

# ***REGIONAL STUDY GUIDE***

## **INTRODUCTORY MAP STUDIES IN THE LAND OF THE BIBLE**

Steven P. Lancaster and James M. Monson

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### **WHAT CHANGED IN VERSION 7.0?**

Version 7.0 provides marginal notes to aid users of the newly released (version 3, 2017, 2014)

***Regional Study Maps*** 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.



## INTRODUCTION

The teacher in the book of Ecclesiastes says, ‘What has been shall be again; what has been done shall be done again, since nothing is new under the sun. Can it be said about anything, “Behold, this is new?”’ (1:9-10). In spite of this reality, Biblical Backgrounds offers this regional study of the land of the Bible as a ‘new approach to an old subject.’

Learning biblical history without the land of the Bible is as difficult as playing chess without a chess board or telling someone how to drive through Boston without a map. Each biblical passage may teach a lesson, but the reader is often left with a myriad of unconnected events which do not fit into a meaningful whole. Learning the regional architecture of the land of the Bible (the ‘playing board’ of biblical history) remedies this situation by providing a gateway into the real world of the Bible. There are many benefits of such a study to us as readers and interpreters of Scripture. Here are some.

- a. We discover the motives of those we meet on the pages of the Bible while participating in their decisions, for better or for worse.
- b. We see events in the Bible fitting into a larger context as pieces of a puzzle fit into a larger picture.
- c. We more fully appreciate the message of the biblical writer as a prelude for translating that message into our lives in the 21st century.

In short, the playing board of biblical history provides the background for a broader and deeper understanding of Scripture and its message in its original setting. This is the goal of Biblical Backgrounds’ *Introductory Study Package*.

The *Introductory Study Package* is made up of three parts:

- a. *Regions on the Run* (Note contents on p. 3, and thumb through the book as you read below.)

This book provides the basis for your entire study. Its opening pages introduce the Land of the Bible in terms of climate, settlement, highways and imperial centers (pp. 6-9). The heart of the study familiarizes the reader with the three main parts of the playing board: the northern, the southern and the central arenas (pp. 10-29). Three maps introduce each arena’s setting, regions, and routes with arrows showing the flow of traffic. This study of arenas also includes ‘field trips through history’ which reinforce the geopolitical issues. These field trips step through history using consistent subtitles for major historical periods. They also appear on the 4000 Year Overview chart inside the back cover of the book. When folded out, this chart keeps the flow of history in view for frequent reference. With the chart on the right and the map on the left the reader painlessly learns a great deal about various historical periods.

*Regions on the Run* also contains a concise two-page historical summary, ‘The Land Between into the Days of Jesus’ (pp. 30-31), and a six-page ‘Regional Outline of the Gospels’ with five reference maps (pp. 32-37). The book concludes with two graphic charts of history and a colored relief map which helps highlight topographical differences throughout the land (pp. 38-back cover).

- b. *Regional Study Maps*

The large *Regional Study Maps* (most measuring 22 x 17 in/56 x 43 cm) offer ‘virtual reality’ as the reader examines selected events. The student’s marking assignments enhance the maps and show how much the lay of the land influenced events and their outcome. The reader, together with biblical characters, meets the geographical challenges of the land as both seek to pass through its natural obstacles or capture and hold its strategic areas.

- c. *The Regional Study Guide*

The *Regional Study Guide* integrates the regional architecture of the land presented in *Regions on the Run* with the study of specific events on various *Regional Study Maps*. Marking exercises allow a closer examination of individual events as they unfold in the Bible and often generate fresh insights into the meaning of the text.

*Regions on the Run* and the *Regional Study Maps* are available through Biblical Backgrounds Distribution Office, P.O. Box 135, Rice Lake, WI 54868 USA. They are protected by copyright and cannot be copied in any way. The *Regional Study Guide*, on the other hand, is available for printing from Biblical Backgrounds’ website ([www.bibback.com](http://www.bibback.com)). It may be distributed to students for the cost of photocopying but may not be edited, republished nor sold for profit without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

## MARKING PROCEDURES FOR REGIONAL STUDY MAPS

Assignments in the *Regional Study Guide* consist of marking instructions for the *Regional Study Maps*, interspersed with discussions and reading assignments from the Bible. Discussions serve as a commentary on the graphics the student is drawing on the map. Each completed map becomes a geographical/historical building block for further study. Each map study is a statement about particular historical events and illustrates the expressed objectives of the unit in which it is marked. The maps, however, have a wide variety of uses in later study as the student continues to examine biblical texts against the background of the playing board.

### COLORS AND CODES USED FOR MARKING

The following is a list of pens which are needed to complete the map assignments in the *Regional Study Guide*. It is best not to use colors that are too dark. The use of each color is explained here.

1. Yellow felt tip pen for highlighting important names and routes
2. Green felt tip pen (a bright, medium color) for information relating to Judah and Israel (except in the study of Israel, the Northern Kingdom)
3. Bright (not dark) blue felt tip pen for information relating to non-Israelite nations
4. Red felt tip pen to show confrontation of some type: battles or captured cities
5. Orange felt tip pen (bright and not too dark) for a variety of uses
6. Black fine ball point pen for writing in names and notes

### HIGHLIGHTING NAMES AND ROUTES

The abbreviation HL instructs the reader to highlight the route or name in yellow. This brings out something especially relevant to the topic being studied on the map. When highlighting a city name avoid coloring the city dot with yellow (unless told to do so), since a different color may be placed on it later.

### SWEEPING ARROWS

These arrows graphically show movement and direction. The flow of action is drawn alongside or near the relevant routes (not directly on them). These arrows should skip over city names. The arrows can pass through hilly regions and run into areas of water if necessary. Make the points of these arrows large enough to show definite direction. Do not hesitate to be artistic. Practice with the dry end of the pen before attempting to mark the map. The following example illustrates the free movement of a sweeping arrow.



### FLIGHT AND CHASE ARROWS

These are special arrows. Forces in flight from a battle are shown graphically with short arrows in the appropriate color. A small, double-pointed chase arrow (directly behind the flight arrow) shows the pursuing forces in its appropriate color. These would appear like the following example, except in two colors.



### CONFRONTATION MARK

The confrontation mark stands at the point of battles. Make it red and like a large asterisk. \*

### ADD YOUR OWN USEFUL NOTE

Feel free to add your own notes to each map. Two useful suggestions are the following:

1. Write the number and abbreviated title in the sea or open space of each event on relevant maps;
2. Write the name of major players and notes, such as a reference, on each major arrow as you draw.

### ABBREVIATIONS

ANET *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. J.B. Pritchard, ed. Princeton: University Press, 1969

RR *Regions on the Run*. James M. Monson with S.P. Lancaster. Rockford: Biblical Backgrounds, 2014

TLB *The Land Between*. James M. Monson. Jerusalem, 1983

Biblical quotations are the authors' own translations. Permission is pending for use of texts from ANET.

**THE LAND BETWEEN WITHIN THE WORLD OF THE BIBLE (ME MAP, version 2)**

[NOTE: *Regional Study Guide* (v. 5) uses ME Map (v. 2). For ME Map (v. 1) use *Regional Study Guide* (v. 4).]

This unit prepares us for later studies by introducing the Land of the Bible (the ‘Land Between’) within the context of eight historical periods. The name ‘Land Between’ emphasizes that it is situated between geographical forces of a western sea and an eastern desert, as well as between great centers of human settlement in Egypt to the south and in the region of Aram and Mesopotamia to the north. The corridor linking these important centers runs through the Land Between, avoiding both desert and sea. For this reason, whatever happened in the Middle East (our current subject) sooner or later had an impact on the Land Between.

**INTRODUCING ME MAP (v. 2)**

1. Open the map before you, FIND the large names AFRICA, EUROPE and ASIA within the corners of the map. Note the names and positions of the various seas and especially the importance of the MEDITERRANEAN SEA, RED SEA and PERSIAN GULF and the lands between them. Note the mountain ranges curving across the north and the large deserts across the south.
2. Within this larger context FIND THE LAND BETWEEN in the blue box in the middle of the map, EGYPT to the south along the Nile River, MESOPOTAMIA (the northern section known as ‘al-Jazira’ in Arabic) and ARAM, across northernmost Mesopotamia, once the home of Aramean kingdoms.
3. Note that eight historical maps below the main map span some two millennia, from -1570 to +325. We begin by a study of these eight maps which provides a context for all of our subsequent work.

**EIGHT PERIOD MAPS: FROM EGYPTIAN DOMINANCE THROUGH ROME SUPREME** (bottom of ME Map, v. 2)

The three-fold goal of this study is 1) to provide an introduction to two millennia of history, 2) to set the scene for the events studied throughout this *Regional Study Guide*, and 3) to link features, regions and sites on these maps to the main map. Therefore we suggest that before you begin your study of each event in this guide you return and review the context of the event in the discussions below. Page 40 in *Regions on the Run* and a free and downloadable, seven-page *Regional Study Guide Supplement* offers further discussions of these periods.

Notes beside these eight period maps outline our discussions below and appear in bold within these discussions. A note with a number relates to an arrow on the period map, and this number also appears in the side margin. It is helpful to follow these notes and arrows as you read. Events you will later study in the *Regional Study Guide* are also listed in the side margins. Other bold names in the discussions (sites, regions or features) appear on the period map and/or on the main map. The term ‘the land’ in our discussions refers to the Land Between.

**1. EGYPTIAN DOMINANCE -1570 TO -1125**

**CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (inside back cover of *Regions on the Run*, abbreviated as ‘4000’ below)

Find ‘Egyptian Dominance/Rival Empires in Aram’ along the bottom of this chart and note Egypt’s rivals to the north (Mitanni and the Hittites). Note what was happening in the Land Between during this period in the middle of this chart (*Slavery of the Israelites in Egypt*, their *Exodus* from Egypt, their settlement during the life of *Joshua* and the *Early Judges*—our references to events in the stories of the Patriarchs through those of the Judges reflect the first view [top] in the five chronological options seen in the middle of the 4000 chart). Just prior to -1570 outsiders (whom the Egyptians called ‘Hyksos’) had controlled Egypt, but Egypt’s new dynasty (18th) finally expelled them.

**MARKING ON PERIOD MAP—1. EGYPTIAN DOMINANCE** (the first small map below the main map)

1. Encircle in blue: EGYPT, MITANNI, HITTITES
2. HL on name: Gaza, Megiddo, Kedesh

**DISCUSSION**

During the century prior to -1570 foreigners, who had infiltrated via the **Land Between**, ruled **Egypt**.

After expelling these intruders, Egypt entered the land via the region of **Gaza** and formed the province of Canaan. When local leaders revolted against **Egypt in Canaan**, pharaoh Thutmose III campaigned to retake the land. After his victory at the strategic site of **Megiddo**, he was in a position to retake routes leading to the region of **Aram** (‘taking Megiddo is like taking a thousand cities’). Later pharaohs also campaigned in the land as Egypt continued to control the land for more than three centuries.

c. -1570

Arrow 1

Event 12 c. -1468

- Arrow 2 A new threat arose when the kingdom of **Mitanni** moved south into the region of Aram. The campaign of Thutmose III aimed to meet this growing threat on Canaan. As the **Hittites overtook Mitanni** pressure on Canaan must have diminished. Meanwhile, internal conflict arose in Egypt as pharaoh Akhnaton upset the religious status quo and built his new capital at the modern site of Amarna. Unrest also grew in Canaan, and local leaders vainly wrote to their ruler in Egypt complaining that other city leaders were expanding their control and welcoming groups of outsiders.
- Arrow 3 c. -1375
- c. -1360
- Cf. 4000 chart According to view #1 of the Israelite Exodus from Egypt under **Moses**, Thutmose III was the pharaoh of Israelite slavery, while his son Amenhotep II was the pharaoh of the Exodus. Among this view's many arguments is the thought that an earlier exodus provides the time needed for Israelite settlement, from the Israelite entry into Canaan under **Joshua** to Egypt's recognition of the people of Israel as a significant enemy (below). Expansion of **Israelite settlement** could very well have occurred during the days of pharaoh Akhnaton (above) when Egypt did not intervene in local affairs in the Land Between.
- Event 20
- Event 21
- Arrow 4 c. -1286 As Hittite power grew stronger in the region of Aram, Ramses II of Egypt's new dynasty (19th) moved north to meet this threat. Following his famous battle at **Kedesh**, an **Egypt-Hittite peace** was established creating a stable frontier in that area. During Ramses' subsequent long rule, Egyptian control of the Land Between again was taken for granted, and **Israelite settlement** must have expanded further. Indeed, **Egypt notes the Israelites** as an actual enemy in Canaan in an inscription of Merneptah, son of Ramses II. This reveals that the Israelites had been present in the land for an extended period of time.
- Event 5 c. -1220
- Event 13 At least two chaotic decades in Egypt (after -1200) followed pharaoh Merneptah's death, ample time for Jabin, king of **Hazor**, to rise to power in the north of the Land Between. His attempts to restrain the expanding Israelites met with disaster when he confronted two early Israelite judges, Deborah and Barak.
- Arrow 5 At the head of a new dynasty (20th) pharaoh Ramses III continued to campaign in Canaan, but waves of so-called '**Sea Peoples**' engulfed the eastern Mediterranean (coming by land and by sea). **Empires fell or declined**. The Hittites, already weakened by internal struggles, succumbed, and Egypt barely survived coastal invasions. Egypt's presence in Canaan diminished, and within decades its armies retreated to the safety of the Nile. Imperial control of the land would not return for over three centuries.
- c. -1168

## 2. AGE OF NATIONS -1040 TO -740

**CHARTS—4000, ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW** (p. 39, *Regions on the Run*, '500' below)

On the 4000 chart find the blue above Egyptian Dominance in the middle of the chart and note that it ends shortly before -1100. Imperial control ends, and local nations in the Land Between are free to emerge and to compete. Egyptian Dominance fades and the Age of Nations begins. This is the period of the Late Judges (middle of chart) and the rise of the Israelite Monarchies (orange/green boxes, rising and falling). Orange represents Israel (the northern Israelite tribes) while green designates southern Judah.

Turn now to the 500 chart (p. 39) to see how this small middle area of the 4000 chart is expanded by adding more information. Page 38 discusses this chart and serves as another useful summary of this important period. When reading the following discussion keep this 500 chart handy.

**MARKING ON PERIOD MAP—2. AGE OF NATIONS** (the second small map below the main map)

1. HL on name: Tyre, Jerusalem, Samaria and Damascus
2. HL on name: Phoenicians

### DISCUSSION

Notes beside this map begin with a **lull in imperial control**, a lull which allowed **local kingdoms to emerge**. **Phoenician** shipping grew quickly to fulfill the need for eastern luxury goods throughout Mediterranean markets. The Phoenicians, however, needed inland trading partners. Emerging local kingdoms thus scrambled for territory and control of trade routes leading to the important Phoenician port of **Tyre**, a small island just off the mainland. It was in this context that the Israelites demanded that the prophet Samuel give them a leader, a king like all the other nations. Israelite history was about to change.

- c. -1040
- Event 2
- Events 9, 22
- Events 14, 18
- Events 23, 7 c. -968
- The story of Saul, his battle with the Philistines, the faith of his son Jonathan, the rise of **David** and his new capital at **Jerusalem** are some of the most descriptive parts of the Bible. Lessons from this action-packed period are many. In the end, David ruled a formidable kingdom and left it to his son **Solomon**.
- After Solomon's death the policies of his son Rehoboam (promoted by young, inexperienced advisors) resulted in the rebellion of northern Israelite tribes against southern Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. An

- Event 19  
Cf. 500 chart  
Events 24, 10
- c. -930 already divided confederacy now became two Israelite kingdoms, **northern Israel versus southern Judah**. In this same period Rehoboam fortified Judah, and **Egypt invaded and ruined** much of the land, destroying the infrastructure Solomon had so carefully created. Fifty years of Israelite civil war ensued which left both sides weakened—but strengthened the power of **Damascus** in the north.
- Events 11, 15  
Event 16
- c. -870 Both Israel and Judah finally realized the folly of their actions as a new dynasty took over northern Israel. Under Ahab in the north (at **Samaria**, Israel’s new capital) and Jehoshaphat in the south both Israelite kingdoms flourished and sometimes cooperated in **trade wars** to secure routes between Arabia and Mediterranean markets. Ahab sold his soul for financial gain, which had come through his marriage to Jezebel of Phoenicia, sealing a northern **trade alliance**. These were the days of Elijah the prophet whose famous contest with Phoenician prophets sparked persecution of faithful, northern Israelites. This northern dynasty fell shortly after Ahab’s death on the battlefield, and soon Mesha of Moab in Transjordan rebelled. Other southern Transjordanian powers joined together in a sneak attack on Judah which failed.
- At this point it is important to note the blue on this map in the region of Aram. It indicates that Aramean kingdoms in this area were suffering as **Assyria crushed Aram**, looting their riches in order to build and decorate their own capital at **Nimrod/Calah** (on the main map in the heart of Assyria). While Assyria did not overrun the Land Between, the situation became so serious to the north that Ahab joined
- c. -853 a much larger coalition to meet the northern Assyrian threat at **Qarqar** (on the main map due north of the Land Between). The coalition appears to have checked Assyria.
- Event 8
- c. -842 Jehu, a military commander, led a bloody revolt against the Phoenician religious takeover of northern Israel but also wiped out Israel’s infrastructure leaving it vulnerable to its arch enemy, Damascus. Like Jehu, Hazael of Damascus was a military commander and killed his master but strengthened Damascus. The days of Elisha the prophet saw northern Israel overrun by armies from Damascus. Only an attack
- c. -800 on that city by an imperial force from Assyria allowed northern Israel, together with southern Judah, to return to prosperity again under Jeroboam II and Uzziah. Then the **Assyrian threat waned**, but it would once again raise its ugly head—aided in part perhaps by the reluctant ministry of the prophet Jonah.
- Cf. 500 chart

**3. ASSYRIA DESTROYS -740 TO -640**

**CHARTS—4000 AND 500 YEAR OVERVIEWS**

One of the most dramatic moments on the 4000 chart is the return of the blue across the chart in the decade following -750. The 500 chart shows this same blue and effectively divides the five centuries of the Israelite monarchy into two sections: one before -740 (‘the year that king Uzziah died’ in Isaiah 6:1, the year of the prophet Isaiah’s vision) and the other after -740. Above we introduced the first section. Here we discuss the second. Note the names of the prophets on this chart. A box around a name signifies that there is a book in the Bible by that name.

**MARKING ON PERIOD MAP—3. ASSYRIA DESTROYS**

1. Encircle in blue: ASSYRIA and EGYPT
2. HL on name: Damascus, Samaria, Jerusalem

**DISCUSSION**

- Arrow 1
- c. -740 The period of local competition in the Land Between suddenly came to an end when the imperial armies of Assyria appeared on the scene in the decades after -740. As we saw above, Assyria was not a new arrival on the plains and hills in the region of Aram. This time, however, Assyria was led by even more ruthless leaders who not only attacked and looted but also destroyed local inhabitants and deported survivors to a distant land in their ever growing empire. The face of the Middle East was about to change and never be the same. Thus Isaiah’s vision in -740 takes on great import. **Assyria had viciously returned** to the battlefield, prepared to achieve victory and destroy.
- Arrow 2
- Arrow 3
- 734 As **the Aramean kingdoms fell**, there was no mercy. Meanwhile, all in the Land Between awaited Assyria’s next move. Even such rivals as **Damascus** and **Samaria** (northern Israel’s capital) made a mutual defense pact and attempted to force Judah to join it. Isaiah declared that both would soon be swept away. Then everything changed. **The route to Egypt fell** as Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria made a lightning raid south along the coast to the ‘river/streambed of Egypt,’ a debated term today (probably **Wadi el-Arish** in Sinai on main map). In Isaiah’s day, however, this only meant one thing—effectively Assyria had severed the land from the Mediterranean Sea and had designs on the land itself. In the following two years Galilee, parts of Transjordan and Damascus fell. The northern approaches of the
- 733, -732

Land Between and key northern territories with highways and trade routes were in Assyrian hands. The 'last days' of the Israelite monarchies were at hand.

- 721 Within a few years the Land Between had been totally transformed. **Northern Israel was deported**, at least those beyond the territory of Samaria. Imperial Egypt knew that the land was a stepping stone into the Nile delta and successfully encouraged revolt in what remained of northern Israel. **Its capital Samaria fell** in -721. The hill of Samaria, chosen for its security, could not withstand Assyria's war machine. Remaining Israelites were deported to places like **Gozan** in the region of Aram while people from as far away as **Cuthah** in Babylonia were settled in the region of Samaria, now an Assyrian province. (These newcomers later became known as 'Samaritans.') Assyria controlled the entire coastal highway to Egypt. Only Judah remained in her hill country heartland, shocked at the loss of northern Israel, the once strong house of Joseph—the patriarch who in Egypt had saved Jacob and his family.
- 705 Would Assyria persist or would it wane as it had before? This was the question. Then, in -705 Sargon II, who had destroyed Samaria, suffered a violent death fighting to preserve control of his northern territories in **Anatolia**. Assyria's enemies in **Babylonia** and neighboring **Elam** were rising again while Sargon's son Sennacherib was having difficulty consolidating his control. Egypt and Babylon seemed ready to help in the struggle to throw off the Assyrian yoke. In light of this larger scene it is not surprising that in -705 Judah's king Hezekiah prepared his revolt and overthrew an Assyrian puppet-king on the nearby coastal plain. This proved to be disastrous.
- Event 3
- Arrow 4 -701 The high drama that came next, **Assyria versus Judah's revolt** is the most documented episode during the Israelite Monarchy, described in 2 Kings and Isaiah, seen in the archaeological record and displayed in Sennacherib's palace at **Nineveh** in Assyria. Sennacherib overcame all of his challenges elsewhere and led his cruel army through the Shephelah lowlands below Judah, violently and mercilessly destroying everything in his path. However, **Judah and Jerusalem survived**.
- Arrow 5 -669 Throughout this drama an even more powerful prophetic voice arose as **Isaiah declared hope** beyond the present catastrophe. **Assyria entered Egypt**, which no other Mesopotamian power had been able to do, but its empire soon crumbled. As this was happening some of the Bible's greatest and most specific prophetic declarations were being made, affirming that in spite of the doom and gloom of this tragic period, the promise made to Abraham over a millennium earlier would be fulfilled.

#### 4. BABYLON OVERTAKES -640 TO -540

##### CHARTS—4000 AND 500 YEAR OVERVIEWS

**Assyria** and **Babylonia** appear on both of these charts in the section 'Empires Control.' The 500 chart is especially helpful since the reign of Manasseh of Judah appears as a particularly low period in contrast to Josiah's reign, which elevates Judah's fortunes before its final decline and fall to Babylon. The cluster of Judean prophets reveals that the prophetic community was very active during this period. Much like modern news correspondents, Ezekiel addressed Jews in Babylon, and Jeremiah addressed Jerusalem.

##### MARKING ON PERIOD MAP—4. BABYLON OVERTAKES

1. Encircle in blue: BABYLON and ASSYRIA; blue underline below MEDIA (name spread out on map)
2. HL on name: Babylon, Haran, Carchemish, Ashkelon, Jerusalem

##### DISCUSSION

With this map we come to the final phase of the Israelite monarchies, the so-called 'Late Judean Monarchy.' The Assyrian onslaught had left Judah's outlying regions devastated but its geographical core remained intact albeit weakened. Assyria's iron grip on the land and its highways meant that confrontation was no longer an option and that the only way to survive was accommodation to this reality. During his long reign king Manasseh not only accommodated but led Judah into days of dire apostasy, worse than any previous ruler.

- Arrow 1 c. -669 Assyria had invaded Egypt during Manasseh's reign but would soon face the ascent of its ancient rival, Babylon. The Assyrian empire was unraveling, and the drama of **Assyria versus Babylon** was rapidly unfolding. This allowed **Josiah, king of Judah**, to expand. Unlike his grandfather Manasseh, Josiah "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord." Josiah's kingdom grew, but the religious revival that occurred during his reign appears to have been superficial within Judah for it did not last beyond his death.
- 640
- 622
- 609, -605 Meanwhile, Egyptian pharaohs hurried north to **Haran** and to **Carchemish** in the region of Aram. The growing power of Babylon had pushed Assyria west into this region, and Egypt decided to bolster

faltering Assyria lest Babylon become an even greater threat. Josiah, however, knew that Egypt's motive was also to regain control of the Land Between, and thus he attempted to halt the advance of pharaoh Necho's army at **Megiddo**. There, Josiah was fatally wounded and brought back to **Jerusalem**. With its 'savior' dead Judah went into shock.

to -605 In the decade between -614 and -605 mighty Assyria lost battles at **Asshur, Nineveh, Haran** and finally at **Carchemish** where **Assyria fell to Babylon** and was no more. At this time Judah was under the control of Egypt, but this ended with the battle of Carchemish. Necho retreated to Egypt with his remaining forces, and **Babylon pushed south** along the eastern Mediterranean, destroyed **Ashkelon** and took over the Land Between. Control of Judah suddenly shifted from Egypt to Babylon.

The next fifteen years, under three subsequent kings of Judah, were a replay of what had happened a century before. Judah revolted; Babylon attacked and deported the highest classes and skilled laborers of Judah; Egypt encouraged rebellion; **Judah and Jerusalem revolted**, and Babylon attacked again.

