on the fishing industries and agriculture products provided by the lake. Even today the lake’s classic beauty calls to mind the miracles and teachings Jesus performed along its shores.

The Jordan Valley (see maps 9–10). For approximately seventy miles the Jordan River winds its way south from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea through the Jordan Valley. The volume of the Jordan doubled with the influx from the Yarmuk River in antiquity, but modern water conservation techniques greatly restrict the present water volume. The northern half of the Jordan Valley is well watered and fertile, with numerous traces of ancient settlements. Key cities (Adam, Succoth, Zarethan, Beth-shan) developed at points where natural routes connected the highlands to the east and west. The Jordan cut a deep gorge (in Arabic, *Zor*) that contained dense thickets of trees and shrubs, the “pride of the Jordan” (Jer. 49:19). In biblical times this dense vegetation harbored wild animals, including lions (Jer. 50:44). The southern Jordan Valley is drier, almost desertlike. Jericho flourishes in an oasis nourished by several springs in the midst of this arid landscape.

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The Jordan River just north of the Sea of Galilee.

The Dead Sea (see maps 11–12). The Dead Sea is unique among the bodies of water on earth. About 50 miles long and 10 miles wide, the surface of the sea lies 1,300 feet below sea level—the lowest place on the earth’s surface. The Lisan Peninsula protrudes into the sea from the east,

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dividing the Dead Sea into two unequal parts. The larger northern portion of the sea reaches depths of 1,300 feet, but the smaller southern sector averages less than thirty feet. Oppressively hot temperatures and dry climate grip the entire region. The barren, ragged landscape possesses an eerie beauty all its own.

Known in the Bible as the “Salt Sea” or “Sea of the Arabah” (Deut. 3:17), the Dead Sea receives water from several freshwater tributaries and springs. Among the larger streams, the Jordan flows in from the north, while the Arnon and Zered enter the sea from the east. However, the rivers have no exit. The waters absorb salts and other chemicals from numerous deposits in the region. The extreme heat of the region concentrates the chemicals by evaporation with the result that the Dead Sea consists of 26 to 33 percent salts—a ratio several times saltier than normal sea water and almost twice as salty as the Great Salt Lake.



View of the southern end of the Dead Sea from Masada. The Lisan Peninsula that divides the Dead Sea into two parts—a deeper northern section and a much shallower southern section—can be seen in the photograph.

These conditions discouraged habitation except where freshwater springs (En-gedi, Ain Feshkha) made settlement possible. Refugees, like David as he fled Saul (1 Sam. 26), found safety in the numerous caves of the region. Later, the Qumran sectarians hid their library in caves along the northwest shore. Beginning in 1947, shepherd boys discovered scrolls today known as the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” Herod the Great built two fortresses, Masada and Macherus, along the shores of the Dead Sea.

Arabah (see map 12). The Jordan Rift continues south of the Dead Sea 110 miles to the Gulf of Aqabah. The Bible calls this region the Arabah, a dry and desolate region. Occasionally the

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Bible uses the term *Arabah* in a broader sense, including parts of the Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea (Josh. 18:18), but here the more restricted sense is used.



The Arabah.

Immediately south of the Dead Sea, the Arabah is below sea level, but a gradual elevation rises above sea level midway to the gulf. The red Nubian sandstone of Edom on the east and the highlands of the Negeb to the west contrast with the monotonous landscape of the Arabah.

Extremely dry and isolated, the Arabah, nonetheless, possessed strategic importance for several reasons. In biblical times the Arabah held important copper deposits located near Punon and Timna. Ezion-geber, a seaport built by Solomon on the Gulf of Aqabah, received the wealth of Arabia and Africa through the fleet stationed there. Highways linking Ezion-geber with Judah ran the length of the Arabah. Control of the Arabah was, therefore, economically important to the court of Jerusalem.

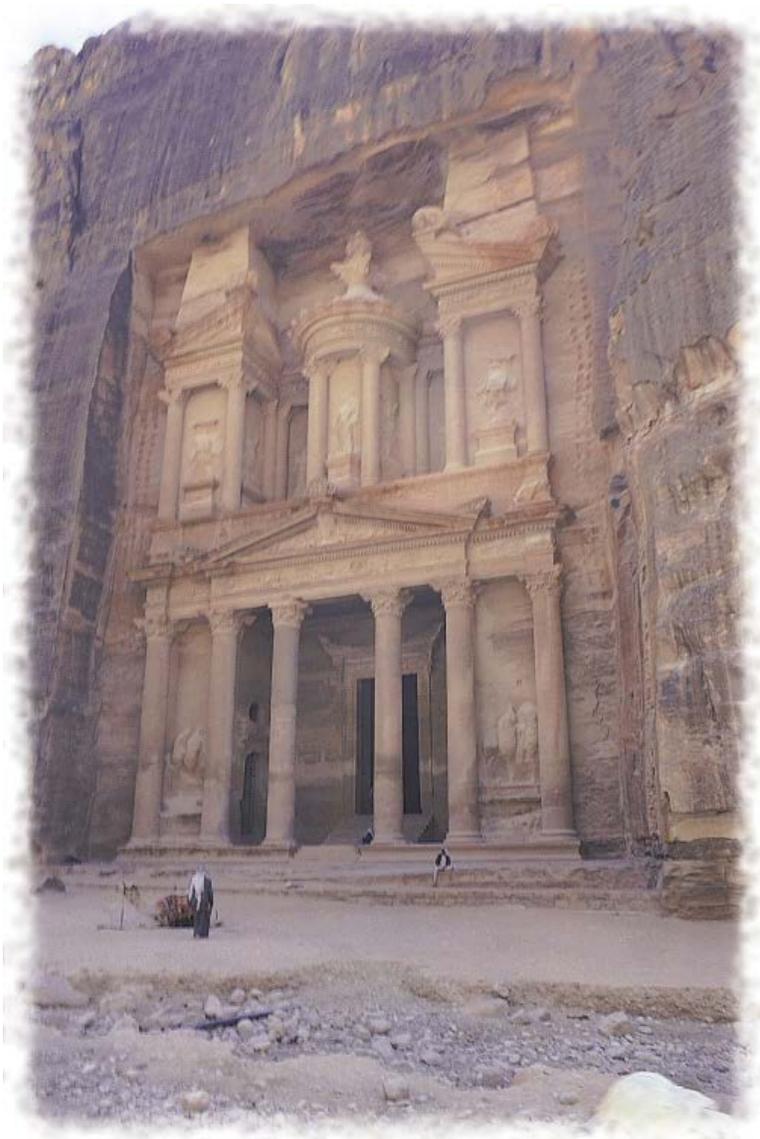
EASTERN PLATEAU (TRANSJORDAN)