-598 This time **Judah and Jerusalem fell**, Babylon destroyed the Temple, and more Judeans (but not all) were deported. The Judean monarchy, established under David some four centuries earlier, had come to an end. Meanwhile, from the natural fortress of **Bozrah**, secluded in the southeastern heights of Transjordan, the Edomites took advantage of Judah's misery. For centuries battles had raged between Edom and Judah, but now the Edomites could easily infiltrate Judah's southern territories. This was indeed a bitter moment for Judah and Jerusalem.

Various prophets had arisen in Judah during this entire period and saw that God's purposes could not be thwarted. The prophet **Jeremiah declared hope**, not only in the book which bears his name but also in the book of Lamentations. Most of **Judah was exiled to Babylon**, but Babylon did not have Assyria's cruel policy of destroying the very fabric of a conquered people by deportation and replacing the deportees with foreigners. Judeans were settled in Babylon itself, and a strong Jewish diaspora community has existed there into modern times. Proud **Babylon boasted** of its accomplishments, but one of those deportees named Daniel was privy to short and long term changes which were coming. Meanwhile, the kingdom of **Media** (seen on this period map) was hovering across a long stretch of territory north of Mesopotamia, and a Persian leader named Cyrus was about to change this entire map.

**5. PERSIA PUSHES WEST -540 TO -332**

**CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW**

Find Persia's expansive empire which followed that of Babylon on the 4000 chart. Note that like Assyria, Persia expanded through the Land Between and into Egypt, remaining there far longer than Assyria. Persia's control of Egypt was fraught with problems as revolts festered, one time lasting for some fourteen years and another for over six decades. The chart also shows that Persia expanded westward into the territories of classical Greek cities. We see this two-pronged Persian offensive on this period map.

**MARKING ON PERIOD MAP—5. PERSIA PUSHES WEST**

1. Encircle in blue: PERSIA
2. HL on name: EGYPT, Achmetha, Sardis, Lydia, Babylon, Athens, Sparta

**DISCUSSION**

On the previous period map (no. 4), we saw that an expanding kingdom of Media hung over Babylon's empire and dominated the Persians south of Media. While Judean exiles languished in Babylon, a leader called Cyrus unified the Persians, and in -550 **Persia overtook Media**. With Persia now on the border of the affluent kingdom of Lydia, conflict soon erupted. Within a few years **Persia reached Sardis in Lydia**. The troops of Cyrus found a secret entryway, and the city's impregnable citadel also fell (an event not forgotten six centuries later in Revelation 3:1-3). Persia commanded Lydian riches and its Greek cities along the Ionian coast. Classical Greek cities such as Athens and Sparta were stunned.

Given such developments, Babylon and its empire was naturally the next step for the great Cyrus, the king of the Medes and the Persians, but first he consolidated his gains and expanded in the east. In the later **Behistun inscription** (east of Assyria on the main map) Darius I may include some of the exploits of Cyrus. The final rulers of Babylon had disturbing dreams and visions concerning the future, some of which Daniel the prophet (a Judean exile in Babylon) interpreted. Then, in -539 (only six years after the fall of Sardis) Cyrus marched into Babylon, assumed control of the city, and **Babylon's empire fell** (period map no. 4). Within the year Cyrus allowed the **Jews to return to Zion** (Jerusalem), and some did.

- Arrow 5 -530 Cyrus was killed ten years after he entered Babylon. His son ruled in his place, and **Persia invaded Egypt**. Another ruler then campaigned eastward to the Indus River in India and began long wars in the west with the **classical Greek cities** led by Athens and Sparta. Meanwhile, the Jews who had returned to the Land Between were surrounded by adversaries who tried to sabotage the Jewish connections to the kings of Persia. These are the days of **Ezra and Nehemiah**, whose accounts in books by their names concentrate on three short periods of one, five and twenty-four years in the century that followed the fall of Babylon. The story of Esther and the rescue of the Jews in the Persian empire from extinction also occurred during this same period. The festival of Purim continues to celebrate this deliverance.
- c. -440
- c. -475
- Arrow 6 -490 The Persian empire lasted over two centuries, and protracted **Persian-Greek wars raged**. When military might failed, Persian gold fueled conflicts between these cities. The legend of the Marathon runner, the famous battle of **Thermopylae**, and dramatic naval encounters occurred in the midst of these wars. The Greeks despised **Persia's Phoenician navy**, not only due to the war but also because the Greeks and the Phoenicians competed vehemently in maritime shipping and commerce. To reward the Phoenicians, Persia awarded them the port-cities of the Land Between but gave Gaza to the Arabians.
- 480
- c. -520, c. -445 Early in this period Judean prophets such as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi not only addressed social issues of their day but also looked beyond the present Persian imperial control to a coming Messianic kingdom. The life and visions of Daniel, however, gave his audience hope in the faithfulness of the God of Israel, who keeps his covenant and in His own time and way acts on behalf of Israel. We hear little of Jews in the land after -430, but Greek historians provide information on later Persian kings and their opulence. Meanwhile, the Jewish diaspora in Persia grew. They benefited from the empire's success, an empire that built the magnificent city of **Persepolis**, constructed in the midst of earlier Persian centers.

## 6. ALEXANDER PUSHES EAST -332 TO -323

### CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW

Find the red vertical line on this chart shortly before -300. This represents the amazing campaigns of Alexander (the Great) between -334 and his death in -323. As the subtitles at the bottom of the chart indicate, this changed the world for centuries to come. Eastern empires gave way to Western control, which stretched to the fall of Rome and beyond. Descriptions of Alexander's campaigns abound. Our task is simply to summarize the intriguing setting of these campaigns and its geographical high points.

### MARKING ON PERIOD MAP—6. ALEXANDER PUSHES EAST

- HL on name: Macedonia, Corinthian League, EGYPT, Gaugamela and PERSIA
- HL on name: Sardis, Issus, Tyre, Alexandria, Babylon, Persepolis

### DISCUSSION

- 338 The presence of Persia along the Ionian coast (map no. 5), military encounters, and Phoenician vessels plying Greek waters exasperated the Greek cities. The rise of **Philip II of Macedon** (Greeks thought Macedonia unsophisticated) culminated in -338 when Philip forcibly unified the competing and weakened Greek cities into the **Corinthian League**. Two years later Philip was assassinated amidst political intrigue, and his son, known later as **Alexander the Great**, persevered in his father's plan to invade the Ionian coast and purge it from Persian control. The great weapon of Alexander's forces was the 'phalanx,' tightly organized ranks of infantry, armed with long spears and protected by shields.
- 336

- Arrow 1 -334 Once across the **Dardanelles** (which centuries before Persians had crossed in the opposite direction) **the war against Persia began**. Alexander's forces fought a decisive battle at the **Granicus river**; **Sardis** fell, and the Ionian Greek cities were at last free. Circling through central **Anatolia** and **Gordium**, Alexander took the city of **Tyana** and then descended via the narrow '**Cilician Gates**' to the plains of **Cilicia**.
- Arrow 2

- Arrow 3 -333 Here Darius III, the Persian king, had mobilized his forces for **the crucial battle of Issus** in an area that guarded the strategic '**Syrian Gates**,' the entrance to Persia's eastern empire. His attempt miserably failed, and both Egypt and Mesopotamia lay open to Alexander.

- Arrow 4 -332 Instead of following hard on the heels of Darius, Alexander turned south to mount an attack (and bring long-awaited brutal revenge) on **Tyre**, the island home of his Phoenician arch-enemy. The isthmus Alexander built to complete **the destruction of Tyre** ended its existence as a naturally defended island. Cities fell as his army moved toward Egypt, but Gaza required another siege. Once in Egypt the Macedonian was welcomed as a liberator and a god, and Alexander sought out the venerated **Siwa Oasis (Ammonia)**. He wintered in Egypt in -332/-331, and during that time the great port-city of **Alexandria** was founded. Greek merchants could now freely exploit maritime trade across the eastern Mediterranean.
- Arrow 5 -332

Arrow 6 -331 Alexander now returned to the task of defeating Darius and the eastern Persian empire. Of all of his eastern battles the one fought on the flat plain of **Gaugamela** (in ancient Assyria’s homeland!) is most exciting. It was here that Alexander broke the back of Persian power. Cities at the heart of the Persian empire now lay open to his advance: **Babylon**, one of the ancient world’s most splendid cities; **Susa**, Persia’s administrative capital; and **Persepolis**, the Persian king’s royal, ceremonial, and architectural masterpiece, which Alexander’s forces plundered and burnt. From this center of the ancient world

Arrow 7 -331  
Arrow 8 -330  
Arrow 9 -323 **Alexander continued to the east** along the Silk Road as far as the Indus river in India.

Daniel 2, 7, 8 -323 **The death of Alexander** in -323, occurred when he returned to Babylon at the age of 32. He died in the palace built by Nebuchadnezzar almost three centuries earlier. Here the prophet Daniel had lived with other Judean exiles in the latter years of Babylon and the beginning of the Persian empire. In Babylon and Susa (Shushan of the Bible) Daniel had interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and had seen visions of empires coming and going:

**Babylon** as ‘a head of fine gold’ and ‘like a lion’;

**Persia** ‘as a bear,’ ‘a ram with a pair of horns’ (Medes and Persians), plunging west, north and south.

**Alexander** and his army from **Macedonia** and **Greece**, ‘a kingdom of brass,’ ‘a leopard with four wings,’ ‘a billy goat from the west,’ coming ‘across the entire earth without touching the earth ... having a conspicuous horn (Alexander) ... in the fury of his power struck down the ram, shattering his horns and trampling him,’ but ‘the billy goat greatly magnified himself at the height of his power and his great horn (Alexander) snapped.’

We later discuss what happens after this in Daniel’s visions.

**7. HELLENISTIC EMPIRES -323 TO -63**

**CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW**

The 4000 chart shows this period in the centuries surrounding -200. Blue areas, the lack of blue and arrows on the chart show that there are basically three sub-periods in the Land Between: 1) Ptolemies, 2) Seleucids, and 3) the Maccabees, later called Hasmoneans. Then the dark blue of Rome descends.

**MARKING ON PERIOD MAP—7. HELLENISTIC EMPIRES**

1. Encircle in blue: Roman Republic, Parthians, Seleucid Empire, Ptolemaic Empire of Egypt
2. HL on name: Alexandria, Seleucia, Antioch, Pania, Jerusalem, Athens, Rome

**DISCUSSION**

**Alexander’s successors** were four in number, as Daniel relates when he says that the swift leopard had ‘four bird-like wings on its back and four heads.’ In his interpretation of the vision he tells us that the rough, hairy billy goat ‘is the king of Greece (Alexander),’ having a great horn between his eyes, which was broken and replaced by four other horns, four kingdoms but not with his might. This indeed

-323 occurred as four successors vied for control of 1) **Macedonia**, 2) **Asia**, 3) remnants of the eastern Persian empire with **Seleucia** (by Babylon) as a capital, and 4) **Alexandria**, the growing port-city in Egypt. **Ptolemy I and Seleucus I** are important since their dynasties began to rule the **Ptolemaic empire in Egypt** and the **Seleucid empire**, which at the outset stretched far to the east. The Seleucid kingdom soon saw its need to be closer to the Mediterranean arena and moved its capital to the much more prudent position of **Antioch** (on the **Orontes river**).

-300

Arrow 1 With a much more unified and defensible territory the Egyptian **Ptolemies claimed the Land Between** without conflict and thoroughly exploited the land’s agricultural resources. The Seleucids, however, engaged themselves in defending their boundless eastern flank, dealing with the rising power of the **Parthians** and attempting to expand westward. This period, more than any other, illustrates the vast difference between secure Egypt along the Nile and the vulnerable territory of the Seleucids stretching across the north. The Seleucid heartland included the area formerly controlled by Aramean kingdoms (period map no. 2), but Greeks began calling this region of ‘**Aram**’ (where the Assyrians had made their last stand) by the term ‘**Syria**,’ a mispronunciation of the original ‘Assyria.’

Arrow 2 -276 It is not surprising that five so-called ‘Syrian wars’ broke out between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids after -276 over control of the Land Between. They ended in -198 when the **Seleucids took the land** at the battle of **Pania**. Meanwhile, the **Roman Republic** had been fighting in the western Mediterranean against its arch-enemy, Hannibal of Carthage (the Punic wars). Rome was finally victorious in -201.

-198  
-201

Arrows 4, 5

-191

Its wise policy during these decades was to keep powers in the eastern Mediterranean preoccupied and divided. A powerful Seleucid ruler (Antiochus III the Great), however, had given Hannibal refuge and against Hannibal's advice joined in an alliance against Rome. Rome was now a tested land and naval power, and the conflict with the **Seleucids versus Rome** ended in disaster. First Rome defeated the Seleucids at **Thermopylae** and then near **Magnesia** (northwest of Sardis). In the peace treaty **Rome humbled the Seleucids**, stripping its kingdom of much of its power. To make matters worse, **Parthian advances** in the east and an internal Seleucid succession conflict soon further weakened the empire.

Arrow 3

-188

The Seleucids met Rome's challenge by consolidating culturally what was left of the empire and by taking Egypt and its resources and thus unifying the eastern Mediterranean. This period again demonstrates how such a goal permeates the history of the Land Between. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) made an initial campaign but did not take Alexandria, permitting a puppet king to rule Egypt. In his second campaign a Roman ambassador met Antiochus with an ultimatum from the Roman Senate to retreat back into his territory. When Antiochus requested time to consider this, the Roman ambassador drew a circle in the sand around him, telling him to decide before he left the circle. Antiochus retreated in a rage and sent a large group of his mercenaries to **Jerusalem**, which was in revolt, in part due to a false report that Antiochus had been killed.

Arrow 6

-170

-168

Cf. Daniel  
11:21-30

What happened next is not totally clear, but tension between Hellenistic Jews who had adopted Greek ways and traditional Jews who worshiped the God of Israel had grown heavy during the previous century. Now cultural unity was a priority of Antiochus. He and his agents may have thought that enough Jews had embraced Hellenism that Jerusalem could become a Greek city—like those which occupied the major highways of the Land Between—and the Jewish Temple could become a temple to Greek gods. He was wrong, and when revolt broke out he entered Jerusalem, razed its walls, slaughtered thousands of Jews and sold many others into slavery. Worst of all, Menelaus (the High Priest who had promoted Greek customs) guided Antiochus through the Temple, even entering the Holy of Holies. Soon **Hellenism was enforced** as the Seleucid agent in Jerusalem desecrated the Temple and compelled sacrifices of swine throughout Jewish territory. All of this and more ignited the **Maccabean revolt**, as traditional Jews refused to submit and took to arms.

Cf. Daniel  
11:31  
Number 7  
(not an arrow)

-162

-142

-104

As the weakened Seleucids fought the Parthians to the east and internal succession battles continued, the Jews in the Land Between bravely responded to various Seleucid attacks. Jews gained religious freedom six years after the revolt had begun. Two decades later they achieved political freedom and continued to expand to the west, to the north and to the east. Ironically, some four decades later their non-Davidic leaders were kings of a 'Jewish' Hasmonean state run on a Hellenistic model, with great internal strife and religious conflict. All of this could only have happened because the Seleucid empire had decayed, with Parthia at its eastern door and Rome controlling the lands around the entire eastern Mediterranean. As in the Age of Nations, 'the mice could play while the cat was away.'

-88

-64

-63

During these developments, Rome became busy back home, dividing up the spoils of victory while military leaders emerged and competed. When a massive revolt broke out across Roman territories in Asia, led by Mithridates of the region of **Pontus** on the **Black Sea**, it took three extended conflicts in twenty-four years to subdue Mithridates; Pompey finally accomplished it. A year later this same Roman leader dissolved what remained of the Seleucid kingdom and established the Roman province of **Syria**. A year later he was in **Damascus**, planning to campaign against the **Nabateans**, who were advancing north from **Arabia**. When he heard of a succession conflict within the Jewish Hasmonean state, he changed plans and marched to Jerusalem; the Jewish state never regained independence. Rome had come.

## 8. ROME SUPREME -63 TO +325

### CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW

Find the dark blue above 'Rome Supreme, Submit or else' on the 4000 chart. Note that 'Roman Empire' (the title at the top of this blue) begins shortly before the date '0.' Before that Rome was a republic which had three phases (in parentheses). Rome's imperial period has been named the 'Pax Romana' (the period of the 'Roman Peace'), noted at the top of this blue. Now explore all of the notes in the midst of this dark blue. Finally, find the lighter blue of Parthia, Rome's arch-enemy in the east, and its conflicts with Rome.

### MARKING ON PERIOD MAP—8. ROME SUPREME

1. Encircle in blue: ROMAN EMPIRE and PARTHIA
2. HL on name: Rome, Ephesus, Asia, Egypt, Jerusalem, Caesarea, Syria, Carrhae, Armenia

## DISCUSSION

Daniel 7:7

*After this in my vision during the night I looked, and, lo, there before me was a fourth beast, scary, terrifying and ferociously powerful, with great iron teeth. It gobbled up (its victims) and smashed (them)—and what was left it trampled with its feet. It was unlike any of the previous (three) beasts.*

Daniel's words are his attempt to describe the indescribable. There was no living creature with which he could compare this fourth beast. This beast is Rome, which we now discuss briefly.

Rome did not set out to conquer the world but rather met every challenge with increased vigor and skill. Rome—it is said—never made the same mistake twice. Two centuries earlier, in the Punic wars  
-216 with Carthage, Rome had come near to ruin in the battle of **Cannae** in Italy when Hannibal's forces outflanked the Romans. The ensuing slaughter was staggering and left an indelible impression on Rome, a fear that permeated all future challenges. The lesson of Cannae came again in **conflicts with**  
-53 **Parthians** at **Carrhae** in Syria. Here the Parthians overwhelmed Roman legions and captured their military standards. Added to its fear of losing was Rome's technology and efficiency. It had allowed the  
-241 Romans to absorb province after province across this map, beginning at the end of the first Punic war with **Sicily**. The Mediterranean was now a Roman sea, and no one dared challenge Rome's authority.

-63 Our discussion begins in the midst of the Late Roman Republic, the century before Jesus' birth when Rome was still ruled by its Senate. During this century the Seleucid kingdom fell and Roman governors began administering the province of **Syria** from Antioch, the former Seleucid capital and a city greatly valued by the Romans. Meanwhile, in the Land Between, Antipater, the Idumean grew increasingly influential (Idumeans were Edomites who formerly had migrated into Judea).

As Rome's military leaders vied for power, Julius Caesar sought to destroy Pompey, who had found refuge in **Egypt**. In this battle a Jewish force organized by Antipater rescued Julius Caesar; Pompey  
-48 was killed; the great library of **Alexandria** went up in flames, and Julius Caesar issued pro-Jewish  
-47 proclamations. His army went on to win a decisive victory at **Zela** against a rebellion in **Pontus**. The  
-44 Jews were favored in the Republic, but within years Julius Caesar was assassinated in Rome.

War with **Parthia** raged on. A secret Jewish-Parthian alliance emerged, and at one point Parthia  
-40 reached the Land Between where many Jews thought that freedom from Rome had come. Antipater's oldest son was killed, but the younger escaped to Rome. His name was Herod. With Parthia's withdrawal Herod returned to crush the revolt, having been made 'king of the Jews' by the Roman Senate. A Jewish movement calling for war with Rome emerged, which fought for freedom and recognized God alone as their master. Herod brutally subdued the revolt, went on to be awarded many more territories in the land and slowly but surely eliminated most of what remained of the royal Jewish Hasmonean dynasty. Meanwhile, the **Nabateans** and Cleopatra of Egypt (through Anthony, the Roman) harassed Herod.

-30 With Anthony and Cleopatra gone, Egypt officially became a Roman province. What was about to happen in Rome would change the world. Political in-fighting had grown so intense that in the decade which followed, the Roman Republic in effect became the Roman Empire. Octavian, the adopted son (great-nephew) of Julius Caesar, was chosen as its sole administrator and the head of the powerful army. The name given him became synonymous with Rome, Augustus Caesar.

Event 4 -4 This transition **from Republic to Empire** was all but complete when Jesus was born in **Bethlehem** of Judea. King Herod died later that same year. Although he had supported Anthony, Octavian's enemy, Herod manipulated his way through the imperial transition to gain more territory and to build some of the most impressive sites in the Land Between, including the expanded Jewish Temple in **Jerusalem** and Rome's gateway to the land, the marble city of **Caesarea**. King Herod ruled with an iron fist, and his death signaled the beginning of a new era of revolts against Roman control and its Greek culture.

ca. +30 Our sketch of Roman supremacy shows that **Jesus and the apostles** lived in a different world than Isaiah and Jeremiah, but their messages remained constant: God will accomplish His will and His plan of salvation in a fallen world. From the perspective of Roman history and Daniel's fourth beast, Pilate's question to Jesus is revealing: 'So, then you are a king!' (*Regions on the Run* includes both a useful summary of eight centuries leading up to the birth of Jesus [pp. 30-31] and six pages, which lay out  
ca. +30 to +33 events, regions and sites in the four Gospels and the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles [pp. 32-37]).

Many sites mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles appear on the main map. Our task here is not to trace events or Paul's journeys but rather to introduce a few significant points. The most obvious one is that in the three centuries prior to the days of the apostles, Jerusalem experienced and survived

immense political and cultural upheaval. There were many differing views among Jews on both political and religious issues. Ironically, even rulers of the Assyrian kingdom of **Adiabene** based in **Arbela** east of ancient **Nineveh** (capital of Sennacherib, who had attempted to destroy Jerusalem in -701!) had converted to Judaism, and its queen Helena had built palaces in the city of David below the Temple Mount. Those making pilgrimage to Jerusalem’s Temple came from all over the Roman world, as well as from Babylon, Persia and Parthia, areas stretching across this map and beyond. As the Holy Spirit fell upon the followers of Jesus at the feast of Pentecost (Shavuot) in Jerusalem there were,

*Jews, devout men from every nation ... bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language ... Parthians, Medes (Media), Elamites (Elam), residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya belonging to Cyrenaica (Cyrene), visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans (Crete) and Arabians.*

Acts 2:1-12

ca. +40 to +62

During his missionary journeys Paul journeyed through parts of this scattered Jewish diaspora, from parts of **Arabia** to **Antioch** south of the famous **Syrian Gates**, from the plains of **Cilicia** west of the Syrian Gates to **Ephesus**, capital of the Roman province of **Asia** along the ancient Ionian coast, and from **Troas** south of the **Dardanelles**, by the island of **Samothrace** and through cities in **Macedonia** to **Athens**, including **Philippi**, the renowned and privileged Roman colony in eastern Macedonia at the end of Via Egnatia which linked it to **Rome**. Beyond this Paul traveled by ship to **Cyprus**, **Crete**, **Malta** and **Sicilia** (Sicily) and finally to Rome itself, and perhaps beyond into the western Mediterranean. As he preached a Jewish Messiah, crucified for both Jews and gentiles from many backgrounds, he traversed former battlefields between Egyptians and Hittites, Persians and Greeks, Seleucids and Romans.

+66

Jewish-Roman tensions were quickly rising in the Land Between as the book of Acts closes. Many Jews were enraged by the corruption and wanton acts committed by some Rome-appointed governors of Judea, including Felix before whom Paul made his defense. Growing discontent finally broke out in the first Jewish revolt against Rome. Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius describes it in great detail, and his account adds much to fill in the background of the Land Between during the lives of Jesus and the apostles decades earlier. The revolt continued as Rome brought in her forces and systematically subdued Jewish territories, bringing relief to surrounding Greek/Hellenistic cities, which had been attacked or overrun. Finally, Jerusalem fell; the Temple was destroyed, and Judea lay in ruins while rebels found refuge in isolated fortresses. Soon the fortress of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea, was taken. Then, in an all out Roman assault west of the Dead Sea, Masada (king Herod’s old luxurious fortress) fell. Daniel’s fourth beast had triumphed, by *smashing and trampling with its feet what remained*.

+67 to +69

+70

+73

+131 to +134

Many Jews of higher class had accepted Greek ways, but others still hoped to throw off the yoke of Rome. A second and better organized revolt against Rome broke out some sixty years after Jerusalem fell. Rome again triumphed but at great cost. **Jewish wars with Rome** had failed, and Jews realized that an independent Jewish state along the eastern edge of a Roman sea was not possible. The process of consolidation of Jewish traditional thought thus greatly accelerated, ultimately being expressed in the **Mishnah and Talmud**. Roman cities multiplied in the Land Between, while **Rome and Hellenism triumphed** along its trade routes. **Petra**, the key city of the **Nabateans**, was now in Roman hands, and its former territory—from Petra to **Damascus**—became the **eastern limit of the empire**.

Cf. 4000 chart

+106

+135 to +325

In the two centuries that followed, Rome’s fortunes fluctuated, but the seed that the apostle Paul and others had sown bore much fruit as the **Gentile church spread** throughout the empire. In various periods Rome persecuted Christians ferociously, which only encouraged the proclamation of the Good News. Like Daniel in Babylon, the apostle John on the small island of **Patmos** had visions of the ultimate triumph of the will of the God of Israel over all human agendas. He wrote to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia: **Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyartia, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea**.

c. +96

Rev 2-3

*I am the Alpha and the Omega, declares the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty ... (the beast and his followers) will make war on the Lamb (of God), but the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.*

Rev 1:8; 17:14

Our study this far sets the scene for many of the events discussed in the remainder of the *Regional Study Guide*. Except for one—the first event, ‘Abraham’s Journeys’—all of these events fall under the periods above. We suggest that you consult this discussion before beginning your work on each event. On the next page, you begin to mark out twenty-four historical events that we have selected to teach how the Land Between functions.

## I. THE LAND BETWEEN IN ITS MIDDLE EASTERN SETTING (ME MAP)

**READ RR** (*Regions on the Run*), pp. 6-7: The Land Between

The larger main map has been used above as a reference in our discussion of the eight small period maps. We now begin marking this main map with four events, which stretch from the days of Abraham to the times of Rome. The first event, Abraham's Journeys, occurred centuries before period map no. 1 ('Egyptian Dominance'), but the three other events in this unit—and all other events in this guide—are placed in their proper chronological position by event number along the side margins of the period discussion you just completed. A useful way for you to begin the study of events two through twenty-four might be to note a reference date at the beginning of each discussion and from that date to locate the context of the event in the discussions on pp. 5-14 of the eight small period maps.

- 1) Abraham plotted a course along international routes as he moved through the Middle East from Mesopotamia and Aram to the Land Between and on to Egypt.
- 2) Phoenician ports along the eastern Mediterranean seaboard were Middle Eastern meeting points for land caravans from the eastern desert and shipping lanes across the western sea.
- 3) Local nations, such as Judah under king Hezekiah, desired to reap the economic benefits of this exchange of goods by controlling part of the Middle Eastern trade network. However, commercial activity at ports in Phoenicia also attracted the attention of the imperial power of Assyria, whose armies campaigned along the highways of the Land Between and against local nations such as Israel and Judah.
- 4) By the time Jesus was born, Rome controlled Egypt, Aram (then known as 'Syria') and the highways through the Land Between. Jesus returned from Egypt to the Land Between along these imperial routes.

### EVENT 1: ABRAHAM'S JOURNEYS—'GO ... TO THE LAND I WILL SHOW YOU!'

#### MARKING ON ME MAP

1. HL geographical regions: MESOPOTAMIA, ARAM (HL on each letter only) and EGYPT
2. HL on city names: Ur, Haran, Shechem, Bethel and Beer-sheba
3. HL on river names: Tigris River (S of ASSYRIA); Euphrates River (W of Ur; N of Mari)

Keep the ME map in view as you read and find highlighted names when they appear in the text below.

#### CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW (Find bold names on the chart.)

The charts in *Regions on the Run* are graphic 'maps of history.' Each new 'Event' in this study usually opens with a discussion of relevant parts of a chart. Remember to find any name printed in bold below on the chart. In this way you become familiar with many parts of the chart and the sequence of historical events. Open the 4000 Year Overview chart inside the back cover of the RR and find the main chart and the timeline below this chart. It may be helpful to skim over the titles and texts which surround the chart and see how the timeline graphically summarizes the main chart.

The timeline places **Abraham** around -2000 which coincides with the word **Patriarchs** in chronologies #1, #2 and #3 in the middle of the main chart. Explore the world which flourished before Abraham by looking at the -3200 to -2200 millennium called **Beginnings** on the bottom of the chart. You can see by the blue areas on the chart and timeline that by Abraham's day empires had already risen and fallen in **Egypt** below the **Land Between** (south on the chart) and in **Mesopotamia** above.

The 'Beginnings' millennium ended in a period of disorder which appears as a **dark red line** running vertically through the chart around -2200. No one yet knows exactly what happened, but empires in Mesopotamia and in Egypt crumbled as '**Dark Ages**' descended upon the Middle East and a new millennium (-2200 to -1200) slowly emerged. Our concern is the period of **New Beginnings** (-2200 to -1600).

#### READING

Two brief sections in RR on p. 40 discuss what was happening in the Land Between in these centuries. Read '-3200 to -2200 Beginnings' and '-2200 to -1600 New Beginnings' and related texts on the chart.

#### CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW (Find bold names on the chart.)

According to chronology #1 on the 4000 Year Overview chart the city of Ur in southern Mesopotamia was flourishing under its 3rd Dynasty (**Ur III**) about the time Abraham's family lived there. If this is

correct, discoveries of ancient texts at Ur shed light on the cultural and political life in the very city in which Abraham's family lived before leaving for Haran. The city had blossomed in the earlier **Classical Sumerian Age** but then declined during the reigns of **Sargon I** and his successors in **Akkad**. Ur's revival (Ur III) after the fall of Akkad ushered in a period of stability and expansion, renowned for its architecture (including magnificent pyramid-shaped ziggurats), its literature and the oldest known legal code. Abraham's family could very well have been familiar with the claims of Ur-Nammu, founder of Ur's 3rd Dynasty (around -2000) and the ruler of an area which encompassed Sumer and Akkad.

Then did Ur-Nammu, the mighty warrior, king of Ur, king of Sumer and Akkad, by the might of Nanna, lord of the city (of Ur), and in accordance with the true word of Utu, establish equity in the land (and) he banished malediction, violence and strife. (ANET 523)

Ur-Nammu's successor, Shulgi, began his reign with the peaceful pursuits of building and administration but then initiated a series of campaigns to secure his borders from external threats, including threats from the '**Amorites**' ('Westerners') northwest of Ur. These campaigns opened important trade routes to the west which carried imports coming from the Persian Gulf and perhaps as far away as the frontiers of India. Shulgi wrote in a self-praising hymn,

I, Shulgi, a mighty king, supreme am I.  
Because I am a powerful man rejoicing in his 'loins,'  
I enlarged the foot paths, straightened the highways of the land,  
I made secure travel, built there 'big houses,'  
Planted gardens alongside of them, established resting-places,  
Settled there friendly folk,  
(So that) who comes from below (Persian Gulf), who comes from above (northern Mesopotamia),  
Might refresh themselves in its cool (shade),  
The wayfarer who travels the highway at night,  
Might find refuge there like in a well-built city. (ANET 585)

The kingdom of Ur III was thus a thriving metropolitan area with strong commercial contacts to the East and to the West. Its literature and religious life, however, remained deeply rooted in local Mesopotamian traditions. Older hymns to Mesopotamian deities spoke of the origin of life, and royal poets revived the legend of Gilgamesh and made it renowned. Gilgamesh, the star of this legend, witnessed the death and decay of his friend Enkidu, and set out upon a quest to find everlasting life. Along the way he was exhorted to forsake his pursuit and to enjoy this present life.

Gilgamesh, where are you wandering? The life which you pursue, you will never find.  
For when the gods created man, they let death be his share, and life they retained in their own hands.  
Gilgamesh, fill your belly, and be merry by day and by night.  
Fill each day with a feast of rejoicing, day and night dance and play. (cf. ANET 90)

Gilgamesh, however, persisted and found that everlasting life came from a type of seaweed. He obtained a piece with great difficulty but momentarily laid it aside to relax. A serpent ate it; Gilgamesh wept.

The following reading presents the migration of Abraham's father from Ur to Haran and Abraham's subsequent call and departure from Haran to 'the land I will show you.' If Ur III was indeed the original cultural setting of these trips, then it is significant that this family set out on a journey of faith which ultimately brought the message of eternal life to the world.

#### READING

**Genesis 11:31-12:10; 13:1**

#### MARKING ON ME MAP

4. Write CANAAN in small, black caps S to N between second 'a' of Gaza and the 'M' of Megiddo
5. Sweeping green arrows = Abraham's journeys
  - a. From the dot of Ur to Haran, staying near the Euphrates river, passing Mari on the way
  - b. From Haran to Shechem, passing beside Damascus and staying to the W of Rabbah
  - c. From Beer-sheba passing near Kadesh to W. Tumilat in the Nile delta
  - d. An arrow parallel to and S of arrow c, returning Abraham to Canaan

**DISCUSSION AND 4000 YEAR OVERVIEW CHART**

If chronology #1 on the 4000 Year Overview chart is correct, Abraham's father left a flourishing culture with a thriving economy to travel northwest some 1000 km/600 mi along the Euphrates River Valley to Haran (to an area later known as Aram), perhaps along the same trunk routes renovated by Shulgi, king of Ur. This trip could coincide with the period of Ur's expansion northwest or reflect the migrations out of Ur in the chaotic period which ended in Ur's destruction decades later.

Abraham received his divine call at Haran: 'Go from your land, your family, and your father's home to the land I will show you.' The Bible records Abraham's journeys but relatively few details along the way. It does preserve illustrations of Abraham's life of faith, later summed up by a remarkable statement in the book of Hebrews: 'By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going' (Heb 11:8).

Chronology #1 also fits well with the spread of Amorite tribes throughout the eastern Mediterranean ('**Amorite**' influence expands on the 4000 Year Overview chart). Abraham journeyed from Haran to Canaan (approximately 650 km/400 mi), but a severe famine soon forced him to leave Canaan and take his family to water-rich Egypt in search of sustenance (approximately 320 km/200 mi). There Abraham encountered the other highly developed culture of the Middle East with its social structure, literature, religion and awe-inspiring great pyramids (centuries old when Abraham arrived). Chronology #1 places Abraham's visit to Egypt during the troubled times of the **First Intermediate Period**, which was marked by incursions of Asiatics into the region of the Nile Delta.

In Genesis 13 we read that Abraham brought his family back to Canaan where he lived as a tent-dwelling, semi-nomad, moving seasonally with the pasture lands around recently reestablished city-states of the **Middle Bronze II** period. Abraham found himself in the southern fringes of a relatively poor land between the great cultural centers of Mesopotamia and Egypt with their rich resources.

Abraham's journeys inspired the hearts of later Hebrews as caravans traveling through this 'Land Between' brought news of far-flung civilizations in Mesopotamia and in Egypt. This could have only heightened their appreciation for the phrase: 'So Abram went, as the LORD had told him.'

**EVENT 2: PHOENICIA'S MARKETS—'YOUR RICHES, YOUR WARES, YOUR MERCHANDISE'****CHARTS—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW AND ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW**

Our study of the Middle East map jumps ahead in time some 1400 years to the period around -600. One can see that empires had struggled during the centuries and that with the demise of the New Kingdom in Egypt the nations in the Land Between were free to emerge and to compete. Most of the local struggles between these nations were for control of overland trade routes and the economic income this control brought. Ports along the Phoenician coastland were main exchange points for overland and maritime trade. Find the word 'Phoenicians' in the middle of the chart, just above the words 'IRON AGE.' The importance of the Phoenician ports can be seen by noting the position of Tyre on Map A on p. 38 (RR).

This period of local competition suddenly came to an end when the empire of Assyria appeared on the scene in the decades after -750, but Phoenicia's final demise waited for the arrival of the armies of Babylon in the years around -600. This disastrous sequence of events is discussed on the right side of the Israelite Monarchies: 500 Year Overview chart on the bottom of p. 39 (RR). This provides the context for our discussions of Tyre's economic trade network which reached across the Middle East and far out on the Mediterranean Sea.

**MARKING ON ME MAP**

1. HL on city name: Tyre
2. Blue circle around city name: Tyre

**DISCUSSION**

The island fortress of Tyre stands out as the best example of how a small, well-organized Phoenician port could exploit its position and commercially reach out in all directions from its narrow and secure coastland beneath the forested slopes of the Lebanese mountains. Just as its success involved many commercial partnerships, so its fall had repercussions across the Middle East and the Mediterranean Sea.

Ezekiel prophesied Tyre's fall with a long lament (Ezek 27) as Babylon's grip tightened on the Land Between. Ezekiel addressed Tyre in the eleventh year of king Jehoiachin's exile to Babylon (26:1) which would place his words around -586. The Judean exile had already taken place (the green arrow to Babylonia on the chart at -586, within the context of Babylonian imperial blue). Tyre exulted at the fall of Jerusalem as recorded in a cryptic comment by Tyre in Ezek 26:2: 'Yes! Jerusalem which served as the gateway for southern traders is broken; now the gates have swung around to me. Let me be filled, as Jerusalem lies in ruins.' This prompted Ezekiel's response.

Ezekiel's lament has two main parts. The first speaks about all the resources on which Tyre drew to equip its sea-faring ships (27:3b-11); the second announces the earth-shattering news that Tyre is lost like a ship at sea (27:25-36). A simple recitation of Tyre's far-flung markets (27:12-23) is found nestled between these two parts of the lament and offers a glimpse of Tyre's market strategy in the Middle East.

#### READING

Ezekiel 27

The verses in this reading which are relevant to the marking below are noted at the end of each instruction. You may want to write these in as you read this chapter.

**MARKING ON ME MAP** (write in with a fine, black pen; stack your lines when necessary)

3. In the sea on the far W side of the ME Map: '**Tarshish**: silver, iron, tin, lead' (v. 12)
4. Between Athens and Smyrna: '**Javan**: slaves, bronze vessels,' and NW of Carchemish: '**Meshech and Tubal**: slaves, bronze vessels' (v. 13)
5. E of Hattusa (upper center): '**Togarmah**: horses and mules' (v. 14)
6. In the sea under Rhodes: '**Rhodes and islands**: ivory, ebony' (v. 15; reading *rdn* after the Greek text instead of the Hebrew *ddn*; *ddn* appears in v. 20, and the r/d interchange is a common scribal error)
7. Above Haran: '**Aram**: precious stones, embroidery, purple, linen' (v. 16; others read 'Edom' for 'Aram')
8. In the sea SW of Caesarea: '**Israel and Judah**: wheat, honey, oil, balm' (v. 17)
9. SE of Damascus: '**Damascus**: wine, wool' (v. 18)
10. SE of Elath: '**Dedan**: saddle blankets' (v. 20)
11. SW of Dumah: '**Kedar**: lambs, rams, goats' (v. 21)
12. E of Red Sea near the bottom of the map: '**Sheba and Raamah**: spices, precious stones, gold' (v. 22)
13. Between Assyria and Media: '**Asshur and all Media**: violet cloth, embroidery, carpets' (vv. 23, 24; reading *klmdy* with the Targum instead of *klmd*)
14. Six blue arrows (medium length) pointing toward Tyre from the general direction of the markets you have located

This recitation of Tyre's trading partners demonstrates its vast influence throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean world. The list swings from west across the sea (Tarshish) to the eastern desert (Dedan, Arabia, Kedar), to the distant southeast (Sheba, Raamah) and on to the far northeast (Asshur, Media). The passage on ship-building also lists other resources from Senir, Lebanon, Bashan, Kittim, Egypt and Elishah. Tyre, as the leader of Phoenicia's merchant marine, became the largest maritime power in the Mediterranean and founded numerous colonies along its coastlands. Carthage on the shores of North Africa became Tyre's most famous colony, and after the fall of Tyre, Carthage continued to exert an influence on the western world.

This brief look at the length and breadth of Tyre's influence illustrates how a large trade network linking the Middle East and the Mediterranean world could be controlled by relatively small ports in Phoenicia. When Tyre finally fell, the nations could not believe the news. The loss of this economic engine which had driven commerce for some 500 years was like a crash of the modern stock markets. Many nations wept bitterly because 'you [Tyre] satisfied many peoples with your wealth, and by your trade goods you enriched the kings of the earth' (27:33). However, given Tyre's great fortunes and the arrival of much stronger empires, Ezekiel knew that Tyre's doom was sealed. He knew that Tyre, 'perfect in beauty' as the queen of the Phoenician coastline, was bound for destruction like a ship caught in an east wind at sea. A reading of Ezekiel 26-28 reveals the prophet's other reasons for this disaster, which rebounded throughout the market places of the Middle East and along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

**EVENT 3: ISRAEL, THE THIRD—‘A HIGHWAY FROM EGYPT TO ASSYRIA’****MARKING ON ME MAP**

1. HL ASSYRIA
2. Blue boxes around EGYPT and ASSYRIA

**CHARTS: 4000 YEAR OVERVIEW AND ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW**

Open the 4000 Year Overview chart in the back of *RR* and turn back to p. 39 so that this page covers part of the 4000 Year Overview chart. On the 4000 Year Overview chart note that the imperial blue of Egypt fades shortly after -1200 which allowed a respite for the Land Between from outside imperial powers. During this time local peoples began to expand and compete for trade routes. Chart B on p. 39 enlarges this important interlude and provides a fuller description of this period. Read the text on p. 38 which discusses the 500 Year Overview: The Israelite Monarchies chart.

On both charts note a sharp return to imperial blue in the decades after -740. These years were fraught with diplomatic and military attempts to contain the expansion of Assyria. It is one of the most documented yet complex periods in biblical history. These were the days of Isaiah the prophet. Find his name on the Israelite Monarchies chart in the dramatic period after -740 when the chart's brown (Nations Emerge and Compete) turns to blue (Empires Control). Developments in this complex period changed the course of the Israelite monarchies.

This event underscores 1) the importance of the Land Between as a thoroughfare for imperial powers, and 2) the dilemma confronting local nations who would not submit to imperial overlords. While the Hill Country of Judah was removed from imperial highways along the strategic Coastal Plain, leaders in Jerusalem became involved in rebellions which led to a large scale Assyrian invasion. Assyria could not tolerate interference along the road to Gaza, its gateway to Egypt, and Judah looked to Egypt for help as pharaoh's armies tried to defend Egypt's last line of defense against Assyria.

**READING**

Isaiah 19:23-25

**DISCUSSION AND CHARTS**

This short pronouncement by the prophet Isaiah stands in stark contrast to the threatening realities of his day. Isaiah envisioned a time when Israel, together with its present adversaries, would be 'a blessing in the midst of the earth.' Israel would be the third member of the three, strategically located between Assyria at one end of the great international highway and Egypt at the other. In the decades prior to -700, however, Israel (more precisely Judah) found itself caught between two great Middle Eastern adversaries, Assyria and Egypt. To illustrate this we trace events in the decades following -740 and draw upon some of the most moving historical and prophetic texts in the Bible. As you read, consult your charts.

The red line followed by imperial blue after -740 on your charts represents Tiglath-pileser's (III) renewal of Assyria's expansionist policy (cf. 2 Kgs 16:7ff.). In -734 Tiglath-pileser took the Philistine Plain and placed it under an Assyrian administration. Hanun king of Gaza fled to Egypt. Then in -732 Tiglath-pileser took the International Coastal Highway away from Israel and reduced Damascus to a province.

In -721 Shalmaneser V (soon replaced by Sargon II) of Assyria captured Samaria, and many from the northern kingdom of Israel were taken into captivity (2 Kgs 17:3-6). Note the end of orange boxes on both charts. It was in these days that Isaiah used Assyrian aggression on the Philistine plain as an illustration of the futility of depending on Egypt. In chap. 20 the prophet warned 'the inhabitants of this coastland' that Egypt and Cush would not deliver them from Sargon II of Assyria. We need to reconstruct the context for Isaiah's message from some of Sargon's inscriptions. Azuri king of Ashdod had withheld tribute from Assyria, hoping that Assyria was too busy elsewhere to be bothered. Sargon was not too busy; he deposed Azuri and set his brother Ahimiti on the throne instead. The people of Ashdod opposed Assyria's puppet king, together with a certain Iamani (possibly an Ionian), who had no right to the throne. This Iamani encouraged others in the Land Between (Judah, Edom and Moab) to join the rebellion against Assyria and send bribes to Pir'u of Musru (Egypt or Cush) in order to be an ally. Sargon responded with a swift, punitive campaign in -711. Iamani fled to Pir'u, who put him in chains and sent him to Assyria (*ANET* 286-287). Isaiah pointedly had addressed the ineffective policy of depending on Egypt's help from the southern end of the international highway against the ever advancing power of Assyria from the north. Hezekiah, king of Judah, should have listened to the warning.

Hezekiah had witnessed these events in the early part of his reign. The 'H' in the green box on the 4000 Year Overview chart stands for Hezekiah. Note that the southbound red arrows of Assyria and the shorter northbound red arrow of Egypt place Judah and others in the land directly between the empires of Assyria and Egypt.

At the death of Sargon II of Assyria (-705) rebellion again broke out, this time led by Hezekiah, king of Judah. Details of this revolt are given in the Bible and in the annals of the new and efficient king of Assyria, Sennacherib. Both accounts strongly infer that preparations for this war of liberation were extensive. Hezekiah, who came to the throne in -715, had seen the Ashdod rebellion fail and this coastal region turned into an Assyrian province. He wanted to be certain that his operation from Judah did not end in the same way. Thus his operation had to be well-planned.

Hezekiah was encouraged by several factors around him and in other parts of the Assyrian Empire. Ashkelon and Ekron along the International Coastal Highway were revolting. Sidon and Tyre in Phoenicia were also throwing off the yoke of Assyrian domination. Babylon, at the other end of the empire, had been taken over by Merodach-baladan, who was busy uniting the region against its long time enemy, Assyria. At the same time Egypt realized that it had to act now or never. If Egypt did not enter into the struggle on the battlefield, its last chance to stop the Assyrian advance would be lost. Add together all these factors, and the timing of Hezekiah's operation is better understood.

#### OPTIONAL READING

2 Kings 18:1-8	Hezekiah moves onto the Coastal Plain.
2 Chronicles 29:31	Hezekiah unifies his kingdom through religious reforms.
2 Kings 20:20	Hezekiah prepares for the revolt: a tunnel to bring water inside the city of Jerusalem; the reinforcement of Jerusalem's fortifications; administrative improvements; southern expansion into the Negev (read Gerar for Gedor, an important city in the western Negev).
2 Chronicles 32:30	
Isaiah 22:8-11	
2 Chronicles 32:27-31	
1 Chronicles 4:39-43	

#### DISCUSSION

The Assyrian king Sennacherib exploited Judah's threatened position when he sent his messenger Rabshakeh to the walls of Jerusalem. Rabshakeh's taunt was recited 'in the language of Judah' and served as propaganda aimed to discourage all who heard it (Isa 36:11-20).

On whom do you rely that you have rebelled against me? Indeed, you rely on Egypt, this broken reed of a staff, piercing the *hand* of anyone leaning on it. So is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, for all who rely on him' (Isa 36:5-6).

During this period Isaiah the prophet delivered some of his most pointed messages. He knew that the LORD had brought Abraham out of the great cultural center of Mesopotamia and had established and preserved his descendants in this fragile 'testing ground of faith' between sea, desert and great political powers. Now, as Judah's demise appeared to be imminent, Isaiah denounced their appeals to Egypt and told them to trust the One who had called, established and preserved them. Isaiah fully appreciated the current crisis but also condemned Jerusalem's leaders, who failed to accept the saving power of the 'hand' of the LORD (a metaphor used throughout the book of Isaiah). Isaiah knew that in the midst of this crisis 'God is with us' (in Hebrew 'Immanuel'), for 'the LORD spoke to me with a mighty *hand* and warned me not to follow this people,' graphically recorded in Isaiah 8:11. This was the same 'mighty hand' which delivered Moses and the children of Israel without human assistance (Ex 6.1). Yet Jerusalem's leaders now turned to that same Egypt for military assistance against Assyria.

Woe to the obstinate children ... who go down to Egypt without consulting me, to take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh, to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt. Now Pharaoh's safety will become shame, and the shelter in Egypt's shadow, humiliation (Isa 30:1ff.). Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses. They depend on chariots because they are many and on horsemen because they are very strong. But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel—the LORD they do not seek.... The Egyptians are men and not divine; their horses are flesh and not spirit. The Lord will stretch out his *hand* [as Moses had done at the Red Sea], and the helper will stumble, the one who is helped will fall, and together they will all come to an end (Isa 31:1-5).

Isaiah's words resonated even more as the crisis came to a sudden end. A plague struck the Assyrian army before it reached Jerusalem. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, returned to Mesopotamia, and Jerusalem was spared destruction. Back in Assyria, Sennacherib memorialized the fall of Lachish, the major site of the Shephelah (Lowland) but not the fall of Jerusalem, Judah's capital. This made such an

impression upon Judah that a century later, as Babylon took control of the Land Between, Judah's leaders were lulled into a false sense of security, for which they paid dearly.

This event illustrates a basic rule in the Land Between: local nations paid a heavy price if they resisted imperial control of the country's major highways. Jerusalem's deliverance from Assyria in Isaiah's day is the greatest known exception to this rule. Understanding this rule and this exception is the best possible commentary on the words of Isaiah the prophet and his far-reaching declaration in Isaiah 19:23-25.

#### EVENT 4: JESUS' JOURNEY—'ARCHELAUS WAS RULING JUDEA IN PLACE OF HIS FATHER HEROD'

##### CHARTS: 4000 YEAR OVERVIEW CHART AND THE ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW

Authority in northern Israel had always resided with the tribe of Ephraim, the strongest son of Joseph. Toward the end of the period of the **Patriarchs** (4000 Year Overview chart), Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egypt where he rose to power and provided a place of refuge for his brothers and his father Jacob (also called 'Israel'). After a period of **Slavery** (red boxes after the Patriarchs) Israel was called out of Egypt, and authority understandably rested with Ephraim, which was also the tribe of Joshua (see orange boxes **Josh/Judges** following 'Slavery').

In light of this we better understand the prophet Hosea's pointed message to Ephraim shortly before the arrival of the armies of Assyria. Find **Hosea** on the Israelite Monarchies: 500 Year Overview chart (RR, p. 39) just prior to -740. Note that Hosea, unlike Isaiah, was a prophet from northern Israel (orange). His warnings united themes of deep love and coming judgment. His careful use of the terms 'Assyria' and 'Egypt,' the two imperial contenders of this period, add ominous overtones to his heartfelt but unheeded call for Ephraim's repentance. In Hosea 11:5 his words resonate like a trumpet call: 'He (Ephraim) will *not* return to the land of Egypt (from whence he was delivered), but his overlord is none other than Assyria!' By such terms the prophet reveals his understanding of who controlled the two ends of the imperial highway through the Land Between and the implications this had for Ephraim and the northern tribes of Israel. These were Ephraim's 'last days,' and the north would soon be overrun by the Assyrian war machine.