The lands rising sharply to the east of the Jordan Rift form a high plateau or tableland often called Transjordan. This plateau, ranging in height from two thousand to more than five thousand feet, towers above the Jordan Rift, then slopes gradually eastward to the Syro-Arabian desert. Four large wadis—Yarmuk, Jabbok, Arnon, and Zered—bisect the plateau, carrying the runoff into the rift. Considerable amounts of rain fall on the plateau as clouds reform in the higher altitudes beyond the rift. The northern and central sections are well watered (twenty to forty inches in Bashan, twelve to twenty inches in parts of Gilead). Further south, the encroaching desert restricts rainfall amounts. The larger cities developed along the important commercial route known as the King's Highway, which traversed the top of the plateau from the Gulf of Aqabah to Damascus. The wadis helped divide the region into four major sections: Bashan, Gilead, Moab, and Edom.

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The Arnon Gorge. The deep chasm created by the Arnon River was the boundary between the Moabites to the south and the Israelite territory of Reuben to the north.



A Nabatean temple—"the Khasneh"—carved out of the sandstone cliffs at Petra.

Bashan (see map 9). Bashan is the northernmost region of the Eastern Plateau. Lying between the towering slopes of Mount Hermon (9,263 feet; also known as Sirion and Senir [Deut. 3:9]) and the Yarmuk River, Bashan is a fertile land blessed with abundant water and rich volcanic soil.

Extinct volcanic cones protrude from the landscape, while oak trees graced portions of the Bashan in biblical times (Isa. 2:13). Often, biblical writers referred to the well-fed cattle that grazed in the Bashan (Amos 4:1; Ezek. 39:18). During the Old Testament period, Israel seldom controlled this region, although portions of Bashan originally were allotted to the half-tribe of Manasseh. The Arameans, especially the kings of Damascus, controlled the Bashan from about 900 to 732 B.C. Herod's son Philip governed this land during the New Testament era when various parts of the region bore the names Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Auranitis, and Batanea.

Gilead (see map 9–10). Gilead, a mountainous region noted for its heavy forests in ancient times, stretches south of the Yarmuk to the top of the Dead Sea. A natural passage links Gilead with the lands west of the Jordan. The Jabbok River (Nahr ez-Zerka), dividing Gilead into two parts, lies opposite the Wadi Farah, which affords easy access to Samaria. The Israelite tribes of East Manasseh and Gad, who settled Gilead, thus maintained contact with their kinsmen beyond the Rift. The Kingdom of Ammon, centered on Rabbah, occupied the lands bordering the desert southeast of Gilead. By New Testament times, portions of Perea and the Decapolis fell within Gilead.

Moab (see map 11). The region due east of the Dead Sea is Moab, a land divided by the deep gorge of the Arnon River (Wadi Mujib). The southern boundary of Moab is the Zered (Wadi al-Hesa), which separates Moab from Edom. Precipitous wadis leading to the Dead Sea scour the land, making both travel and settlement difficult along the western edge. The eastern border of Moab is ill defined as the habitable land blends gradually to desert.

Between the western scarp and desert lies a plateau where conditions favored sheepherding and cereal crops. The story of Ruth the Moabitess illustrates the agricultural potential of Moab. North of the Arnon, a high flat tableland, in Hebrew *Mishor* (Josh. 13:21), provided the best agricultural lands of Moab. Important cities of the Mishor include Heshbon and Dibon. Although the Moabites claimed this region, the Israelite tribe of Reuben settled north of the Arnon, leading to frequent hostilities between Israel and Moab over control of this territory (2 Kgs. 3:4–27).

Edom (see map 12). South of the Zered, striking red Nubian sandstone mountains decorate the land of Edom. The name *Edom* comes from the Hebrew word meaning “red.” Occasionally, underlying granite rocks protrude through the earth's crust giving the region a more dramatic visual impact. Some mountains reach heights in excess of five thousand feet. Tucked between the desert and the Arabah, Edom is something of a fortress consisting of a narrow band of mountains affording protection to its inhabitants. Sufficient rainfall occurs in the western area to produce small clumps of juniper, oak, and hawthorn forests. Seir is another name for Edom (Gen. 32:3), although sometimes the name refers to land south of Judah (Deut. 1:2, 44; Josh. 11:17). The Edomites, descendants of Esau and ancestral enemies of Israel and Judah, built their cities in the rugged mountains of this region. Later, the Nabateans carved out of the living rock the city of Petra—a feast of beauty with its multicolored sandstone monuments.