##### READING

Hosea 11

##### DISCUSSION

Matthew, the Gospel writer, drew upon this text from Hosea and thereby showed his understanding of the inherent tensions in the Land Between. He speaks of another call out of Egypt to fulfill divine purposes. Roman governors now administered Egypt to the south and Syria (the Greek name for Aram) to the north. Rome's representatives kept an eagle eye on potential rebellions like the one which broke out after the death of king Herod in -4. The imperial highways through the Land Between were essential if Rome were to maintain its hold on these parts of the Middle East. The darker blue of **Rome Supreme** on the 4000 Year Overview chart is an ominous reminder of these times.

Within this context a startling message was heard: 'Repent, for Heaven's *kingdom* is at hand' (Matt 4:17). This 'kingdom' was not realized nor sustained through the might of armies and chariots nor by political maneuvering and required alliances but by a young boy who had walked beside his parents along a dusty historic highway from Egypt to Nazareth in Galilee. The highway was now fully under the control of Rome, and that boy would someday die upon a Roman cross—but through that death and resurrection Jesus completed the long journey which Abraham began toward everlasting life.

##### READING

Matthew 2:13-23

## II. IMPERIAL HIGHWAYS THROUGH THE LAND BETWEEN (LB MAP)

This unit introduces highways which made the Land Between an essential bridge between population centers in Aram and Mesopotamia and the empire of Egypt. The land contains two major north-south highways whose paths avoid the challenges of terrain while satisfying the need for water and security. After gaining a better understanding of the land itself we consider selected events which show how imperial powers sought to control the country's highways for their purposes of conquest and commerce. Local peoples coveted these same routes in order to tax the trade caravans passing through this Land Between.

**READ** RR 8-9: Imperial Highways and Local Routes

**EXPLORE** RR map inside back cover: The Land Between—Relief, Flow and Elevation

The elevation scale on the map aids you in determining the relative heights of land forms on this map. You can learn much about the country and its imperial highways by understanding the relative elevations of the map's relief. Names printed in bold indicate that the site or feature appears on this map. Find these names and the geographical features which are mentioned as you explore the map.

Place your finger on the term **Rift Valley** at the bottom of the map and move north through two bodies of water (the **Dead Sea** and Lake Galilee) to the top of the map where the valley swings northeast off the map. This rift is part of a much larger split in the earth's crust which runs north from Africa and the Red Sea through this map. In the Land Between much of the area west of the Rift Valley is called **Cisjordan** (in bottom border of the map) while **Transjordan** applies to the area east of the Rift Valley.

The headwaters of the Jordan River in the far north of this map flow south into a flat, swampy basin between **Dan** and **Hazor** (the Huleh Basin). Higher ground (a basaltic outflow) separates this basin from lower Lake Galilee. Look at the elevation scale and find the green of '0 m/f' (sea level). Find the same green color on the slope above Lake Galilee. Had the Mediterranean Sea flowed into the Rift, this green color would be its sea-shore. Farther south along the Jordan River elevations drop even farther below sea level until you reach the lowest point on the face of the earth, the Dead Sea. Elevations rise and sea-level green again appears south of the Dead Sea near **Moa**. Return to the north and again work your way south, this time noting the hill regions on either side of the Rift Valley. Where do you find the steepest slopes along the Rift Valley?

Now place your fingertip in the hills just east of the Mediterranean port of **Sidon** (in the far north). As you move south through Cisjordan, try to stay in hill regions of **Galilee** west of the Rift Valley. You soon run into the large **Jezeel Valley**, which separates the hills of Galilee from the hills of **Samaria**. As you proceed south through Samaria and **Judah** you run into the **Negev** basin (around Beer-sheba) which separates Judah from the **Southern Highlands**. Steep drops and deep canyons between the Negev and the Dead Sea descend into the Rift Valley.

Attempt the same exercise in Transjordan. There you find only two major hill regions: in the north by **Mt. Hermon** and the **Anti-Lebanon** range (with elevations over 2800 m/9000 f) and in the hills of **Gilead**. The broad plateaus of **Golan** and **Bashan** separate Mt. Hermon from the hill country of Gilead. South of Gilead steep slopes rise from the deep Rift Valley to elevated plains. These plains rise higher and higher until they are over 1700 m/5575 f in **Edom**. Find four main canyons which cut deeply through Transjordan (**Yarmuk**, **Jabbok**, **Arnon** and **Zered** canyons). It may be useful to reread the text on RR, p. 7.

**EXPLORE** LB (Land Between) Regional Study Map

Hill country regions present difficulties for travel and communication, whereas plains, valleys, and plateaus offer relative ease of travel. On this map try to find the easiest way through the land by staying on plains, valleys, or plateaus and avoiding hilly regions and canyons. Place your finger at **Gaza** (on the southwestern coast) and try to reach **Damascus** (in the far northeast corner) without crossing any Hill Country area. It is impossible. The range of Mount Carmel (just east of **Dor**) presents a barrier to the Jezeel Valley by Megiddo. Once in the Jezeel Valley, ridges and hills in **Galilee** separate you from **Hazor** and **Dan** (around the Huleh Basin). Should you try to leave the Jezeel Valley by the eastern pass of **Beth-shan**, the eastern scarp of the Rift Valley and its canyons separate you from the plateaus of Golan and Bashan.

Go back to Gaza and proceed east into the **Negev** basin past **Beer-sheba** to **Arad**. Note the difficulties which face you as you proceed eastward to Moab and then north to Bashan and Damascus. Topographical barriers and the lack of water (see RR, p. 7) show that this was not a desirable route.

It is clear that any attempt to cross the Land Between is difficult at best. Natural barriers abound and define strategic regions such as gateways and passes along the country's imperial routes. Anyone seeking to control

the land had to consider carefully these strategic regions, as history clearly teaches us. Four selected events, chosen to illustrate the highways on the LB map, stretch from the days of Egyptian dominance in the land to the times of Rome's control.

- 1) An Egyptian scribe listed Egyptian priorities in the Land Between as they lay along the major highways.
- 2) Ezekiel alluded to the imperial highways as he portrayed the Babylonian king divining his course of action at a northern fork in the road.
- 3) David of Israel and Hazael of Aram displayed an intimate knowledge of the land as they each devised strategic plans for taking control of the country's highways.
- 4) Matthew interpreted Jesus' move from Nazareth to Capernaum as a programmatic move to position his ministry over the international routes.

#### EVENT 5: EGYPT'S PRIORITIES—'LET ME KNOW THE WAY TO PASS MEGIDDO'

**CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

Again we open the chart in the back of RR, this time to note the era of a strong Egyptian presence in the Land Between after -1600 until after -1200. Find this era of **Egyptian Dominance** on the chart and read about it on the lower part of RR, p. 40. Find the **19th Dynasty**, the period when **Ramses II**, a strong pharaoh of this dynasty, had a well-organized administration armed with imperial scribes, the secretaries and couriers of their time.

One of these scribes, Amen-em-opet, was evidently advancing in the scribal ranks and had been offended by an earlier letter from a scribe named Hori. Amen-em-opet's letter was so harsh that Hori responded in a tongue-in-cheek fashion which questioned Amen-em-opet's experience and his ability to perform his duties when traveling abroad with an army or as an official courier. Excerpts from Hori's satirical letter provide us with one of the best and certainly the most amusing ancient descriptions of Egyptian priorities along the major highways in the Land Between.

#### MARKING ON LB MAP

1. Not all names in Hori's letter appear on this map, but we can follow his imaginary trip as it avoids areas of difficulty and follows imperial highways in Canaan. He begins in Phoenicia and moves down the coast to Mt. Carmel (Hori's 'Mt. User') but stops before entering the mountains whose main city is Shechem. He then turns toward Hazor and on the way questions Amen-em-opet about other options around Lake Galilee. After an excursion off our map to the north he returns to the region of Damascus and circumvents the Yarmuk River canyon by Kiriath-anab to reach Beth-shan, a natural eastern gateway to the Jezreel Valley and to Megiddo. He then proceeds through the nearby perilous pass to the coastal highway and south to Joppa, Gaza and Raphia. Follow his path in the text below and color the dot of each city in orange when the name of that city appears in bold below.

#### READING

Let me tell you about another strange city named Byblos. What's it like, as well as its goddess? Once again—[you] have not walked about it. Now, please instruct me about Beirut, about **Sidon** and about **Zarephath**. Where is the stream of the Litani? (The Litani reaches the sea just north of Tyre.) What is Uzu (**Usu**) like? They say another town called **Tyre-the-Port** is situated in the sea (an island). Water is taken to it by the boats, and it is richer in fish than the sands.

Let me tell you another difficult case—the crossing of Seram (Selaim, the perilous highway along steep slopes south of Tyre also called the 'Ladder of Tyre.').... Lead on toward the south and the route to the region of **Acco**. Where does the road to **Achshaph** begin? At what town? Pray, teach me about the mountain of User (Mt. Carmel south of Acco). What is its promontory like? Where are the mountains of **Shechem** found?...

In which direction does the royal courier travel to reach **Hazor**? What is its river (wetland) like? Put me on the way to Hamath (**Tiberias** of Jesus' day by Lake Galilee), Deger, and Deger-El, a thoroughfare known to every royal courier. Pray, teach me about its road and show me Yan (**Yenoam**). If one is traveling to **Adamim**, which way is the face? Do not shrink from your teaching! Guide us (to) know them!

Haven't you yet seen **Kiriath-anab**? ... don't you know about Aduru or Zedpet (Aduru is perhaps by **Edrei**; Hori asks about options in this area of crossroads)? ... Pray, teach me about the appearance of Qiyen, let me know **Rehob**, explain **Beth-Shan** and Tirqa-El. The stream of the Jordan, how is it crossed? Tell me about the way to pass **Megiddo**.

The narrow valley (the Megiddo-Aruna Pass) is dangerous ... you're alone; there's no messenger with you, no army host behind you. You find no scout, who might show you a way of crossing. You come to a decision by going forward, although you know not the road. You're seized by fear, (the hair of) your head stands up, your soul lies in your hand. Your path is filled with boulders and pebbles, without a toe hold for passing by, overgrown with reeds, thorns, brambles, and 'wolf's-paw.' The ravine is on one side of you, and the mountain rises on the other. You go on jolting, with your chariot on its side, afraid to press your horse (too) hard.... You start to trot. You come to a clearing and think that the foe is behind you. Trembling seizes you. If only you had a hedge of shrubs to separate you (from your enemies)! The horse is exhausted by the time you find a night-quarters. You see the taste of pain! ... Finally, you come into **Joppa**, and you find the meadow blossoming in its season ...

**Raphia**—what is its wall like? How long is the march to **Gaza**? Answer quickly! Make me a report, that I may call you royal courier. (adapted from ANET 477-478)

#### MARKING ON LB MAP AND DISCUSSION

#### 2. HL the routes Hori followed in his letter

- Start HL N of Sidon; move S past Tyre, Acco, and Jokneam to Gath [-padalla] along one route
- From Megiddo HL N to Hazor; take the road that passes just N of Shunem and N of Mt. Tabor
- From Hazor HL N off the map
- Start your HL NE of Damascus; from Damascus move directly S past Karnaim and follow the most direct route from Karnaim via Beth-arbel to Beth-shan
- From Beth-shan HL the shortest route to Megiddo
- From the dot of Megiddo, HL SW through the pass to Gath [-padalla]; continue S to Aphek, Ashdod, Gaza, Raphia and off the map; also HL the Aphek-Joppa and Joppa-Ashdod connections

In his letter the scribe Hori demonstrates that he knew the major imperial highways of the Land Between, including the all-important Coastal Highway and the Transjordanian Highway across the Bashan. It is clear that he had traveled along them as a lone carrier and no doubt together with the pharaoh's armies. Inscriptions on the walls of Egyptian temples, especially city-lists of military conquests, follow these same routes. The campaign of pharaoh Seti I into Canaan in -1303 used most of the same routes described in Hori's letter. Campaigns listed on the '4000 Year Overview' during Egypt's New Kingdom lie behind the chart's flow of imperial blue through the Land Between and beyond during this period of Egyptian Dominance.

#### 3. HL the remaining portions of the two international highways (used in this or in later periods)

- HL the route from Hazor to Damascus via Dan
- From Karnaim continue HL S past Gerasa, Rabbah, Medeba, Dibon, Bozrah, E of Petra and off the map. This is called the King's Highway, the western branch of the Transjordanian Highway.
- From Rabbah HL SE to Sahab and then S to Jiza, Qasr Bashir and Qatrana and continue S off the map. This highway runs roughly parallel to the King's Highway and is commonly called the Desert Highway. The King's Highway intersects heavier settled regions and richer water resources.
- Compare HL on the LB Map with the discussion of highways on RR, p. 8 and shown on Map B, RR, p. 9

#### EVENT 6: EZEKIEL'S SIGNPOST—'THE KING OF BABYLON STOOD ... AT THE FORK OF THE HIGHWAY'

**CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

Centuries of **Egyptian Dominance** were followed by the **Age of Nations** when local nations in the Land Between emerged and competed (see the center of the chart). After -740 waves of armies from **Assyria** all but eliminated these nations and ushered in an Assyrian Peace (**Pax Assyriaca**). With the revival of **Babylonia** as an imperial power this era slowly but surely came to an end. Miraculously the nation of Judah had been spared deportation by Assyria, and as Assyria weakened, nationalistic elements in Judah emerged. Shortly after -600, rebellion in Judah resulted in the deportation of some of Jerusalem's upper classes to Babylon. Among them was a priest called Ezekiel. His vision and prophetic word issued from Babylon warned zealous patriots back in Jerusalem that their actions would only lead to the fall of Judah and Jerusalem a few years later (-586 on the chart). The following passage is one of the most striking examples of how he used regional realities of the Land Between in his prophecy.

## READING

Ezekiel 21:18-23

## DISCUSSION

Ezekiel's 'signpost' is based upon well-known traffic-patterns in the Land Between. Everyone knew that conquerors from the north normally did not pass through the central Hill Country regions nor down the Rift Valley. Those entering the land from the north therefore had to make a major strategic decision before they proceeded south: to follow a southeastern route in Transjordan toward Arabia or a southwestern route via the Jezreel Valley in Cisjordan and the Coastal Highway to Gaza and Egypt. The prophet Ezekiel used this issue to attract the attention of his audience. It raised questions which should have struck fear in their spirits. Which route will the king of Babylon choose? Which city will fall first?

God instructed Ezekiel to set up a sign at the fork in the road. One arrow on the sign would point toward the city of Rabbah in Ammon, a key position on the Transjordanian Highway. The other arrow would direct the Babylonians to Jerusalem, in other words, to the Coastal Highway from where they easily could attack Judah. Ezekiel could place a sign-post at several places in the land. If the Babylonian army came via Damascus, Nebuchadnezzar would make a decision there. However, if the army used the Hazor Gateway or the Phoenician Gateway, Ezekiel could place his sign in the Jezreel Valley. The point is that this text underscores the reality that there are two imperial highways through the Land Between.

## EVENT 7: DAVID'S EXPANSION—'IN THE COURSE OF TIME, DAVID DEFEATED ...'

Events 5 and 6 above provide an imperial view of the highways passing through the land: Egypt's priorities when its army marched north and Babylon's strategy when its army marched south. We now turn our attention to expansionist programs which began within the Land Between and discover how smaller, local nations could take and hold the land from within.

**CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

We have seen the absence of imperial blue between the dates -1200 and -740, the **Age of Nations**. During this period the reigns of David and Solomon are represented by D/S in the green and orange box after -1000. Green, here the more prominent color, represents David's tribe of Judah; orange represents the northern tribes of Israel, and together (with no line between them at this time) the box represents the United Monarchy. Note that the box is raised above the adjacent boxes reflecting a period of relative strength, as David and Solomon ruled most of the Land Between. A larger format of this period can be seen by keeping this chart open and flipping back one page to chart B (p. 39).

The 4000 Year Overview chart also lists other developing peoples who enter the struggle for control of the highways in the absence of empires: **Phoenicians, Zobah, Aram-Damascus, Ammon, Moab, Philistines** and **Edom**. An early Assyrian campaign to Aram north of the Land Between a century before David is not seen on this chart, but other Assyrian campaigns after -900 are. Therefore, the international scene was such that Israel, together with other nations, could expand and compete.

## MARKING ON LB MAP

Some of David's campaigns in this period are explained in great detail, such as the battle for Rabbah in Ammonite territory on the Transjordanian Highway. Others are only hinted at in single verses or short passages. Still others, like the take-over of the Canaanite centers in the Jezreel Valley, are not mentioned at all but must have happened. Together all of these actions show that David understood well the dynamics of the Land Between and used them to his advantage. The marking below represents David's expansion from his new capital at Jerusalem. A discussion of his expansion follows the marking exercise, along with readings from relevant passages. When marking cities, include the dot inside your box or circle.

1. **Green** box around Jerusalem = David's new capital, far removed from imperial highways
2. **Red** circle around Gezer, Medeba, Helam, Rabbah = Battlefields along imperial highways
3. Sweeping **green** arrows = David's expanding kingdom. Label your arrows with a **black** pen as you mark. Write the letter of the arrow beside the arrow and draw a black circle around the letter.
  - a. An arrow from Jerusalem pointing toward Gezer via Gibeon and Beth-horon
  - b. An arrow from Jerusalem pointing toward Gath via Bethlehem and Azekah

- c. An arrow from Jerusalem to the region of Jericho; and a second arrow from E of Jericho to Dibon passing SW of Medeba; place the circled 'c' beside the second arrow
  - d. An arrow from Bethlehem and continuing via Hebron and Arad to the Rift Valley W of Zoar
  - e. A second arrow from E of Jericho curving past Abila to Medeba (place circled 'e' below arrow)
  - f. An arrow splitting off of arrow 'e' near Abila and curving up to Helam via Jazer, Jogbehah, Gerasa and Edrei
  - g. An arrow coming out of the junction of arrows 'e' and 'f' and curving up to Rabbah
  - h. An arrow from W of Gezer to Joppa
4. **Green underline:** Megiddo, Beth-shan, Hazor (Canaanite cities taken by David but not listed in his conquests)

**DISCUSSION AND READING** (Find bold names on the LB map.)

As you read this discussion consider regional realities that might have contributed to the actions described below. Read the texts printed in bold, either while reading the discussion or later as a review at the close of Event 7.

MOVE TO JERUSALEM AND CAMPAIGNS TO THE WEST

The northern tribes came to David of Judah at **Hebron** and anointed him as king over all Israel. David later moved his capital outside Judah's territory by capturing and settling **Jerusalem**, an unconquered Jebusite town within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin (2 Sam 5:1-13). David's move accomplished two purposes. It was an unspoken compromise representing his willingness to serve all Israel, and it was a strategic repositioning of his capital to a location which, unlike Hebron, greatly facilitated eastern and western expansion. David's move immediately seized Philistine attention. They saw the revival of a unified Israelite kingdom based in Jerusalem as a direct threat to their hold on local routes. On two occasions the Philistines entered the Hill Country and camped in the Valley of Rephaim, just southwest of Jerusalem. Both times David drove them out of the hills. In the second victory he pursued the Philistines from **Gibeon** to **Gezer** (2 Sam 5:17-25; arrow 'a'). In the years which followed, David secured his western border and expanded onto the coastal highway by subduing the Philistines (2 Sam 8:1; arrow 'b').

EARLY CAMPAIGNS AND MAJOR VICTORY IN TRANSJORDAN

David now turned his attention to Transjordan. First he conquered **Moab** (2 Sam 8:2; arrow 'c') and then either approached **Edom** by moving south along the Transjordanian Highway or by traveling through the Negev past **Arad** (1 Chron 18:12-13; arrow 'd'). David spoke of a kindness shown to him by Nahash king of Ammon, perhaps reflecting aid earlier offered to David. As long as David focused on his western border with the Philistines, Nahash continued to feel secure, but David's actions against Moab and Edom must have unnerved Ammon. With the death of Nahash, his son Hanun became suspicious of David's overtures of friendship and insulted David, an intolerable action in the Middle East.

Hanun's actions went beyond an insult. He hired mercenaries from Zobah and Maacah (Arameans north and southwest of Aram-Damascus) to assist in a war against David. Suddenly a major military contest emerged. David's successful campaigns against Moab and Edom had established his presence along the Transjordanian Highway south of Ammon, and now, because of Hanun's insult, he was free from his previous obligation to Ammon. If he successfully met this new challenge, his influence would expand to the highways north of Ammon. If he were to fail, however, he would be forced to retreat to Cisjordan, and Hanun of Ammon (as well as the Arameans farther north) would be free to expand. The stakes were high. The battlefield was the strategic plateau around **Medeba** (1 Chron 19:7). David's general Joab engaged the Aramean and Ammonite coalition and both fled before him (2 Sam 10:6-14; arrow 'e').

Hadadezer, the Aramean king of Zobah, regrouped his armies and gathered reinforcements from the far north. David heard about their mobilization and acted quickly. He crossed the Jordan and met Hadadezer's coalition at **Helam** on the strategic plateau of Bashan (2 Sam 10:15-19; arrow 'f'). Damascus came out in support of Hadadezer (2 Sam 8:3-5), but David was victorious. He stationed Israelite forces in Aram-Damascus to hold his new acquisitions along the highway, and Hamath, the region north of Zobah, sent David a petition for peace (2 Sam 8:5-10). Suddenly David found himself controlling areas of great economic potential, far from his native Wilderness east of **Bethlehem**. The red circle and green line on Map B, RR 14 illustrate this 'sudden burst of geopolitical skill.' Both texts on RR 15 (right hand columns) refer to David's expansion into Transjordan.

## THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST AMMON AND DAVID'S SIN IN JERUSALEM

Ammon and its capital **Rabbah** remained as the one obstacle in Transjordan. Historically, Ammon had created problems for Israel. During Jephthah's time (Judg 11), the Ammonites had made a claim on Gilead—Reubenite and Gadite territory—since it would give Ammon access to **Beth-shan**, the Jezreel Valley and the Phoenician ports. During Saul's reign (1 Sam 11), Nahash of Ammon had laid siege to the Israelite town of **Jabesh-gilead** on the highway from Rabbah to Beth-shan. Nahash's goal was the same as the earlier Ammonite goal: Beth-shan and Phoenician ports. Now David could remove Ammonite competition. He sent the army under Joab to lay siege to the Ammonite capital of Rabbah. Here the biblical text interjects a strange twist into the historical record: king David in Jerusalem sees a woman, takes her in adultery, orders her husband killed in battle and dismisses a military loss at the walls of Rabbah because it serves his purposes.

Why is this account here? Why this interruption in David's expansion? It appears that the basic message of these accounts is not David's success along the country's main trade routes but rather an inspection of David's heart. Events recorded in the history of Israel and its leaders such as David were lessons on the most basic spiritual requirement of God's people: a contrite heart. The account of David's sin reflects the lesson of Satan's third temptation of Jesus, the Son of David: 'all the kingdoms of the world ... I shall give to you' (Matt 4:8). Jesus' answer—'You shall worship the LORD your God and serve him only'—was a lesson David apparently had to review. Centuries later the prophet Amos brought this lesson to the leaders of northern Israel who had expanded across the plain of Bashan and boasted, 'Haven't we, by our own might, taken Karnaim?' (Amos 6:13) but paid little attention to their social and moral obligations as a chosen people and witnesses to surrounding nations. The lesson is underscored in David's response to Nathan's satirical account (2 Sam 12:1-14) of unbridled, insensitive power: 'this man deserves death ... he had no pity.' Nathan adds, '... by this affair you have indeed given the enemies of the LORD cause to scorn....' David finally recognizes his sin, and His contrite heart is unveiled in Psalm 51: 'Show me mercy, O God, according to your bond of loyalty ... cleanse me from my sin, for my violation I know ... create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a correct spirit in me.'

David and Joab returned to Ammon to finish the battle at Rabbah (2 Sam 12:26-31; arrow 'g'). With this conquest, David had control of the Coastal Highway in Philistia and the full length of the Transjordanian Highway. Canaanite centers like Megiddo and Beth-shan were sealed off and must have fallen to David. The biblical account does not mention this, but during Solomon's reign these centers became part of the defensive and administrative structure of his kingdom. Taking over these centers completed the Davidic conquest of the trade routes through the Land Between.

As a postscript to David's conquests, 2 Samuel 21:15-22 and 1 Chronicles 20:4-8 recall that the Philistines revolted late in David's reign. A victory near Gezer may have gained the port of Joppa for Solomon's kingdom (arrow 'h'). In Solomon's reign, building materials from Phoenicia are brought in through Joppa (2 Chron 2:16). The following is a summary of David's conquests discussed above.

2 Samuel 5:17-25 (1 Chronicles 14:8-17)		David's earlier battles with the Philistines
2 Samuel 8 (1 Chronicles 18)		Summary of David's conquests and reign
2 Samuel 10-12 (1 Chronicles 19:1-20:3)		Details of David's northeastern and eastern campaigns (19:7 adds Medeba as a gathering point for Arameans)
2 Samuel 21:15-22 (1 Chronicles 20:4-8)		David's later battles in the west against the Philistines

**EVENT 8: HAZAEL'S EXPANSION—'HAZAELE DEFEATED ISRAEL THROUGHOUT ALL THEIR TERRITORIES'**

**CHART—THE ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW; LB MAP** (Find bold names on the chart.)

Earlier we saw that the green/orange boxes in the middle of the 4000 Year Overview chart represent high and low periods of the Israelite monarchies. The Israelite Monarchies: 500 Year Overview chart on page 39 enlarges these boxes and summarizes various periods of the Israelite monarchies. Turn to this chart and read the left hand summary statement inside the tan box.

The affluent period of **Ahab** and **Jehoshaphat** is the background for the disasters of Event 8. They had put aside the civil wars which plagued Israel and Judah after the death of Solomon, and each had built

a prosperous economy, the fruits of controlling large portions of the trade routes passing through the Land Between. While this was happening, however, the Assyrian Empire in Mesopotamia was gaining strength and extending its control in the region of Aram to the north. This had serious implications for the nations around Israel, and local powers, including Israel, were wise enough to stop their feuding briefly and organize a unified front against this rising Assyrian threat. They met Shalmaneser III king of Assyria in battle near **Qarqar** (-853, on both charts) on the Orontes River in the territory of Hamath. The coalition from Canaan stopped him from advancing southward. Once the Assyrian threat was temporarily halted, however, the league of smaller nations dissolved and local skirmishes resumed.

At the end of Ahab's reign rebellion broke out in Transjordan (2 Kgs 1:1), and **Moab** (LB map) extended its control north to the strategic plateau around **Medeba** (LB map). Ammon may also have taken advantage of the situation. Aram, which had suffered a setback at the Battle of Aphek (1 Kgs 20:26-34), appears to have maintained control of **Ramoth-gilead** (LB map; 1 Kgs 22:36-37 with 2 Kgs 8:28). From Ramoth-gilead Aram may have encouraged liberation movements in Moab.

In -841 a coup in Damascus brought the new dynasty of Hazael to power (2 Kgs 8: 7-15). A coup in Israel brought the new dynasty of Jehu to power (2 Kgs 9-10) leaving Israel's king (Ahab's son), the queen mother, Jezebel (princess of Phoenicia), and all the royal family and administrative officers dead, together with the king of Judah and his royal family. Israel's alliances with Phoenicia and Judah were in shambles. Meanwhile, Assyria was on the move to the north under **Shalmaneser III**. In -841 he conducted a lightning campaign from **Bashan** (LB map) to Mt. Carmel before withdrawing via Phoenicia. Cities such as **Beth-arbel** (LB map) were left in ruins as recalled by Hosea (10:14) a century later.

Thus, between -853 and -841 Israel witnessed tremendous upheaval with disastrous effects on political and economic life. Recovery would not begin until a half century later when **Adad-nirari III** of Assyria broke the power of Damascus in -806 and Israel and Judah revived and reached another zenith under **Jeroboam II** and **Uzziah**. The interlude between these two high points on the Israelite Monarchies: 500 Year Overview chart is called the '**Heyday of Damascus (Hazael)**.' This box represents a period of weakness when Damascus oppressed both Israel and Judah. Israel's fortunes changed when God sent a 'deliverer' (2 Kgs 13:5), who may have been the Assyrian Adad-nirari III, or was it Jehoash, for whom the prophet **Elisha** prophesied victory (2 Kgs 13:14-25)?

During this 'Heyday of Damascus' Hazael took the opportunity to seize the Transjordanian Highway from Israel (2 Kgs 10:32-33). Damascus also appears to have had a free hand along the strategic entrances to Galilee and the Jezreel Valley. The Aramean troops even campaigned along the Coastal Highway and onto the Philistine Plain. From Philistia Hazael turned toward the Hill Country of Judah to attack Jerusalem, but king Joash of Judah saved Jerusalem by sending heavy tribute to Hazael (2 Kgs 12:17-18).

What a change from the days of Ahab a few decades earlier when Israel and Judah controlled much of the Land Between! During these decades of disaster Elisha ministered, witnessing the wrath of Hazael and hoping that the once affluent but apostate Northern Kingdom would learn from this tragic experience.

#### MARKING ON LB MAP AND DISCUSSION

1. Blue box around Damascus = Hazael's capital
2. Blue circle around Aroer in Moab and Gath in Philistia
3. Sweeping blue arrows = Hazael's expanding kingdom
  - a. An arrow from Damascus pointing toward Aroer in Moab via Gerasa and Rabbah (skipping over green arrow 'f' and staying east of the green arrows 'g', 'e' and 'c')
  - b. An arrow from Damascus pointing to Gath in Philistia via Dan, Hazor, Megiddo, Aphek, and Lod (skipping over the green arrow 'h')

It is clear from this marking that Hazael's invasion was a disaster for Israel and Judah, who lost their economic hold on the country's trade routes. Again we see the significance of the highways running through the land. Note that the biblical writer only records destinations along the highways (Aroer and Gath), knowing that his audience knew the routes implied by such names, the economic motivation behind Hazael's campaigns and what Hazael's gains meant to Israel and Judah. The writer then went on to spell out more carefully the spiritual message of the event: God's great mercy. The pattern is the same as that found in the book of Judges: Israel sins, God disciplines with oppression, Israel cries out, God delivers. Indeed, it may imply judgment of the royal houses since things were as bad as they had been in the period of the judges when 'Israel did not have a king, so everyone did as he pleased' (Judg 21:25).

It is interesting that in the midst of this story the prophet Elisha anointed Hazael king in Damascus and then wept over the future destruction of Israel by Hazael (2 Kgs 8: 7-15). Jehu would destroy the political infrastructure of Israel, and Hazael would destroy its economic infrastructure, but when the oppression became intolerable, king Jehoahaz repented and God sent a deliver (2 Kgs 10:32; 13:4-5). As the writer clearly teaches, ‘The LORD was gracious and compassionate with them, and he turned to them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was not willing to destroy them or to cast them away from himself even now’ (2 Kgs 13:23). Thus, as in the rise of David, the real message of this event lies behind the details of the story. By the same token, were we not to have the details of the story and the knowledge of the land and its highways, the message would lose much of its impact.

#### READING

With the background gained from your study of this event, read the following summary of events.

- 2 Kings 8: 7-15      Hazael seizes power in Damascus
- 2 Kings 10:32-33    Hazael takes the Transjordanian Highway all the way to Aroer
- 2 Kings 12:17-18    Hazael takes the Coastal Highway all the way to Philistia
- 2 Kings 13            Hazael serves as a tool for disciplining God’s people

#### SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This unit argues for and defines ‘Imperial Highways through the Land Between.’ Knowledge of these highways comes from historical texts which speak about how conquerors and caravans used the highways. The discussion here uses four illustrative events for the presentation of the routes, but many more biblical as well as extra-biblical events took place along these same roads. Such routes are at the heart of a regional study of the land. They are what drives the Land Between, the avenues of caravans and the goals of conquerors. Any interference with these routes affects the geopolitics of the entire Land Between.

Can biblical history be understood apart from these routes and the regions through which they pass? The answer is clear and must be a resounding ‘No!’ Routes and regions not only illuminate regional architecture, they also reveal the motives of the historical players and heighten our understanding of the divine message behind our brief glimpses into past events. The fragmented terrain and resulting road system of the Land Between made it politically fragile. For Israel to survive it had to depend upon a greater power, one which Israel is told again and again to trust. David, ‘a man after God’s own heart,’ realized this more than other kings in the Israelite monarchies, and for this he has been revered to our day (1 Sam 13:14; Act 13:22).

This idea that Israel’s mission was to love, to obey and to represent the justice and righteousness of their God to other peoples finds expression in historic, poetic, and prophetic portions of the Bible. In 1 Kings 10 the queen of Sheba visited Jerusalem and gave praise to the God of Israel, who delighted in His people and by his loving bond of loyalty gave them a wise ruler to maintain justice and righteousness. The liturgical writer of Psalm 72 casts the ideology in a poetic enthronement hymn which calls on God to endow the royal son with justice and righteousness, so that his fair and equitable rule might draw the attention of distant nations and bring blessing to all. The prophets envisioned the day when the nations would go up to Jerusalem to witness justice and righteousness, to worship Israel’s God and to learn the ways of peace (Isa 2:3-4; Mic 4:2-3).

In Isaiah 9:1-7 we find the same ideology. The prophet proclaims good news to the Israelite tribes living along the highways. The tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali had borne the greater part of the suffering brought by conquering armies, armies that had their way with Israel because (in the prophetic view) disobedient kings had led God’s people astray. The good news is the birth of a future king who will reign from David’s throne, establishing and upholding his kingdom with justice and righteousness. According to the prophet, one day the nations will support rather than oppress Israel. It is more than a coincidence that Matthew draws upon this text from Isaiah to explain Jesus’ move from Nazareth to Capernaum. Jesus moved from an insignificant, out-of-the way village to a commercial hub of the Galilee. His ministry centered on a northern crossing point of the highways so that all who passed through might begin to hear the proclamation of the king as he called out to his people, ‘Repent for Heaven’s Kingdom is at hand’ (cf. Matt 4:12-17).

Read RR 5: Lessons from the Land

NCA, v.3

If you have version 3 of RSMAP 3: NCA, notes such as this alert you to updates in the NCA map

### III. NORTHERN BATTLEFIELDS ALONG THE HIGHWAYS (NCA MAP)

'Northern Battlefields along the Highways' introduces three geographical corridors which gather routes and manage traffic in the north: the Jezreel Valley, the Hazor Highway, and the Bashan. These corridors lie between the Phoenicians, Israelites, Ammonites, and Arameans. They became battlefields as these peoples contended for control of the north or resisted invasions by outside imperial powers.

**READ** RR 10-11: The Northern Arena

**SKIM** RR 12-13: Phoenician and Carmel Gateways; RR 14-15: Damascus, Bashan and Hazor Gateways

With this introduction to the Northern Arena we turn to three events (9-11) which unfold along these three corridors. All three events occurred during the period of the Israelite monarchies.

- 1) The Philistines campaigned north into the **Jezreel Valley** and beyond to Beth-shan in order to gain control of the growing caravan trade in the region.
- 2) Ben-hadad of Aram campaigned along the **Hazor Highway** and seized four Israelite positions in order to gain control of routes which linked eastern caravan trade with Phoenician ports.
- 3) Ahab, king of Israel, campaigned at Ramoth-gilead in southern **Bashan** in order to maintain his control of eastern caravan trade passing through the north to Phoenician ports.

#### EVENT 9: SAUL'S BATTLES—'THE PHILISTINES GATHERED THEIR FORCES AT APHEK, AND ISRAEL CAMPED BY THE SPRING IN JEZREEL'

##### READING

RR 12-13: Phoenician and Carmel Gateways

**CHART—THE ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

The prominence of the color orange in the **Samuel and Saul** box represents the authority of the northern Israelite tribes, including Ephraim (Samuel's tribe) and Benjamin (Saul's tribe). This box is low because Philistine dominance in this period (1 Sam 13:19-22; 14:52) continued until the days of **David** of Judah (green). The chart also lists references for each period as well as the names of prophets. Note that Samuel initiates this list. A box with two 'S's below -1040 on the 4000 Year Overview chart also represents the 'Samuel and Saul' period, which is preceded by the period of the judges.

##### DISCUSSION

During the period of the judges, tribal heroes arose to deliver Israel from foreign oppressors, but no judge had united the tribes politically or religiously. As internal decay deepened and Israelites adopted the ways of the Canaanites, Samuel was born (1 Sam 1-2). He not only served as a priest but also as the last of the judges (1 Sam 7:15) and initiated the office of the prophet as 'king-maker,' an office which continued to have access to the royal court (cf. 1 Sam 10:1; 1 Kgs 19:16). Samuel preached that spiritual renewal of the inner man resulted in obedience to God and the security for which both the Israelite and Israel longed. In his own words,

If you are coming back to the LORD with all your heart, then throw away the strange gods from your midst—as well as the Ashtaroth—and fix your heart firmly on the LORD, worshipping Him alone; and He will deliver you from Philistine domination. (1 Sam 7:3)

The Israelites, however, wanted visible assurance of security in the form of a national leader, a king like peoples around them had. In spite of personal misgivings, Samuel honored their request and anointed Saul of Benjamin as the first king of Israel. Saul soon had an opportunity to prove his ability to lead.

##### MARKING ON NCA MAP

1. HL JEZREEL VALLEY
2. HL HAROD VALLEY

##### DISCUSSION

The Jezreel and Harod valleys serve as one long corridor between the Rift Valley and the Mediterranean Sea. They effectively interrupt the Hill Country west of the Jordan and, if held by an enemy, cut off Israelite tribes in Galilee from those to the south. Two sites, Jezreel and Shunem, guarded the pass leading from the Jezreel Valley into the Harod Valley and on to Beth-shan.

Saul's reign not only began but also ended (1 Samuel 31) with military actions in this strategic area. The goal of both was to defend the integrity of tribal unity in the north and to make Israel's claim on the Jezreel Valley corridor with its eastern gate via Beth-shan and the Harod Valley. The detailed account of the Ammonite campaign against Jabesh-gilead in 1 Samuel 11 puts these geographical realities into the world of Samuel and Saul.

**MARKING ON NCA MAP**

3. Blue box around Rabbah = Ammonite center and HL Ammon
4. HL on Transjordanian Highway
  - a. From Rabbah to Gerasa, er-Ramtha, Karnaim, Naveh and off the map
  - b. From Rabbah to Umm el-Hanafish, Samaga, Medeba and S off map
5. HL route from Gerasa to Jabesh-gilead and Beth-shan
6. Red circle around Jabesh-gilead
7. Sweeping blue arrow from Rabbah to Jabesh-gilead via Gerasa
8. Orange box around Gibeah (S of map above Jerusalem) = Saul's capital
9. Orange circle around Bezek (in the hills SW of Beth-shan) = Saul's camp
10. Sweeping orange arrow from Bezek to Jabesh-gilead via Abel-meholah and Pehel
11. Sweeping orange arrow from Gibeah to Bezek via Bethel and Shechem

NCA, v.3  
 Name appears as  
 Ramtha instead of  
 er-Ramtha

The marking you have just completed reinforces the flow of blue and orange arrows on RR 14, Map B. The cross-flow of these arrows explains some of the Ammonite-Israelite tension in the Bible. The goal of the Ammonite's push was to reach trade routes in the region of Beth-shan and the Harod Valley. (Find 'Ammon's Push' and the verses around Ammon on RR 11, Map B.) Saul's objective was to stop this Ammonite advance and protect Israelites in Gilead. Later Israelite leaders looked beyond Jabesh-gilead to the intersections of trade routes around Ramoth-gilead and Karnaim in Bashan. Other events along these routes in this period are summarized in the section 'Nations Emerge and Compete' on the bottom of RR 15.

**READING**

1 Samuel 11; 14:47-48

**DISCUSSION**

Saul's success at Jabesh-gilead did not satisfy the needs of his threatened spirit. He appears to have had difficulty applying Samuel's message of obedience. Once he offered sacrifice at Gilgal without Samuel, and Samuel told him, 'Since you did not obey, your kingdom will not last' (1 Sam 13:13-14). Again he disobeyed in a battle against the Amalekites and brought back sheep that he alleged were for sacrifice. Samuel told him, 'To obey is better than sacrifice; the LORD has rejected you as king' (1 Sam 15:22-23). Finally, God sent Samuel to anoint a new king, David, the youngest son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah. As David's exploits and popularity rose, Saul's threatened spirit became even more restless and suspicious.

**MARKING ON NCA MAP**

12. Blue boxes around Gath, Ekron, Ashdod (SW of map) = Three main Philistine centers on this map
13. Blue circle around Aphek (include Antipatris and dot) = Philistine mustering center
14. HL COASTAL PLAIN and PHILISTINE ALLUVIAL PLAIN (SW corner of map), Beth-shan, MT. GILBOA
15. Blue sweeping arrow from PHILISTINE ALLUVIAL PLAIN to Aphek
16. HL on International Coastal Highway
  - a. From Aphek to Ono, Jabneel, Ashdod and off the map
  - b. From Aphek to Yaham, Aruna, Megiddo, Afula, En-dor, Adamah, Chinnereth and Hazor
17. HL from Afula to Shunem and Beth-shan
18. Blue circle around Shunem and Beth-shan = Philistine camps
19. Blue sweeping arrow from Aphek past Aruna and Megiddo to Shunem
20. Orange circle around Jezreel (actually the 'JEZREEL SPRING' on GAL map) = Saul's camp
21. Sweeping orange arrow from Gibeah to Jezreel (parallel to first orange arrow)

22. Orange on the city dot of En-dor = Saul visits the witch
23. Red confrontation mark ✱ between Shunem and Jezreel
24. Orange flight arrow and blue chase arrow from ✱ onto Mt. Gilboa (see 'Marking Procedures')

**DISCUSSION**

Philistine expansion runs as a thread throughout the book of 1 Samuel, and Saul encountered their forces numerous times throughout his reign (1 Sam 14:52). With all his faults, Saul did stop Philistine intrusions into the Hill Country. In spite of this, by the end of Saul's reign the influence of the Philistines extended north into the Jezreel Valley and beyond to Beth-shan. From Saul's perspective, this constituted a wedge between the heartland of Israelite tribal settlement in the central Hill Country and tribes in the hills of Galilee. Although a cause is not given, toward the end of Saul's reign the Philistines mobilized at Aphek along the Coastal Highway, marched north, crossed the Megiddo Pass and set up their camp at Shunem. Saul again proceeded north through the center of the country and this time encamped by the Jezreel Spring, just northeast of the site later called Jezreel (see GAL map). From this position Saul could monitor Philistine actions.

It is interesting to note that Saul's camp was located in the vicinity of previous Israelite victories. Nearby, at the Spring of Harod (see GAL map), Gideon had chosen the three hundred men who defeated invading Midianite herdsmen, by 'the sword of the LORD and of Gideon!' (Judg 7). From Bezek Saul had marched to Jabesh-gilead and had been blessed with victory over the advancing Ammonites. The situation was now the same. An advancing enemy threatened to fragment Israelite unity in the Jezreel and Harod valleys. The burning question was, 'Would God again help His people?' On the night before the battle, Saul skirted the Philistine camp and sought an answer from a witch at En-dor. The foreboding answer came, and the next day Saul, his sons and his troops fled before the Philistines to the nearby slopes of Mount Gilboa. There they fell, and Saul took his own life.

**READ**

1 Samuel 28-29 and 31 (Note on the NCA map how quickly this story changes regional settings.)

**DISCUSSION**

The Philistine and Ammonite thrusts toward Beth-shan illustrate how the Jezreel Valley is a corridor which controls trade and manages northern traffic. Nearby Beth-shan draws routes from Transjordan and provides an open access to the Jezreel Valley. It is clear why the Egyptians established a military base here. Indeed, almost two centuries before this Philistine campaign, pharaoh Seti I had arrived via the same path to reinstate Egyptian domination in the north after Beth-shan had been threatened by the kings of nearby Pehel and Hammath. Seti marched north along the Coastal Highway, entered the Jezreel Valley, and campaigned around Beth-shan, reestablishing a strong Egyptian base there.

**OPTIONAL REVIEW** RR 10-11; 12-13; 14-15

Especially note the 'Regional Connections' 1 and 2 on RR 12 and relevant arrows on Map B. They illustrate the motives behind the military campaigns discussed in Event 9. Saul's moves to counter the Philistine and Ammonite invasions followed the orange arrows flowing out of the central Hill Country.

**EVENT 10: BEN-HADAD'S NEW MARKETS—'BEN-HADAD CONQUERED IJON, DAN, ABEL-BETH-MAACHAH AND ALL CHINNERETH IN ADDITION TO NAPHTALI'**

**READING**

RR 14-15: Damascus, Bashan and Hazor Gateways

**CHART—THE ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

In studying previous events we have discussed the first two orange/green boxes on this chart. We now turn to the decades following the death of **Solomon**, the box entitled the **Battle of Benjamin**. This box again is low (like the 'Samuel and Saul' box) indicating that this was a period of weakness following the zenith of the **United Monarchy**. The red line between the orange and green represents disputes between the northern tribes (known as 'Israel' during these periods) and the southern tribe of Judah. A third player in these disputes was the rising Aramean state at Damascus, called **Aram-Damascus** on the 4000 Year Overview chart. Israel and Judah paid dearly for the support of Aram-Damascus so that at the end of this period both Judah and Israel were weaker but Aram-Damascus had become stronger.

**DISCUSSION AND NCA MAP**

The rebellion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the decades following the death of Solomon led to Israel's defection from the central government of Judah in Jerusalem. However, the north was anything but stable, and two decades later the new dynasty of Baasha ruled Israel from the 'backwoods' city of Tirzah. Under Baasha's rule the bitter tribal conflict between Israel and Judah continued.

The NCA map helps us set the scene for the disastrous events in the northern arena during the rule of Baasha. Find Baasha's capital city of Tizrah (south of Bezek) and Judah's capital at Jerusalem. During the time of Baasha's predecessors, Judah had made an alliance with Aram-Damascus and was able to make a military thrust north of Jerusalem as far as Jeshanah (north of Bethel). The shocking defeat for Israel no doubt helped bring Baasha to power at Tirzah. Baasha soon politically outflanked Judah by negotiating his own treaty with Aram-Damascus and pushed his border south beyond Bethel to Ramah (just north of Jerusalem). Baasha's fortification of Ramah meant that he was in a position to 'allow no one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah' in Jerusalem. Asa could not tolerate this situation. The stage was set for the events which soon transpired along the strategic Hazor Highway far to the north of Ramah.

Faced with such a threat, Asa of Judah sent 'the silver and gold left in the treasury of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house' to Damascus and asked Ben-hadad of Damascus to break his treaty with Baasha. Damascus received a significant economic boost and its armies were free to invade Israel's northern territories. Faced with a two front war, Baasha 'stopped building Ramah and dwelt in Tirzah.' Asa immediately issued an order to which 'no one was exempt' and fortified two approaches Israel's armies might use to attack Judah in the future, Geba and Mizpah. Within this context we now turn to Ben-hadad's invasion from Damascus into the heart of Israel's territory in Galilee.

**MARKING ON NCA MAP**

1. HL on route
  - a. From Hazor to Abel-beth-maachah and Ijon (along the phrase 'To Aram')
  - b. From Abel-beth-maachah to Dan and Pnias and NE off the map
2. HL the swampy HULEH BASIN which together with the mountains of Galilee define the Hazor corridor
3. Blue box around Damascus in the phrase 'To Damascus' (NE corner) = Aramean mustering center
4. Red dot on city dots of Dan, Abel-beth-maachah, Ijon, Chinnereth = conquered sites
5. Black write-in: LAND OF NAPHTALI in small caps (and on two lines) W of Chinnereth
6. Red underline
  - a. Under Hazor (Hazor is not mentioned in 1 Kgs 15:20 or 2 Chr 16:4, but archaeology suggests that the Solomonic city was destroyed.)
  - b. Under LAND OF NAPHTALI
7. Blue sweeping arrows
  - a. From 'To Damascus' to Dan
  - b. From Dan to Abel-beth-maachah
  - c. From Abel-beth-maachah to Ijon
  - d. From Abel-beth-maachah to Hazor
  - e. From Hazor to Chinnereth
  - f. From Chinnereth toward Adamah

As you look at your marking, note that the Hazor corridor is a well-watered area, so well-watered that swamps become a major difficulty for travel. From Dan the region slopes gently S into the swamps of the Huleh Basin, an area slightly above sea level. The slopes of Upper Golan to the E and the hills of Upper Galilee rising abruptly to the W outline the basin. Mt. Hermon dominates the entire region. A slightly higher strip of land between the Huleh basin and the hills of Upper Galilee provides a narrow passage from Abel-beth-maachah to the strategic site of Hazor. The basin has been blocked by a higher outflow of volcanic lava called the Rosh Pinna Saddle (see GAL map) which falls quickly from the area of Chorazin to the shores of Lake Galilee. The Jordan River cuts through the eastern part of this basaltic dam.

**READING**

2 Chronicles 16:1-10 (1 Kings 15:16-24)

**EXPLORE RR AND NCA MAPS**

Ben-hadad of Damascus wisely chose to invade the Hazor Highway, the corridor running south along the western side of the Huleh Basin from Abel-beth-maachah and the region of Dan to Hazor and Chinnereth. This gave Damascus control of a major north-south imperial highway and its junctions for east-west routes from Transjordan to ports in Phoenicia. Ben-hadad captured this strategic highway all the way from Ijon to Chinnereth, and probably beyond, according to the phrase, 'and all the land of Naphtali.' Arrow 1 on Map B, RR 14, shows an arrow from the Beqaa Valley to the region of Dan via the city of Ijon which controlled this approach. Since Ijon is the first name mentioned in both accounts of Ben-hadad's invasion, the Aramean forces may have come from the direction of the Beqaa valley.

On Map A, RR 12, run your finger along the dotted lines from the Persian Gulf to Bozrah and Rabbah. Now move along the arrow 'from Sheba' and bring your caravan (fingertip) up to Rabbah. Transfer your fingertip to Rabbah on Map B. How would your caravan continue to Tyre and to Sidon? Reread the legend for arrows 3 and 4. Clearly intersections along the Hazor Highway controlled the flow of east-to-west trade from the Transjordanian Highway to ports in Phoenicia.

On the NCA map run your fingertip along the route from Ramoth-gilead (in the east) through Ashtaroth, Dan, Abel-beth-maachah and NW off the map (toward Sidon, seen on the LB map). Return to Ramoth-gilead and find ways to Tyre via the Rift Valley, around both sides of Lake Galilee and across Upper Galilee. This underscores the importance of the region of Dan and the site of Hazor.

The geopolitical implications of Ben-hadad's invasion are obvious on Map B, RR 11. The Hazor Highway red circle opens the way for his entry into Lower Galilee and the Jezreel Valley, the territorial aspiration of all Aramean offensives in the biblical text. Israel, on the other hand, will push Damascus back as far as possible and will repeatedly campaign for control of the region of Bashan in Transjordan. In our day the struggle between modern Syria and modern Israel follows the same pattern except that various wars have been fought in the regions of Upper and Lower Golan. The underlying dynamic remains the same.

**REGIONAL LESSONS**

Event 10 teaches the geopolitical importance of the Hazor Highway, but the prophetic writers had another purpose for including this episode in the biblical text. They are arguing, as discussed above ('Some Concluding Thoughts' for Chapter II), that God is Israel's help, their greater power. It is no coincidence that the prophetic message and Asa's cry for help in earlier threats (2 Chr 14, 15) provide a backdrop for Hanani's reaction to Asa's alliance with Damascus (2 Chr 16:7-10).

The invasion of Damascus into northern Israel during the early ninth century B.C. illustrates the importance of the Hazor Highway as a gateway into the land via Dan, Hazor and Chinnereth. The Bible records that 250 years later (-733) Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria made a similar entrance into the land via the Beqaa Valley taking 'Ijon, Abel-beth-maachah,... Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee, all the land of Naphtali' and the tribe of Dan into captivity (2 Kgs 15:29). Dan had always been one of the first cities to fall in the north, and over a century after Tiglath-pileser III as Babylon was poised to enter the land, the prophet Jeremiah used the region of Dan to highlight his admonition to Judah to trust God and not man.

A voice is making an announcement from Dan ... Take it seriously. Warn the nations [along the country's main highways] ... The shock troops are coming from a distant country ... Why aren't we doing anything? Get mobilized! Come into the fortified cities ... You can hear from Dan the snorting of their horses. The sound of their stallions neighing shakes the whole land. (Jer 4:15-16; 8:14-16)

**EVENT 11: AHAB'S CLAIM—'DON'T YOU KNOW THAT RAMOTH-GILEAD BELONGS TO US?'**

**CHART—THE ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

Omri and his son Ahab came to power in Israel at about -880, reorganized the north and again brought prosperity to the northern tribes. This can be seen on this chart as the **Ahab/Jehoshaphat** box is higher than the **Battle of Benjamin** box. Event 11 is just one of many fascinating episodes during this period when apostasy and prosperity grew hand in hand in northern Israel. The names of the period's two main prophets, **Elijah** and **Elisha**, are not outlined in black on this chart since there are no prophetic books in the Bible by these names. The acts and teachings of these two prophets appear in the unfolding drama of the book of Kings, a record which is far more than simply history. Events in these days of apostate abundance followed by dire distress give us the context we need to understand prophetic teaching about God's work and the frailty of human faith. This is most clearly seen in the moving story of Elijah as it intersects with the apostate deeds of king Ahab and his Phoenician wife Jezebel.

**DISCUSSION**

Omri and Ahab initiated several systematic policies which brought Israel and Judah to a point of strength and domination in the Land Between (cf. 1 Kgs 16:21-34). First, Omri moved the capital from the 'backwoods' site of Tirzah to the hill of Samaria, a site much better situated for interaction with the Coastal Highway and Israel's commercial connections with the ports of Phoenicia. Secondly, Omri and his son Ahab aligned themselves with Phoenicia by marriage. Ahab married Jezebel, the Phoenician princess. Thirdly, Ahab made peace with the house of David by giving a royal daughter, Athaliah, in marriage to Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat (cf. 2 Kgs 8:25-27). Costly wars with Judah ceased; both kingdoms put their resources into other activities, and both Israel and Judah took advantage of the growing Phoenician commercial network which linked the caravan routes of the east with western maritime markets. Israel's expansion, however, came with a spiritual price tag.

**EXPLORE RR AND NCA MAPS**

RR 20, Map B shows an orange arrow, 'Ahab of Israel' sweeping from Samaria through Jericho to the Medeba Plateau south of Rabbah. This continued Ahab's father's policy of expanding to the southeast in order to hold part of the Transjordanian Highway. The rebuilding of Jericho (1 Kgs 16:34) was an important part of this policy. 2 Kings 3:4-5, as well as the Mesha Stone (a later Moabite victory monument left by Mesha, king of Moab), speaks of Moab's subjugation by Israel. This move to the southeast was part of a greater plan of commercial expansion which involved northern highways as we have seen on Map B, RR 12. In this context we turn to the main action of Event 11.

**DISCUSSION**

Ben-hadad II (the king of Damascus in this period) and other Aramean leaders must have viewed Ahab's alliance with Phoenicia and his advances into Transjordan as a threat to the control they had of trade moving north along the Transjordanian Highway. Ben-hadad went about consolidating these Arameans under his leadership against their common enemy, Ahab of Israel. In -856 he laid siege to Ahab's capital city of Samaria (1 Kgs 20:1-21). The writer of 1 Kings makes an important point when he records that a certain prophet told Ahab (infamous in the Bible as one of the most evil kings in Israel's history) that God would deliver the city in order that Ahab might know that 'I am the LORD.'

In a second battle the following year (-855) Ahab overcame Ben-hadad in the vicinity of Aphek, probably on the Yarmuk plain just south of Lake Galilee (1 Kgs 20:22-34). The convergence of routes here in the Rift Valley south of the lake (seen on the NCA map) shows the significance of this region bridging the plain of Bashan in Transjordan with the Jezreel Valley. The choice of this area for the battle also highlights Ben-hadad's remark, '... but if we fight them on the plain we shall surely overcome them.' Ahab's victory here was yet another spiritual lesson which went unheeded, for if Israel had been defeated, Ben-hadad and his allies could have advanced to the Beth-shan and Harod valleys and beyond into the Jezreel Valley. This would have guaranteed Aramean control of most trade routes in the north and would have left Israel with little hope of controlling trade across the north (RR 14, Map B and the legend for Arrow 2). Instead, Ben-hadad made substantial economic concessions, causing a significant growth in Israel's commercial influence in the north. Israel could now expand its commercial activities into the heart of Aramean territory as Ben-hadad's father 'had done in Samaria.'

**MARKING ON NCA MAP**

1. HL UPPER GOLAN, LOWER GOLAN and YARMUK PLAIN
2. HL on route
  - a. From grid reference 275 on upper right-hand side of map to Beth-shan via Jassam, Fiq and Lo-debar
  - b. From Ramoth-gilead to Beth-shan via Beth-arbel and Ephron
3. Blue box around Damascus in the phrase To Damascus at grid reference 275 = Aramean capital and mustering center
4. Blue sweeping arrow from To Damascus to the name LOWER GOLAN
5. Orange sweeping arrow from Beth-shan to the elevation reading -199m/-653f N of YARMUK PLAIN
6. Red confrontation mark ✱ NE of the elevation reading -199m/-653f
7. Blue flight arrow from ✱ to Aphek on E side of Lake Galilee
8. Red dot on the city dot of Aphek = Ben-hadad's hiding place

**READING**

1 Kings 20-21

**DISCUSSION AND RR MAP**

The same treaty concessions no doubt applied to cities along the Hazor Highway, since Ahab's systematic building program can be seen at sites such as Hazor and Dan (as well as at the strategic site of Megiddo). Ahab also built a winter palace at Jezreel above the Jezreel and Harod valleys (1 Kgs 21:1). This site affords a beautiful eastern vista down the Harod Valley toward Beth-shan with the scarp of Transjordan rising in the background. Clearly Ahab picked the site with eastern expansion in mind. We see this in the final episode in this chapter as Ahab now seeks to press beyond the Rift Valley and on to the plateau of Lower Gilead and southern Bashan. This is seen on RR 14, Map B where two orange arrows sweep out of Samaria. One flows north into the Hazor corridor, the other to the northeast to the Bashan corridor. Ahab had taken one corridor and now planned a campaign to take the other.

The alliance between Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Ahab, king of Israel, was sealed by the marriage of their children and brought the two kingdoms into cooperative efforts and campaigns. During a visit by Jehoshaphat to Samaria, Ahab revealed the next step in his program of northern expansion with the tantalizing statement, 'Don't you realize that Ramoth-gilead should be under our control, and yet we are doing nothing about taking it from the king of Aram?' (1 Kgs 22:3). Ahab's claim that Ramoth-gilead belonged to Israel may still reflect the agreement negotiated after the Battle of Aphek. Ben-hadad had apparently never completed his withdrawal, perhaps due to a temporary alliance of local nations in -853 to face a much more formidable foe at Qarqar far to the north, Shalmaneser III of Assyria.

RR 14, Map B shows that Ramoth-gilead is located in Lower Gilead where routes from Beth-shan intersect the Transjordanian Highway. If Ahab were to control the region of Ramoth-gilead he could reassert Israelite control in Bashan as in the days of Solomon (1 Kgs 4:7,13). This would thwart hopes for expansion in Damascus and offer protection to the Israelite tribes in the north and in Transjordan. (See also the opposing claims of Israel and Damascus for east-west trade through Bashan and across the Hazor Highway, RR 11, Map B.) The campaign to Ramoth-gilead therefore had important economic and political overtones, a fact underscored by the unified effort on the part of Israel and Judah, who could both benefit from a victory.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat engaged the Arameans at Ramoth-gilead, but the battle cost Ahab his life, an episode recounted in obvious satirical fashion to underscore the end of those who in kingly fashion had set up their own agendas and yet ignored the prophet's admonition, 'I am the LORD' (1 Kgs 20:13, 28). Ahab's attempt to expand and to contain Damascus failed, and the region and its routes were left open to Aramean infiltration. Meanwhile, Ahab's death encouraged a Moabite rebellion farther south along the highway, dangerously weakening Israel's and Judah's positions along the Transjordanian Highway.

**MARKING ON NCA MAP**

9. HL BASHAN and LOWER GILEAD
10. Blue sweeping arrow from To Damascus (grid reference 275) to Ramoth-gilead
11. Orange sweeping arrow from Beth-shan to Ramoth-gilead
12. Red confrontation mark ✱ just NW of Ramoth-gilead
13. Orange flight arrows from Ramoth-gilead to Beth-shan

**READING**

1 Kings 22:1-40 (2 Chronicles 18)

GAL, v.3

If you have version 3 of RSMAP 5: GAL, notes such as this alert you to updates in the GAL map

## IV. TAKING OR HOLDING THE JEZREEL VALLEY (GAL MAP)

'Taking or Holding the Jezreel Valley' focuses our attention on the Jezreel Valley, crossroads of the Northern Arena. Together with Lower Galilee, this valley gathers traffic from all directions and offers a unique bridge between the Coastal and Transjordanian highways. This celebrated battleground of history and its approaches is presented on the GAL map. If necessary, review the following pages in RR to note the special part the Jezreel Valley and Lower Galilee play in the Northern Arena.

### REVIEW RR 10-15

The Northern Arena (10-11)

Phoenician and Carmel Gateways (12-13)

Damascus, Bashan and Hazor Gateways (14-15)

### EXPLORING THE GAL MAP (Find bold names on the map.)

Open the GAL map and have the earlier marked LB and NCA maps handy. Note the limits of the GAL map on its finder map (bottom right hand corner). Compare the GAL map with the LB you already marked and find common features such as Lake Galilee, the Rift Valley, Mt. Carmel, the Jezreel Valley and the Yarmuk Canyon. Try to fit the GAL map with its more complex route system into the simpler route system of the LB map. Glance at the blue arrow on the LB map and see how it flows through the area covered by the GAL map. Do the same with the blue arrows on the NCA map. In short, make yourself 'at home' on the GAL map before proceeding with a closer look at the map below.

The range of hills which stretches from **Mt. Carmel** to **Samaria** is called the Carmel Range. You can see that Mt. Carmel is higher than the rest of the range, a fact confirmed by a careful look at elevations on this map. The **Iskandar Uplift** falls short of Mt. Carmel's highest point. Both are regions of uplifted and deeply eroded hard limestone. Between them lies the **Shephelah** (Lowland) of **Carmel** consisting of softer, chalky limestone, much lower and much easier to cross as seen by its roads on the map. Note the various ways to cross the Carmel Range from the northern **Sharon Plain** to the **Jezreel Valley**. The location of **Megiddo** made it one of the main defensive positions guarding the Carmel Range.

The GAL map shows a series of ridges stretching across **Lower Galilee**. In the west they tend to run east-west while in the east they angle into the Rift Valley. Routes from the Jezreel Valley to **Hazor** make their way around these ridges, but routes to Transjordan follow faulted valleys which empty into the Rift Valley and cross fords on the Jordan River before climbing to **Lower Gilead** and **Lower Golan**. Sit back now and look at the GAL map as a whole. It shows how open Lower Galilee and the Jezreel Valley are to northern invaders. Unlike the south, the north has no unified barrier such as the Carmel Range. The only practical line of defense is a depression in the Rift Valley along the western shore of **Lake Galilee**. Note how an invader moving south from Hazor had to descend to below sea level to the site of Chinnereth before climbing to the crossroads of Lower Galilee via **Arbela** and **Adamah**. This may well have been the threatened 'way of the sea' mentioned in Isaiah 9:1. It is clear why the same verse refers to the entire region as 'Galilee of the Gentiles.' It was easily overrun and difficult to defend in the past as well as today, when Israel, Syria and Jordan share the terrain seen on this map.

The two main events in this unit reveal the open character of Galilee and how imperial armies and Canaanite forces clearly controlled the routes in 'Galilee of the Gentiles.' Other events are summarized in 'A Look from Megiddo.' Gideon's dramatic victory over the Midianites and the setting of Nazareth overlooking the Jezreel Valley and Galilee receive special attention.

- 1) Canaanite insurgents mobilized at Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley in order to stop Pharaoh Thutmose III's march north along the International Coastal Highway to reassert Egyptian control.
- 2) Siser's plan to secure Hazor's influence over the north by mobilizing Canaanite chariots at Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley is thwarted by an Israelite peasant militia on Mt. Tabor led by Deborah and Barak.

### EVENT 12: THUTMOSE'S TRIUMPH—'TAKING MEGIDDO IS LIKE TAKING A THOUSAND CITIES'

**CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

In the study of Event 1 we heard of the 'Amorites,' a term which means 'Westerners,' as people in Mesopotamia viewed them. Look at the red line at -2200 on this chart, and toward the bottom find the mention of '**Amorite wave begins**' in a brief text. Around -2000 find the headline '**Amorite** influence expands on the Aram register. Around -1700 find the headline **The 'Amorite' wave reaches Mesopotamia and Egypt**. Clearly, the Amorites were on the move in the Middle East.

Around -1700 Egypt was relatively weak, a period known as the **Second Intermediate Period**. It was then that a red arrow on the chart descends into Egypt (near the fold of the chart): **Alien Rulers ('Hyksos') invade Egypt**. Egyptians called these alien rulers **Hyksos** (*heqa khoswe* in Egyptian). Many believe that this was the Amorite invasion of Egypt from the Land Between.

Shortly before -1550 red arrows on the chart point from Egypt into the Land Between. Imperial blue on the chart suddenly surges north from Egypt through the Land Between into southern Aram. The first arrow is labeled **Ahmose to Sharuhén**. Ahmose, whose reign began Egypt's **18th Dynasty**, is credited with expelling alien rulers from Egypt. His campaign took him to Sharuhén, the southern gateway to the Land Between (south of Gaza on RR 18, Map B). Egypt awoke to a new and mighty surge of nationalism and expansion which lasted four centuries. This has been called Egypt's **New Kingdom**, known archeologically as the **Late Bronze Age**. Glance over this era of **Egyptian Dominance** on the chart.

In this period some of Egypt's greatest pharaohs ruled the Land Between, and, according to Israelite chronologies #1 and #2, the Israelites left Egypt under Moses and entered the Land Between under Joshua. One of the greatest names in this period was **Thutmose III** who ruled Egypt around -1450. As the kingdom of **Mitanni** in northern Mesopotamia expanded, Canaanite rulers in the Land Between revolted against Egypt. Thutmose marched north to reassert Egyptian control and prevent Mitanni from entering the land. Thutmose saw his conquest of Megiddo in Canaan as one of his greatest victories.

#### MARKING ON GAL MAP

1. HL SHARON PLAIN, MT. CARMEL and JEZREEL VALLEY
2. Look at the area between the three geographical regions just highlighted. Note that highways avoid the rough higher terrain of Mt. Carmel and the Iskandar Uplift.
3. HL city names: Megiddo, Yaham (by the note 'To Aphek and Egypt') and Dothan
4. Place yourself at Yaham and consider various routes you could take to reach the Jezreel Valley. Each follows a path of least resistance and ends up at a different location in the Jezreel Valley.
5. HL the three routes across the Carmel Range
  - a. **The Dothan Pass:** Begin HL on the route S of Yaham on the edge of the map. Head N by Yaham and then veer NE of Gath [-padalla] along the ridge route which runs S of the Iskandar Uplift. Continue to HL this route which drops into the Dothan Valley (named for the major site in the valley). Continue HL past Hephher and Kh. Burqin to the intersection NW of Beth-haggan. This popular pass was used for millennia by armies and by traders.
  - b. **The Aruna-Megiddo Pass:** Return to Yaham and HL N past Gath [-padalla] and Kh. Beidus. Veer NE and HL route via Aruna to the intersection just S of Megiddo. Note that this route follows a valley, becomes quite narrow between higher slopes and almost reaches the site of Megiddo. This is by far the most renowned pass across the Carmel Range.
  - c. **The Jokneam Pass:** Return to Yaham and again move N past Gath [-padalla] to Kh. Beidus, but this time HL N past T. Esur and across the Shephelah (Lowland) of Carmel to Jokneam. This is the most direct route to Galilee's port of Acco and also to convenient routes across Lower Galilee. Note that this route joins a valley pass coming from the port of Dor. From T. Esur one could also easily reach the site of Zephath (a route not shown on this map) and then continue to Jokneam.
6. Dothan, Aruna-Megiddo and Dor-Jokneam valleys are natural passes of eroded softer chalks. They are bordered by harder and higher limestone regions (Mt. Carmel and the Iskandar Uplift) and by softer limestones in the Shephelah of Carmel and Samaria. This geographical combination has made the area one of the most decisive military staging grounds in the Land Between.

#### DISCUSSION

In light of our marking above we can understand why Egyptian sources made a point that Thutmose III called together his top advisors for a council meeting at Yaham. They had just completed their coastal campaign and before proceeding had to make a strategic military decision. Three routes lay before them: 1) the southern Dothan Pass (which also led to Taanach), 2) the northern Jokneam Pass (toward Zephath and Jokneam), or 3) the direct but much more dangerous Aruna-Megiddo Pass. They knew that the forces of a strong Canaanite coalition awaited them somewhere along these routes.

#### READING

The following reading is from a text on the temple walls at Karnak in Upper Egypt. The text records the victory of Thutmose III over Canaanite insurgents who had gathered at the city of Megiddo.

His majesty [Thutmose III] conducted a war council [we are earlier told this was at Yaham] with his conquering army and said, 'That miserable rebel from Kadesh has taken Megiddo and enlisted princes from all of Egypt's formerly loyal subjects ... he says, 'I will wait here in Megiddo ...' What is your counsel?

The commanders responded to his majesty, 'Think of the difficulties on this road [Aruna-Megiddo Pass] as it becomes so narrow. The report is that the enemy is there waiting and becoming more numerous. The horses will have to go single-file as well the army and all the support staff. Our vanguard will engage in battle while the rear guard is still waiting in Aruna, unable to fight. There are two other roads. One is to the east of us and comes out near Taanach. The other is to the north ... and comes out to the north of Megiddo. May our victorious lord choose to use one of them, so we do not have to use this difficult road.'

... His majesty challenged the army, 'Keep pace with your victorious lord's march on this narrow road. His majesty has sworn, "I will not let my victorious army go ahead of my majesty on this road."'

... His majesty marched forth at the head of his army ... he did not meet the enemy. Their southern wing was at Taanach and their northern wing on the south side of the Qina Valley...

#### DISCUSSION

The Canaanite forces gathered at Megiddo did not think that the Egyptian chariots would venture through the narrow Aruna-Megiddo pass. They placed their camps in the valley at the two other approaches: at Taanach to the south and somewhere north of Megiddo but south of Jokneam. Pharaoh's advisors also knew the dangers of the Aruna-Megiddo Pass and warned him against sending his chariots single file through this pass since his disorganized forces could be overrun before they could regroup near Megiddo. Thutmose's scouts most likely had brought him information about the position of Canaanite camps in the Jezreel Valley. He overruled his council's advice and gave orders to proceed through the Aruna-Megiddo Pass—with him at the head of his army.

As it turned out, Thutmose's forces had time to regroup on the plain before the Canaanites could rush their men and equipment back to Megiddo. The Egyptians won the battle on the plain below Megiddo but were so taken up with the spoil of war that the city itself had time to close its gates and man its defenses. The Egyptian army subsequently had to lay siege to the city. The opposing forces encamped on low hills just west of the city, the setting for the final scene in this episode of Megiddo's history.

#### MARKING ON GAL MAP

7. Blue circle around Yaham = war council
8. Write in small, black caps above the blue circle 'THUTMOSE'S COUNCIL TO DECIDE ROUTE'
9. Small orange box E of Taanach = Canaanite southern camp; write in small, black caps 'CANAANITES'
10. Small orange box E of T. Qiri = Canaanite northern camp (?); write in small, black caps 'CANAANITES'
11. Sweeping blue arrow from Yaham to Megiddo via Aruna; write 'THUTMOSE' in black on this arrow.
12. Red circle around Megiddo

#### DISCUSSION

The importance of these passes (the Carmel Passes) cannot be overestimated. They carried almost all of the commerce and military might of the ancient world passing through the Land Between, the land bridge between the Nile and Mesopotamian river valleys. A glance at the LB, NCA and GAL maps shows the centrality of Megiddo overlooking the Jezreel Valley, the crossroads of this Land Between. The geographer George Adam Smith aptly described this valley in his book *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, a handbook for teachers and students for over a century.

With our eyes on these five entrances, and remembering that they are not merely glens into neighbouring provinces, but passes to the sea and to the desert—gates on the great road between the empires of the Euphrates and Nile, between the continents of Asia and Africa—we are ready for the arrival of those armies of all nations whose almost ceaseless contests have rendered this plain the classic battle-ground of Scripture. Was ever arena so simple, so regulated for the spectacle of war? Esdraelon [Jezreel] is a vast theatre, with its clearly-defined stage, with its proper exits and entrances. (Smith, 1966 (reprint):253)

It is clear why Thutmose III boasted that 'Taking Megiddo is as good as capturing a thousand cities.' His campaign provides us with one of the best illustrations of Megiddo's importance in the Jezreel Valley.

#### CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW (Find bold names on the chart.)

Egypt's interest in Megiddo did not end with Thutmose's campaign. Megiddo continued to be a major Egyptian base in the Land Between throughout the reigns of later pharaohs of Egypt's 18th Dynasty.

Following a lull in campaigns, pharaohs of the **19th Dynasty** found it necessary to reassert Egypt's authority in the Land Between. **Seti I** reestablished Egypt's control of important sites and roads in the Land Between. His successor, **Ramses II**, reigned for sixty-seven years and campaigned throughout Canaan and farther north into Aram where he met Egypt's new rival, the **Hittites**, who claimed Aram and its approaches to the Land Between. (Ramses' battle at Kedesh on the Orontes River appears on the ME map.) In the latter part of Ramses' reign Egypt presumed that its control of the country was secure, but local peoples, including the Israelites, began to expand onto the trade routes. **Merneptah**, Ramses' successor, returned to reassert Egyptian dominance. A victory hymn cites some of his conquests on this campaign and also provides us with the first non-biblical reference to the people of Israel.

Ravaged is Canaan for every misdeed. Taken is Ashkelon. Captured is Gezer.  
Yenoam is made non-existent. [The people of] Israel is desolate; its seed is not.

### EVENT 13: SISERA'S STRATEGY—'AT TAANACH BY THE WATERS OF MEGIDDO'

**CHART—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

Shortly before -1200 pharaoh **Merneptah** died and Egypt's **19th Dynasty** came to an end. At least two unsettled decades passed before the **20th Dynasty** emerged, and during this time Egyptian control of Canaan must have been questioned. It may have been in this interlude that the ruler of the northern city-state of Hazor mobilized fellow Canaanites against the encroaching Israelites. Merneptah's campaign a few years earlier had dealt with this growing Israelite threat, and the king of Hazor was determined to continue this policy. He knew that the commercial control of the north was at stake.

#### DISCUSSION

The northern tribes faced serious territorial problems. They were separated from the stronger tribe of Ephraim in the central Hill Country, and their expansion was severely restricted by Canaanite centers which controlled important road junctions (Judges 1:27-33). Hazor, not named in this general list, remained the north's chief Canaanite center and a leader in the campaign against emerging Israelites. The Canaanites had the upper hand in this struggle. Judges 5:6-8 states that northern Israelites 'avoided highways; and those who (dared) take trips kept to the back roads.' The situation was so bad that Barak made his way south to the Hill Country of Ephraim for advice from Deborah, who was judging Israel at that time. As the story unfolds Hazor appears at the head of a northern Canaanite coalition with Sisera in command. He gathered his forces at one of the north's most strategic positions, 'at Megiddo by the waters of Taanach.' We return to the GAL map to set the stage for this exciting event.

#### MARKING ON GAL MAP

1. HL LOWER GALILEE and UPPER GALILEE
2. Write these tribal names in green caps
  - a. ISSACHAR, ZEBULUN, ASHER, NAPHTALI (about where they are found on RR 14, Map B)
  - b. MANASSEH to the S of the JEZREEL VALLEY under the geographical name ISKANDAR UPLIFT and also in Transjordan by finder map NE of Jabesh-gilead
3. Blue on the city dot of identifiable, unconquered Canaanite centers in Judges 1:27-33
  - a. In the tribal territory of MANASSEH: Beth-shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo
  - b. In the tribal territory of ASHER: T. Akko, Aphek (S of T. Akko), Rehob (SE of T. Akko)
4. HL Hazor (far north); draw blue box around HL (don't mix color) = leader of Canaanite coalition
5. HL on routes
  - a. From Megiddo (the Aruna-Megiddo Pass) to Hazor via Afula, En-dor, Lubiya, Arbela, Chinnereth
  - b. From the Dothan Pass by Kh. Burqin to Beth-shan via Jezreel (northern Harod Valley route)
  - c. From Jokneam to Hazor via Bethlehem (of Galilee) and Hannathon and then E via Turan and Mashkanah to join the highway already HL by Madon
  - d. From T. Akko to Hannathon
  - e. From the HL route by Kh. Burqin NW to Taanach, Megiddo, Jokneam and N via T. Akko toward Tyre which is off the map to the N

#### READING

Judges 4:1-5:31

**DISCUSSION**

Barak came from Kedesh 'of Naphtali.' This is not the Kedesh near Hazor but rather Kedesh-naphtali, located on the slopes above the southwest shore of Lake Galilee.

Deborah was concerned about the situation in the north and summoned Barak to a meeting. She was 'judging Israel' from a much more secure position 'between Ramah and Bethel in the Hill Country of Ephraim' (perhaps at a spring by Mizpah on the lower part of the NCA map). Deborah and Barak agreed to muster the northern Israelite militia at the prominent site of Mt. Tabor, located between the tribal territories of Zebulun, Naphtali and Issachar. Meanwhile Sisera, in the service of 'Jabin, king of Canaan who reigned in Hazor,' mobilized his Canaanite forces 'at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo.' From their position on Mt. Tabor above the broad Plain of Tabor the Israelites could see the area of Megiddo and the highway which ran from Megiddo past Mt. Tabor to Hazor. The Israelites effectively separated the Canaanite forces from Hazor. As the Canaanites approached Mt. Tabor the stage was set for a decisive battle between the Canaanite chariotry and an ill-equipped Israelite peasant militia.

**MARKING ON GAL MAP**

6. Find the name KISHON STREAM NE of Mt. Carmel between Achshaph and the Mediterranean Sea. Follow it upstream past Gaba-shemen, through the Q of T. Qashish and through the elevation reading 35m/115f. To the SE, just above the elevation reading 54m/177f, the stream breaks into a north-eastern branch and a southern branch. The southern branch reaches all the way to Beth-haggan, Beth-eked and the western slopes of Mt. Gilboa. Part of the southern branch reaches into the hills south of Megiddo and Taanach. Follow the northeastern branch (beginning just N of 54m/177f) which approaches the elevation reading 121m/397f. It also branches off to Nain. Beyond 121m/397f surface drainage runs eastward around Mt. Tabor and down a deep canyon to the Rift Valley. Optional: trace major tributaries of the KISHON STREAM with a light blue pencil (not a blue marker).
7. Write KISHON STREAM in small, black caps alongside the branch of the Kishon N of Afula
8. Write SISERA MOBILIZES in small, black caps SE of Megiddo
9. Circle SISERA MOBILIZES in blue
10. Sweeping blue arrow from blue circle by Megiddo along road to Afula and beyond, stopping just short of the 121m/397f elevation; in small, black caps write 'SISERA'S ADVANCE' along this arrow
11. HL MT. TABOR, Oak in Zaananim (SW of LAKE GALILEE)
12. Red confrontation mark ✱ just below the elevation reading 121m/397f
13. Green, broken circle around Mt. Tabor (around the mountain, including the name)
14. In small, black caps write 'DEBORAH, BARAK, ISRAELITES' just E of Mt. Tabor (stacked on three lines).
15. Sweeping green arrows
  - a. Begin one arrow near dot of Daberath/Dabaritta and sweep toward the ✱
  - b. Begin another at southern side of Mt. Tabor and sweep toward the ✱
16. Short blue flight arrows from ✱ to the SE via En-dor and then E toward Oak in Zaananim; in small, black caps write 'SISERA'S FLIGHT' along these flight arrows

**DISCUSSION**

The Canaanite-Israelite battle was fought on the Plain of Tabor, probably near the plain's water divide around the 121m/397f elevation reading. To the west of this elevation tributaries drain into the poorly drained Nahal (Streambed of) Kishon. Judges 5:21, in the poetic portion of the biblical text, suggests that just before or during the battle a cloudburst made the Kishon a 'surging nahal (streambed).' The rich alluvial soil of the area would have quickly been transformed into heavy mud, impractical for chariot warfare. The Israelite peasant militia, however, were on foot and used these conditions to their advantage. They quickly turned certain disaster into a stunning victory, a reminder of how their forefathers had been delivered from pharaoh's chariots at the Red Sea. Sisera left his chariot and fled east of Mt. Tabor by foot to the tent of a certain Kenite named Heber, whose wife was Jael. The Kenites had joined the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings and lived far to the south. Heber, however, had moved his herds north and had pitched his tent by the Oak in Zaananim. The climax of the Israelite victory over the urbanized Canaanites of the north came by the hand of a 'tent-dwelling woman.' You may want to reread the poetic rendition of this story to capture more of its drama and the exultation after this surprise victory. Like other biblical poems, it captures the spirit of the moment.

What followed the Israelite victory over the Canaanite coalition led by Hazor is not recorded. About this time, however, Hazor suffered a disaster which included the burning and destruction of the last, proud Canaanite city. Who did this is still uncertain. What is known is that in the decades after -1200 the Land Between slipped from the reins of Egypt, and the Israelites, together with surrounding peoples, began to emerge as entities in the Land Between. The Age of Nations had begun (see the 4000 Year Overview chart after -1200) and in the following centuries the northern Israelites ultimately rode their own chariots across the battlefields of the country. The contest we have just traced, however, happened much earlier when the future of the northern tribes appeared to be hopeless. The writer of the book of Hebrews must have had this event in mind when he spoke of those 'whose weakness was turned to strength in battle' and included Barak in his list of those who lived by faith (Heb 11:32-34).

#### ADDITIONAL MARKING ON GAL MAP

In order to complete the main northern highway system, HL the following routes.

1. From Hannathon to Lower Golan via Adami-nekeb, Jabneel, Ubeidiya, Apheca/Fiq, NE off the map
2. From Beth-shan to Lower Gilead via Ephron, Beth-arbel and off the map via 'To Bashan'
3. From Beth-shan to Upper Gilead via Pehel/Pella, Jabesh-gilead and SE off the map
4. From Beth-shan to T. Akko via Shunem, Afula, Sarid, Shimron and Shefaram

#### AN OVERVIEW FROM MEGIDDO—VIEWS AND SELECTED EVENTS AROUND THE JEZREEL VALLEY

Our study of the GAL is not complete without a brief overview of the Jezreel Valley and the main events which happened in and around it. To gain a better perspective we climb the 'hill of Megiddo' and walk by its ancient fortifications to reach its summit and a marvelous overview of the valley. No other region in this small Land Between compares with the Jezreel Valley, and few views of the valley compare with what can be seen from the 'hill of Megiddo.' This term ('har megiddo' in Hebrew) appears in its Greek form in an apocalyptic passage which startles all who hear it: 'the kings of the whole world' gather their forces for battle 'at a place which is called in Hebrew *Armageddon*,' 'the hill of Megiddo' on which we now stand. As you explore the GAL map below, find (not HL) features whose names appear in bold.

Rev 16:12-16

The Jezreel Valley is clearly outlined on the GAL map. Some have compared it to a bird in flight with its beak pointing northwest toward **Mt. Carmel**, its two wings spread toward **Mt. Tabor** and **Mt. Gilboa** and its tail flowing down the **Harod Valley** toward the strategic site of **Beth-shan**. Others see it as the point of a broken arrow, leaving only the remnant of an arrowhead. No matter how one views the valley, it remains the classic battleground of history. With our GAL map in hand we are ready to survey the biblical scenes before us.

#### NORTHWEST: MT. CARMEL AND THE KISHON PASS

As we turn to the northwest we see the uplifted limestone summit of **Mt. Carmel**, towering above the Jokneam Pass and halfway between Samaria and Phoenicia. Today the Carmelite **Muhraqa Monastery** occupies its southern summit, the traditional site of the prophet Elijah's contest with Jezebel's prophets of Baal. The actual site may well have been on a small plateau below the monastery (by the 'm' of 474m), since following the contest Elijah asked his servant to ascend to the summit and look toward the sea (seen from the terrace of the monastery). The surging Nahal (Streambed of) Kishon leaves the valley along Carmel's steep eastern slopes. Far below the Muhraqa Monastery, somewhere along Nahal Kishon, the prophets of Baal met their deaths.

1 Kgs 17-18

1 Kgs 18:43

1 Kgs 18:40

2 Kgs 4:25

Amos 9:3

Mt. Carmel, with its forested slopes and deep canyons, also served as a retreat for Elijah and Elisha. Amos the prophet clearly knew the position of Mt. Carmel when he wrote, 'Though they hide on the top of Mt. Carmel ... though they hide in the depths of the [nearby] sea....' This ridge was one of the major landmarks in the country, both from land and by sea. Early Egyptians referred to it as the 'Antelope's Nose,' and centuries later an Assyrian king erected a victory monument on its slopes.

#### NORTHEAST: THE NAZARETH RIDGE AND MT. TABOR

To the northeast of Megiddo, on a clear day, the long Nazareth Ridge can be seen. The city of **Nazareth**, the village of Jesus' youth, is nestled in a hollow along its southern slopes. At the eastern end of this ridge **Mt. Tabor**, an almost perfectly rounded hill, stands alone with slopes draping down to the valley below. In front of Mt. Tabor lies the Plain of Tabor where Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanite forces which had mobilized 'at Megiddo by the waters of Taanach.' The International Highway stretches across the valley and disappears behind Mt. Tabor. Mt. Tabor and Mt. Carmel are

Judg 4-5

GAL, v.3  
By blue dot  
SE of dot of  
Muhraqa

Jer 46:18 familiar landmarks cited by Jeremiah to herald the invading armies of Babylonia: ‘As Tabor is among the mountains and as Carmel is by the sea shall one [Babylon] come.’ The fortress which stood on Mt. Tabor in the days of Jesus was taken over by Galilean rebels in +66 but fell to Rome in +68.

**EAST: HILL OF MOREH, HAROD VALLEY AND MT. GILBOA**

By looking directly east it is possible to discern the **Harod Valley** between the **Hill of Moreh** and **Mt. Gilboa**. Slightly higher ground around the **70m/230f** elevation marks the water divide between tributaries to Nahal Kishon, which drain to the Mediterranean Sea, and a streambed which flows down the Harod Valley and into the Jordan River in the Rift Valley. Biblical events abound in this region.

In the decades following Deborah and Barak’s victory over the Canaanites, Egypt’s control broke down and finally disappeared. There was no central authority to protect the settled population. Soon Midianite herdsman from marginal regions to the southeast of the Land Between came with their flocks. Normally the farmers would allow shepherds’ flocks to graze in their fields after the grain harvest to eat the remaining stubble and fertilize the fields. The Bible states, however, that the Midianites came each year as the grain harvest began and ravished the farmers’ lush fields. For seven years they had sowed their increasingly precious seed but had harvested little grain. The situation was very serious.

Judg 6:1-6

The Beth-shan and Harod Valleys offered these desert invaders a convenient approach to the fertile regions around the Jezreel Valley. They set up their main camp in a small, sheltered valley along the northeastern slopes of the Hill of Moreh, southeast of **Nain**, a village in the days of Jesus.

As the crisis deepened, the northern tribes became desperate. Their agricultural and economic base was in shambles. Finally, a reluctant Gideon, a member of the tribe of Manasseh who lived at **Ophrah** above Taanach, organized another peasant  $\dot{a}$  to try to deliver the Israelites. Gideon ‘sent messengers throughout all of Manasseh who joined ranks with him.’ After this initial mobilization Gideon ‘sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, and they also came out to meet him.’ All of these tribes bordered the Jezreel valley and had the most to gain by an Israelite victory.

Judg 6:33-35

While the Midianites encamped behind the Hill of Moreh, Gideon gathered his forces at the **Harod Spring** below the northern slopes of Mt. Gilboa. To be sure that Israel did not boast that it had rescued itself, Gideon’s forces were reduced to three hundred men along the bank of the stream which issued from the spring of Harod. By reading the biblical text and comparing it with the GAL map, you can trace the outcome of this encounter until it exits the southeast corner of the map.

Judg 7

**MARKING FOR THE GIDEON STORY ON GAL MAP**

1. HL Ophrah (W of Taanach), HAROD SPRING and HILL OF MOREH
2. Write GIDEON in small, black caps by the HAROD SPRING and circle his name in green
3. Write MIDIANITES in small, black caps between Nain and Neoran and circle the name in blue
4. Sweeping green arrow from GIDEON to the HILL OF MOREH
5. Red confrontation mark \* (if room allows) between the Midianite camp and the name En-dor
6. Blue flight and green chase arrows from this \* SE toward the site of Rehob and continuing toward Abel-meholah; in small, black caps write MIDIANITE FLIGHT along these flight arrows.

Judg 8:18 (Tabor)

After a battle below Mt. Tabor the Midianites fled the same way they had come, over the low hills southeast of the Hill of Moreh and beyond the Harod Valley to fords along the Jordan river by Abel-meholah. Other sites along their path of retreat (Succoth and Jogbehah) can be seen on the NCA map.

Judg 8:4-21

The importance of this victory is recalled by later biblical writers. In the midst of Assyria’s invasion of Galilee Isaiah speaks of deliverance in a messianic era as in ‘the day of Midian.’ The psalmist used Israelite victories in the days of Deborah and Gideon as object lessons to Israel and to surrounding nations. One can hear the echoes of triumph in the play on the word *adamah* (which in Hebrew means both the name of a city at the fords of the Jordan and ‘earth’).

Is 9:1-7

‘Make them like Midian—like Sisera, like Jabin in Nahal Kishon;

Ps 83:9-10

They were wiped out at En-dor; they became dung at Adam’ (or *adamah*, ‘for the earth’).

1 Sam 11

The end of Egyptian rule was a prelude to struggles in this region as local nations emerged. Saul, who from **Bezek** had rescued **Jabesh-gilead** during an Ammonite siege early in his reign (NCA map), led the Israelite army to the **Jezreel Spring** shortly before his death. Meanwhile, the Philistines marched north (probably via the Megiddo Pass), crossed the valley and camped at **Shunem** below the Hill of Moreh.

1 Sam 29, 31

The night before his final battle Saul slipped around Moreh to consult the witch of **En-dor**.

Of the other biblical episodes which could be recounted three deserve mention. King Ahab of Israel chose the site of **Jezeel** for his winter palace. From this site overlooking the Jezreel and Harod valleys his administrators collected tolls on caravans passing between Arabia and Phoenicia. Here Ahab and his wife Jezebel seized Naboth's vineyard after ruthlessly ordering his death. At the same vineyard and in nearby Jezreel, Jehu's coup brought the dynasty of Ahab to a bloody end.

1 Kgs 21  
2 Kgs 9

During the same period a wealthy woman who lived with her elderly husband at **Shunem** arranged a roof-top room for the prophet Elisha, who predicted the birth of her child the following year. Years later Elisha restored that child to life after his untimely death. It is no surprise that when Jesus raised the only son of a widow from **Nain** (on the other side of the Hill of Moreh from Shunem), people recalled Elisha and proclaimed that 'a great prophet has arisen among us.'

2 Kgs 4:8-37

Lk 7:11-17

#### SOUTHEAST: MT. GILBOA AND DOTHAN VALLEY

When we turn to the southeast on the 'hill of Megiddo' we look toward the famous mound of Taanach and beyond to the gateway to **Samaria** at **Beth-haggan/Ginae**. Biblical texts bring this area to life.

Gen 37

Jacob's sons were tending their herds in the Dothan Valley, far from home, when their brother Joseph arrived, sent by his father to check on his brothers. Sibling jealousy almost cost Joseph his life but the eldest brother, Reuben, negotiated a compromise. Joseph was sold to caravan traders passing along this international trade route and soon was on his way to Egypt. There he became second only to pharaoh and in the end provided deliverance for his entire family. Joseph's two sons became the tribes of Ephraim, Israel's tribal leader, and Manasseh, who first settled the southernmost parts of our GAL map.

Gen 45:1-46:7; 48

During the rule of Israel's kings the armies of Damascus penetrated deeply into Israel's territory. Once they tried to capture the prophet Elisha at **Dothan** since Elisha was informing his king of the enemy's every move. The rest of the story reveals Israelite morality in the midst of apostasy, underscored when Naaman, the famed commander of the army of Damascus (and a leper), was healed. As Jesus and his disciples tried to pass through Samaria, inhabited by hostile Samaritans in their day, they were turned back and had to proceed to Jerusalem via another route. This may have been by Beth-haggan/Ginae. The disciples wanted to call down fire, but Jesus reminded them of the ways of Israelite mercy. He later healed ten lepers 'on the border between Samaria and Galilee,' but only one returned to give thanks, 'and he was a Samaritan!' The healing of this Samaritan and Naaman of Damascus, both seen as Israel's enemies, revealed that God's mercy extended to everyone in 'Galilee of the Gentiles.'

2 Kgs 6:8-23

2 Kgs 5

Lk 9:51-56

Lk 17:11-19

#### SOUTHWEST: THE ARUNA-MEGIDDO PASS

Earlier we saw that the entire stage before us, from Mt. Carmel to Samaria, can be reached via passes across the Carmel Range. One of these led to the 'hill of Megiddo.' Campaigns along this route are too many to list here. Megiddo's need for security is recorded in its fortifications, including strong gateway systems, walls and an underground tunnel, hidden from enemy forces, bringing water into the city. Here at Megiddo one of Judah's last kings attempted to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy of a messianic reign by a descendant of David. King Josiah had brought sweeping reforms in the south and now held out hope to those who remained in the north after Assyria's cruel deportations. As pharaoh Neco moved north along the Coastal Highway, Josiah followed the same plan as the Canaanites had used against Thutmose III eight centuries earlier. He waited near Megiddo as the Egyptian army marched through the Aruna-Megiddo Pass. Josiah lost his life in the battle, Judah retreated and the prophet Jeremiah composed laments for this one who many thought would be a messiah.

2 Kgs 23:28-30

2 Chr 35:25

#### JESUS AT NAZARETH OVERLOOKING THE JEZREEL VALLEY AND GALILEE

We have already noted the position of the village of **Nazareth** along a ridge by the same name which forms the northern border of the **Jezeel Valley**. This was the setting in which Jesus grew up. In a few minutes from his home he could reach the edge of a steep scarp (seen just south of Nazareth on the GAL map) for an overview of the valley, including **Mt. Tabor**, the **Hill of Moreh**, **Mt. Gilboa** and the hills of **Samaria**. In the other direction he could climb to the top of the ridge above his home and not only see the features noted above to the south but also **Mt. Carmel**, the port of **Acco/Ptolemais**, the **Mediterranean Sea**, the higher hills of **Upper Galilee** and lofty Mt. Hermon, covered with winter snows and towering above the city of Damascus. Many of the events we have surveyed above were recited in the synagogue school Jesus and other children attended. Jesus would have known the history of the Jezreel Valley on the southern border of the threatened tribe of Zebulun. Whereas it once resounded with the tramp of the Assyrian boot, in Jesus' time it heard the rumble of Roman legions. The northern Israelite tribes had been blessed with victories led by Deborah and Gideon but humbled by losses before the Philistines, the Arameans, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, and now the

Lk 2:39-40, 51-52

Romans. The name of the oppressor had changed, but Galilee was again under imperial control. The burden of the past and the present most certainly engendered hope for the future among the inhabitants of Nazareth when they looked out over Galilee in all directions from the summit of the Nazareth ridge.

Is 9:1 Just as in the past he [the LORD] humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, so in the future he will honor the way of the sea [the Hazor-Megiddo route on both sides of the Nazareth Ridge], regions beyond the Jordan, and Galilee (the circle) of the Gentiles.

The routes and the tribal territories of **Zebulun** and **Naphtali** (written in) on the GAL map make clear why the ‘honor’ declared by Isaiah the prophet was such a magnificent promise in Jesus’ day. The Gospel writer knew that Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, was in the territory of Zebulun, and that Capernaum, where most of Jesus’ ministry occurred, was in the territory of Naphtali. The ‘way of the sea’ was the Hazor-Megiddo road which descended to Lake Galilee, circumvented the Nazareth Ridge and passed through both the territory of Naphtali and Zebulun. Matthew’s regional reference gives a very specific and quite intentional message to the reader: Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy.

Matt 4:12-17

At Nazareth Jesus used past events in the north to convict his audience. When he returned from his visit to Jerusalem and read from the prophet Isaiah in his home synagogue in Nazareth, ‘all spoke well of him’ and expected great works to follow. However, Jesus turned the history of cultural, economic and military oppression in the north upside-down when he stated what everyone would have rather forgotten. Elijah and Elisha, the famous prophets of the north, had done their greatest works among Israel’s enemies and not among the Israelites. Geography and history were potent teaching tools as seen in the sudden change of attitude in the people of Nazareth.

Lk 4:14-31  
RR 33; II:8

We again turn to George Adam Smith’s *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (pp. 282-283) for his summary of Galilee’s open character and an insightful meditation on Jesus’ youth. Smith used the Greek form of Jezreel (Esdraelon) in referring to the great Jezreel Valley below the Nazareth ridge.

The position of Nazareth is familiar. The village lies on the most southern of the ranges of Lower Galilee, and on the edge of this just above the Plain of Esdraelon [Jezreel Valley]. You cannot see the surrounding country, for Nazareth rests in a basin; but the moment you climb to the edge of this, which is everywhere within the limit of the village boys’ playground, what a view you have! Esdraelon lies before you, with its twenty battle-fields—the scenes of Barak’s and Gideon’s victories, of Saul’s and Josiah’s defeats, of the struggles for freedom in the day of the Maccabees. There is Naboth’s vineyard and the place of Jehu’s revenge upon Jezebel; there Shunem and the house of Elisha; there Carmel and the place of Elijah’s sacrifice. To the east of the Valley of Jordan, with the range of Gilead; to the west the radiance of the Great Sea, with the ships of Tarshish and the promise of the Isles. You see thirty miles in three directions. It is a map of Old Testament history.

But equally full was the present life on which the boy Jesus looked out. Across Esdraelon, opposite Nazareth, there emerged from the Samarian hills the road from Jerusalem, thronged annually with pilgrims, and the road from Egypt with its merchants going up and down. The Midianite caravans could be watched for miles coming up from the fords of Jordan; and the caravans from Damascus wound round the foot of the hill on which Nazareth stands. Or if the boys climbed the northern edge of their hollow home, there was another road in sight, where the companies were still more brilliant—the highway between Acco and the Decapolis, along which legions marched, princes swept with their retinues, and all sorts of travellers from all countries went to and fro. The Roman ranks, the Roman eagles, the wealth of noblemen’s litters and equipages cannot have been strange to the boys of Nazareth, especially after their twelfth year, when they went up to Jerusalem, or visited with their fathers’ famous Rabbis, who came down from Jerusalem, peripatetic among the provinces. Nor can it have been the eye only which was stirred. For the rumour of the Empire entered Palestine close to Nazareth—the news from Rome, about the Emperor’s health, the changing influence of the statesmen, the prospects at court of Herod or of the Jews; Caesar’s last order on the tribute, or whether the policy of the Procurator would be sustained. Some Galilean families must have had relatives in Rome; Jews would come back to this countryside to tell of the life of the world’s capital. The scandals of the Herods buzzed up and down these roads; pedlars carried them, and the peripatetic Rabbis would moralise upon them. The customs, too, of the neighbouring Gentiles—their loose living, sensuous worship, absorption in business, the hopelessness of the inscriptions on their tombs, multitudes of which were readable (as some still) on the roads round Galilee—all this would furnish endless talk in Nazareth, both among men and boys.

Here He grew up and suffered temptation, Who was tempted in all points like as we are. The perfection of His purity and patience was achieved not easily as behind a wide fence which shut the world out, but amid rumour and scandal with every provocation to unlawful curiosity and premature ambition. The pressure and problems of the world outside must have been felt by the youth of Nazareth as by few others; yet the scenes of prophetic missions to it, Elijah’s and Elisha’s, were also within sight. A vision of the kingdoms of the world was as possible from this village as from the mount of temptation. But the chief lesson which Nazareth teaches is the possibility of a pure home and a spotless youth in face of the evil world.

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If you have version 3 of RSMaP 4: SCA, notes such as this alert you to updates in the SCA map

## V. COMPETING CLAIMS ON SOUTHERN TRADE ROUTES (SCA MAP)

This unit introduces the three geographical regions which commanded southern trade: the Philistine Plain, the Negev (Western and Eastern) and the southern and central Transjordanian plateau. During the Age of Nations (-1200 to -740) the Philistines, Judah, Moab and Edom competed in these regions for control of as much southern commerce as possible. All except Judah were located along major highways. Judah's heartland lay deep in the Hill Country, and to compete it had to push west to the International Coastal Highway in Philistia, south into the Negev and beyond, or east to the Transjordanian Highway beyond the Rift Valley. During a shorter interlude (-120 to -64) prior to Roman control local peoples competed in these same regions. Names had changed but the economic objective was the same: to control trade passing through the Land Between. Readings in *Regions on the Run* set the scene for events studied on the SCA map.

**READ** RR 16-17: The Southern Arena

RR 18-19: Philistine and Negev Gateways

RR 20-21: Arabian Gateways: Edom, Moab and Ammon

### MARKING ON SCA MAP

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If name is spread across the map, HL on each letter only

1. HL these regions west of the Rift Valley: COASTAL PLAIN, PHILISTINE ALLUVIAL PLAIN, HILL COUNTRY, WILDERNESS, SHEPHELAH, WESTERN NEGEV, EASTERN NEGEV (HL on each letter only)
2. HL the following regions east of the Rift Valley: MOAB, MEDEBA PLATEAU, AMMON

**EXPLORING THE SCA MAP** (Find bold names on the SCA map unless the LB map is specified.)

Position your LB map (marked earlier) near your open the SCA map. Note the limits of the SCA map on its finder map (top left hand corner). Compare the SCA map with the LB map and find common features such as the Dead Sea, the Rift Valley, the Coastal Plain by Ashkelon (Philistia), the Negev basin and the Arnon Canyon across the Dead Sea from En-gedi. Try to fit the SCA map with its more complex route system into the greater context of the LB map. Make yourself 'at home' on the SCA map before proceeding.

Southern regions on the SCA map are far less fragmented than those in Galilee. The map simply has a **Coastal Plain**, a **Hill Country** bordered on either side by lower regions (**Shephelah** and **Wilderness**), a Rift Valley and a high Transjordanian plateau eroded by deep canyons. The **Western** and **Eastern Negev** basin south of the Hill Country could be compared to the Jezreel Valley in the north, but the Jezreel Valley and its approaches are far more complex. As we study the SCA map in this chapter and the detailed JUD and BEN maps in following chapters we will find that the south has many smaller subregions.

The International Coastal Highway enters the LB map near **Raphia** and makes its way north through the relatively open Coastal Plain known as Philistia. There are a number of branches of this highway through Philistia. The main branch in the west (already highlighted on the LB map) avoids coastal sand dunes as it moves north by the Philistine sites of **Gaza**, **Ashkelon** and **Ashdod** and then on to **Joppa** and/or **Aphek**. Other branches of this highway head inland from Raphia, Gaza or crossroads near Ashkelon. They make their way north and ultimately reach Aphek. Find these routes on the LB map, and then on the SCA map note the roads flowing north through Philistia and east into the Shephelah.

Find the five main Philistine cities of **Gaza**, **Ashkelon**, **Ashdod**, **Gath**, and **Ekron** on the LB and SCA maps and note how they lie along main branches of the coastal highway. Philistine settlement reflects a clear understanding of geo-economic realities in this part of the Land Between. Three of these five cities surround the basin of fertile soil from the mountains which has accumulated on what we call the **Philistine Alluvial Plain** (SCA map). Elevations around this plain show that it is a lower area.

Higher ridges along the coast divert its waters to the north around an outlet by **T. Mor**.

The **Shephelah** (Hebrew for 'Lowland') lies inland from the Coastal Plain. Its rolling terrain is seen on the SCA map to the north and south of **Gath** (sometimes called 'Gath of the Philistines' to distinguish it from all the other sites in the country with the same name). As one moves eastward beyond **Azekah**, the Shephelah becomes an area of low hills which abruptly end at the uplifted Hill Country with its high ridges and deep V-shaped canyons. It is easy to see why the broad valleys of the Shephelah became the battlefield between people living along the Coastal Plain and those in the Hill Country of Judah.

**Judah** was located in the Hill Country between the Coastal Plain and the Dead Sea. It was cut off from eastern trade by the Wilderness and its cliffs falling into the deep Rift Valley and the shores of the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth. These eastern obstacles made the Shephelah to the west much more attractive for those in Judah wanting to expand to coastal trade routes. However, insecure valleys in the

Shephelah and the determination of the Philistines stood between Judah and its commercial dreams.

The southern Shephelah between **Lachish** and the Hill Country was removed from the main Philistine cities and held more promise for Judah. This region absorbed trade coming from the **Negev** and along an inland branch of the coastal highway via **Gerar**. As caravan trade from Arabia grew, routes through the arid Negev took on added importance, a fact we shall see illustrated later in this chapter. Three broader valleys north of Lachish and Mareshah (the **Elah**, **Sorek** and **Aijalon** valleys) were much more threatened by the Philistines. Broad valleys guarded routes leading in and out of the Hill Country of Judah, and these became battlefields between the Philistines and the Israelites. These valleys were also Judah's first line of defense when it was defending itself against imperial forces coming from the Coastal Plain. The names of sites in and around these valleys appear in some of the most action-packed stories of the Bible and tell us that whatever the contest, the Shephelah and its access routes were at stake. Either Judah was pushing out of the Hill Country or outsiders were containing or invading Judah.

The Negev offered Judah an easier opportunity to expand. The region had strong links to the Hill Country around **Hebron**, and its limited rainfall permitted some seasonal farming. We have already seen in our reading in RR that caravans arriving from Edom to the southeast could easily reach Mediterranean ports such as Gaza and Ashkelon via relatively unobstructed routes in the Negev. The Relief, Flow and Elevations map inside the back cover of RR offers you an opportunity to bring your own caravan from Edom to Philistia via the Negev. As you follow the blue arrow, note the natural obstacles which lie across your path. It is clear that if Judah controlled the Negev and a larger network of southern routes, she could intercept trade and collect tolls. Remains of cities at **Beer-sheba/T. es-Saba** and forts at **Arad/T. Arad** show Judah's determination to hold this important link between the Coastal and Transjordanian highways.

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→ The Hebrew name  
T. Sheva replaces  
the Arabic name  
T. es Saba

Again, glance at the green arrows on RR 18 and 20 (Map B) and review Judah's southern issues. In order to ensure income from southern trade, Judah had to control the Shephelah to the west, the Negev and its approaches to the south, and the southern part of the Transjordanian Highway. As you continue your work on the SCA map, remember that the deep Zered canyon and the region of Edom with the city of Bozrah lay just beyond the southeastern edge of the map. Edomite pressure became one of Judah's greatest challenges, and in the end it was the Edomites (in Greek, 'Idumeans') who established themselves in the Negev, in the Hill Country south of Hebron and in the area around Lachish and Mareshah.

Our work in this unit covers four specific periods from the emergence of the nation of Judah through ensuing conflicts with its neighbors to the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of many of its inhabitants to Babylon. The story of David and Saul in 1 Samuel received more attention since it contains abundant geographical data.

- 1) Philistines entrenched along the southern Coastal Highway coveted growing caravan trade across the south, causing Achish, king of Gath, to enlist David (a fugitive from Saul) to patrol the Negev.
- 2) King Mesha of Moab reasserted Moabite independence and expanded onto the Medeba Plateau.
- 3) Transjordanian invaders tried to humble Jehoshaphat of Judah and gain control of the southern trade.
- 4) Edom rejoiced in Judah's problems, which left the Negev open for settlement.

#### EVENT 14: A 'PHILISTINE' SHERIFF—'ACHISH GAVE ZIKLAG TO DAVID ...

##### AND DAVID AND HIS MEN WENT UP AND RAIDED'

#### CHARTS—4000 YEAR OVERVIEW AND ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW

David's rise to power toward the beginning of the **Age of Nations** is one of the Bible's most intriguing sagas. Scenes quickly change as David crisscrosses the SCA map during the period of **Samuel and Saul** on the 500 Year Overview (the **SS** box in the middle of the 4000 Year Overview). In a surprising turn of events David found himself working in Philistia where he learned lessons which helped him later rule Judah (green on the charts) and Israel (orange). The impressive reigns of **David and Solomon (D/S)** could only have occurred during this interlude in imperial domination (no blue on the charts).

#### MARKING ON SCA MAP

1. Orange box around the tribe of EPHRAIM (top center) = the strongest tribe in the House of Joseph
2. Underline the tribe of BENJAMIN in orange (above center) = tribal brother of the House of Joseph
3. Green box around the tribe of JUDAH (center) = the southern House of Judah
4. Orange on Bethel city dot = in Ephraim; green on Bethlehem and Hebron city dots = in Judah

**READING**

1 Samuel 15:34-16:23 (Follow the story on SCA map. Ramah and Gibeah are in Benjamin, the prophet Samuel is an Ephraimite and king Saul is a Benjaminite.)

**DISCUSSION**

This reading sets the scene for the cat and mouse game between king Saul from the tribe of Benjamin (a tribe beholden to the House of Joseph) and David, son of Jesse, of the House of Judah. The prophet Samuel naturally was surprised at the command to travel south to Bethlehem of Judah to anoint a new king. Ephraim of the House of Joseph had always led the Israelite tribes, and even after its crushing defeat at the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam 4) still held its head high. It was in this context that Saul of Benjamin became king of Israel. Samuel knew that his walk of a few hours from Ramah to Bethlehem had serious implications and would ultimately lead to tribal conflict.

**MARKING ON SCA MAP**

Place the SCA map beside the LB Map for a reference as you trace the routes below. These show the main flow of traffic through the Coastal Plain where the Philistines lived in the days of David. From here they systematically kept the tribes of Ephraim and Judah from expanding beyond the Hill Country and the nearby Shephelah. One of Saul's greatest challenges was to keep the Philistines out of the hills.

5. On the SCA map find the coastal route running through Gaza and begin HL where the road enters the map from the SW. HL route through Gaza, past Ashkelon, through Ashdod, Jabneel, Ono, Aphek and off the map to the N. This is the main Coastal Highway with side roads to Joppa.
6. Return to Gaza and find Yurza; HL an eastern branch of the Coastal Highway which begins SW of Yurza and runs N via Yurza, T. el-Hesi, Gath, Ekron, Gibbethon, Lod, Aphek and off the map.
7. From Gaza HL the route through Gerar, Beer-sheba, Aroer and off the map.

**READING, DISCUSSION AND MARKING ON SCA MAP**

David's triumph over Goliath the Philistine (1 Sam 17) in the Valley of Elah (east of Gath on the SCA map) naturally brought him the admiration of many in Israel. Saul's jealousy grew, and David barely escaped alive from Saul's court at Gibeah (1 Sam 18-19). Geographical detail abounds as we follow David's flight and Saul's chase (1 Sam 21-26). David found refuge in various regions in and around Judah but was in constant danger from Saul and his informers.

Marking, discussion and reading (noted by the numbered sites below) are integrated in the following paragraphs which summarize main themes and supplement each reading. You may want to skim the reading and concentrate on geographical information for now. As you read, write the number of the paragraph in green in the designated place on the SCA map and circle the number.

1. **Gibeah** (just below the term BENJAMIN; green '1' by city name): **1 Samuel 18:1-19:17**

David's involvement with the royal court began at Gibeah in central Benjamin. These events show the favor David had with Saul's family, his officers, the people and his God. Three times the text says, 'the LORD was with David.' Three times the text states Saul's relationship to God: 1) an evil spirit from God came upon him (18:10); 2) the LORD had left him (18:12); and 3) again Saul had an evil spirit from the LORD (19:9). Three times we hear of Saul's fear of David. His jealousy grew to murderous proportions, and three times Saul attempts to impale David. David fled to Ramah.

2. **Ramah** (just above the term BENJAMIN; green '2' above the name Ramah): **1 Samuel 19:18-24**

From Gibeah to Ramah is a short walk north through central Benjamin. When David arrived, he and Samuel moved on to what is called the '*nayoth* in Ramah.' This is probably not a proper name but simply means 'dwellings' somewhere near the city, perhaps a gathering place in a more secluded area where Samuel could retire with his disciples. Saul had no trouble finding David but did encounter other difficulties on the way.

From Ramah David returned to his friend Jonathan, the crown prince, in or near Gibeah. Jonathan's deep commitment to David (1 Sam 20) far outweighed Saul's fixation on kingdom building. David's reciprocal commitment is also felt throughout the rest of 1 Samuel and on into David's early reign.

3. **Nob** (see BEN map, NE of Jerusalem; green '3' at Nob): **1 Samuel 21:1-9; 22:6-19**

Nob is probably located near the summit of the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem, a city which was then inhabited by Jebusites. In this small sanctuary David received supplies and the sword of Goliath, which served him well in subsequent months. An Edomite, head of Saul's herdsman, informed Saul of what

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Green '3' above the  
'MT' of MT. SCOPUS

had happened at Nob, and Saul reacted as the men of Gibeah had centuries before (Judg 19) with ruthless disregard of God and man. In his frustrated quest for recognition nothing stood in Saul's way. Circle the number 3 in red to indicate the violent massacre which took place at Nob (1 Sam 22:19).

**4. Gath** (at intersections on W edge of the Shephelah; green '4' by city name): **1 Samuel 21:10-15**

David could think of no better place to escape from Saul than in Philistine territory. This journey took David back into Judah, possibly through Bethlehem and along the same route he followed on his journey to meet Goliath (follow the route from Bethlelem via Hushah, Timnah, Socoh, to Gath). On the way he had time to consider his transition from shepherd to warrior, especially as he passed through the Elah Valley. Finding himself in potential trouble at Gath, his ruse allowed his escape.

**5. Adullam** (in the Shephelah SE of Gath; green '5' below the name Adullam): **1 Samuel 22:1-2**

Adullam is located on the eastern edge of the Shephelah above the chalk moat which can be seen on the map (between the Hill Country's hard limestone and softer rock in the Shephelah). From Adullam David could watch the ridge routes coming from the Hill Country. Find a natural chalk moat running north from Keilah by Adullam to Eshtaol and beyond. The JUD map shows this moat in more detail, both to the north and far to the south.

Somewhere in the Shephelah near Adullam, David came to an important conclusion, probably due to his experiences with Saul and with the Philistines at Gath. He could no longer serve his people in Saul's forces, and it was only a matter of time before the Philistines again invaded Judah and Benjamin. He therefore organized his private army, a 'mixed bag' of volunteers like Robin Hood's band. David's wisdom and patience were no doubt taxed during their training. They served him well, however, and we have a list of these 'mighty men' and their home towns (2 Sam 23:8-39).

**6. Moab** (beyond the Dead Sea; green '6' above the name MOAB): **1 Samuel 22:3-4**

David's concern for his mother and his father Jesse meant that a trip from Bethlehem to Moab was necessary. Since David's great-grandmother was Ruth the Moabitess and since in his service to Saul he had not been involved in any military action against Moab, he was sure he would be welcome in Moab. Although the route to Moab is not specified, it seems likely that the safest route was the long descent from Bethlehem and Tekoa through the Wilderness (which David knew well) and the steep path leading down to En-gedi. From there they could follow the shore of the Dead Sea, pass the large, isolated rock platform known as 'The Stronghold' (today's Masada) and cross to Moab.

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Place the '7' below the name rather than to the right of the dot

**7. The Stronghold** (green '7' right of the dot, which indicates a much later fortress): **1 Samuel 22:4-5**

Returning from Moab David went to 'The Stronghold' or fortress (in Hebrew *metsudah*). Writing in the decades after the close of the book of Acts, Josephus Flavius called this 'Masada,' king Herod's magnificent stronghold-palace later used by Jewish rebels in their stand against mighty Rome. The Stronghold's natural defenses provided David with the imagery which he and others would later incorporate into their spiritual verses of praise. Psalm 18, for example, declares,

The Lord is my sharp crag, my *metsudah* (stronghold), my place of escape.

My God is my rock, I will take refuge in him.... (v. 2)

He makes my legs like those of the deer,

and on the heights he enables me to stand.... (v. 33)

You broaden the footpath under me,

so that my ankles do not twist. (v. 36)

Compare the imagery used in Psalms 31, 71, 91 and 144. After his departure from the Stronghold, David 'went into the forest of Hereth,' a region yet to be identified.

**8. Keilah** (in Shephelah S of Adullam; green '8' by city name): **1 Samuel 23:1-13**

News from the Shephelah of Judah confirmed David's fears—the Philistines were beginning to move again. His vigilant defense force was ready. We know that it was April or May since the people of Keilah were harvesting and threshing grain in the nearby fields. The Philistines were invading the Shephelah and forcibly taking the processed grain. The Philistines advanced beyond Socoh (their front line in the Goliath episode) and south via the Elah Valley along the chalk moat to Keilah. In spite of the danger of being intercepted by Saul, David knew he would have to move quickly.

David used all of his leadership qualities to muster his checkered militia. Some did not want to go on this mission. If caught, they could face criminal charges plus suffer the consequences of following David, a rebel leader regarded by many as a fugitive from justice. In the end the band left the Wilderness, crossed the Hill Country of Judah and descended into the Shephelah. David's inquiries

in the text reveal an interesting aspect: twice he asked of the LORD if he should try to relieve Keilah; twice he asked if the people there would turn him over to Saul. This reminds the reader that the LORD was with David and, equally as important, that David trusted his LORD.

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Name is laid down

**9. Wilderness of Ziph** (Hill Country of Judah; green '9' E of Ziph by 638m/2093f): **1 Samuel 23:14-29**

It is not possible to pinpoint the location of David and his men during this period. The Wilderness of Ziph is somewhere east of the city of Ziph, an area which is today the home of various Bedouin tribes. The men of Ziph, although from Judah, may have recalled Saul's campaign against the Amalekites and the force which accompanied him on that expedition (1 Sam 15). Saul had erected a monument at the nearby town of Carmel. It served as a reminder to the inhabitants of southern Judah of the deliverance Saul had provided (1 Sam 15:12). Either out of respect or out of fear, the men of Ziph informed Saul of David's whereabouts. David had to move again, this time farther east into the badlands above the Dead Sea, an area the Bible calls the 'Jeshimon.' Unlike other areas in the Wilderness, the shepherd and his herds do not frequent this rough and dangerous region.

In spite of the challenges of the terrain Saul finally cornered David and his men. Only a Philistine raid (perhaps again in the Shephelah) diverted Saul and saved David. Saul returned to his duties as king, for to ignore such Philistine actions was politically dangerous for this first king of Israel. The mention of the raid reminds us of the continual Philistine threat from the west of Judah.

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Write the green '10' right of 'David's Canyon' and note the blue spring dots in the canyon

**10. En-gedi** (on the western shore of the Dead Sea; green '10' above EN-GEDI SPRINGS): **1 Samuel 24**

The most beautiful, refreshing place along the dry and inhospitable western shore of the Dead Sea is En-gedi. Springs in a number of places provide fresh water, and greenery of interesting sorts flourish in the warm climate, 400m/1312f below sea level. Just north of En-gedi is a good sized spring which gushes forth in a small canyon, known today as 'David's Canyon.' Indeed, David and his men may have retired to this canyon and its spring after barely escaping Saul's troops. Just south of En-gedi the great Arugot Canyon, with its own spring-fed stream, emerges from the Wilderness. Its walls rise some 600m/1900f. On one summit above En-gedi, ancient fortresses guarded this 'back door' to Judah. From them one could survey the entire Dead Sea.

The Arugot Canyon divides the Wilderness east of Bethlehem from the Wilderness east of Ziph and Maon. Running just north of this major canyon is a natural route from Bethlehem and Tekoa to En-gedi. When Saul returned from his defensive operation against the Philistines and heard that David was in En-gedi, he chose an elite corps of men and headed for En-gedi. He no doubt descended via Tekoa, the same route along which David may have led his elderly father Jesse when they escaped to Moab. On the way Saul would have passed near Bethlehem, David's home town. He felt that this time he would rid Judah of David. The action-packed episode along the cliffs and rugged terrain of En-gedi, however, clearly showed the respect and concern David had for king Saul.

SCA, v.3

Write '11' below the '7' you wrote earlier

**11. The Stronghold** (green '11' by green number 7): **1 Samuel 24:22**

Leaving En-gedi David and his men headed south and again climbed 'The Stronghold,' the region's most secure site. The combination of the massive cliffs and deeply-eroded canyons by which he and his men passed must have left a lasting impression upon David's sensitive spirit. The striking view of steep Transjordanian slopes (rising 1200m/4000f in the east) and the thought of challenges which faced him may have made young David recall Joshua's early days of leading Israel and the impossible odds against him. It is not surprising that Psalms 27 and 37 contain some of the same themes as Joshua 1, since both of these young men looked to the God of Israel for courage and strength. This was especially true at this moment in David's life, for it seems that when he was here he received word that Samuel, his counselor and the spiritual father of Israel, had died in Ramah (1 Sam 25:1). One wonders at Saul's reaction to the same news.

SCA, v.3

Name is laid down; write '12' below elevation 673m/2207f

**12. Wilderness of Paran/Maon** (S of Ziph; green '12' SE of Maon by 673m/2207f): **1 Samuel 25**

David and his men now moved into an area of herdsmen, nearer villages in the southern Hill Country of Judah. The location of the Wilderness of Paran (or Maan/Maon as some manuscripts read) is somewhere east or southeast of Maon and Carmel. (The book of Genesis locates another Wilderness of Paran much farther south.) Even today Bedouin shepherds can be seen throughout this area with their herds of goats whose teeth can seek out every blade of dry grass. The combination of herds and agricultural products listed in the chapter illustrate the region well. David's discipline over his men was such that they refrained from the normal practices of desert raiders and instead protected the

farmers as well as the herdsmen of the region. The remark of Nabal, so clearly recording the effective use of words to dishonor one’s family and discredit one’s actions, almost brought a disastrous response from David. Abigail, who appears to have respected David’s rein on his militia, acted quickly and saved the young leader from discrediting himself in the eyes of all Judah—particularly by Nabal’s prominent clan of the Calebites from Hebron. Finally, this interesting episode in David’s wanderings again shows that not all in Judah supported David.

SCA, v.3

Write ‘13’ just left of elevation 428m/1404f

13. **Wilderness of Ziph** (green ‘13’ above elevation 441m/1447f by pass across Zeelim canyon): **1 Samuel 26**

Again the men of Ziph reported David’s whereabouts to Saul, and the Wilderness and the Jeshimon are the context of Saul’s pursuit and David’s escape. A dramatic conversation is recorded between Saul and David from either side of a deep canyon in the region, no doubt the great Zeelim canyon. This time Saul appears convinced to give up his chase. At the end of the chapter the two separate, never to meet again. (See a more precise discussion of the event in this region and a special map in the online *Geobasics Study Guide: Part Three—Southern Arena*, pp. 197-200.)

14. **Gath** (green ‘14’ near green ‘4’): **1 Samuel 27:1-4**

Once the immediate threat from Saul had passed, David had second thoughts about staying in the Wilderness. He had the choice of moving to Moab in Transjordan where he had taken his family or of joining forces with the Philistines on the Coastal Plain. David must have given careful thought to this important decision. Although Moab straddled the Transjordanian Highway, it was completely isolated from Judah and offered David little political opportunity. If escaping from Saul had been his only concern, he could have crossed over to Moab at any time during his flight. It is clear that David had more in mind than his daily security, so he appealed to Achish at Gath, who sent him to Ziklag. When Saul heard that David was in Gath, ‘he no longer sought for him.’

SCA, v.3

Write ‘15’ by city name above the Western Negev Basin

15. **Ziklag** (above WESTERN NEGEV; green ‘15’ by city name): **1 Samuel 27:5-7**

Ziklag, according to the probable location seen on the SCA map, is situated in the Western Negev. The site stands on the edge of a small spring-fed streambed which flows westward throughout the year as far as Gerar, and in the rainy season into the great Nahal Besor. Geographically the region belongs to the Negev, an area of fine, wind blown soil (called ‘loess’) which covers most of the Negev basin. The region of Ziklag is quite different from the Coastal Plain to the north. Note the slightly higher and rolling area of brown steppe soil separating Ziklag from the Philistine Alluvial Plain (defined by the cities of Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath). Ziklag has an elevation of about 168m/551f versus the elevation on the Philistine Alluvial Plain of 50m/164f.

The question of the locations of Ziklag and Gath have received much attention. Events in 1 Samuel 27 figure prominently in the discussion. Some argue for Ziklag and Gath in close proximity, while others call for some distance between them. The SCA map adopts the interpretation that distance is required. Two elements from the account (to be read later) support this: 1) The king of Gath needed David to patrol his southern border. This requires some distance between the cities, for otherwise Achish could have done the task himself. 2) David’s tactics also required that he be separated from his Philistine master. From Ziklag’s location on the SCA map, David was able to report to Achish that he was policing the people of Judah in the southern Hill Country and the Negev, while in reality he was moving against others and protecting Judah. Had Ziklag been close to Gath, Achish could easily have discovered the truth. It should be noted that the Hebrew term *hayyom* (‘today’ in 27:10) allows for broader interpretation than a specific twenty-four hour period.

Glance over the SCA map and note where the action has taken place. The chapters you have read have taken you across vastly different geographical landscapes of the country, from coastal highways and the valleys of the Shephelah along high ridges and across the terraced farmland of the Hill Country, as well as deep into the refuges of the Wilderness and along the shores of the Dead Sea (the lowest point on the face of the earth) to the high Moab tableland beyond. They have also stretched from central Benjamin by Ephraim to the Negev in the south. These events, more than any others in the Bible, illustrate the area of Judah and the regions which surrounded it.

**MARKING ON SCA MAP**

8. HL Gath and Ziklag
9. Blue circle around city name and dot: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod/*Azotus* (inland site), Gath, Ekron
10. In blue caps write PHILISTINES in open area between Ashkelon and Gath
11. In small, black caps write DAVID, A ‘PHILISTINE’ SHERIFF IN THE NEGEV by Ziklag (stacked)

**DISCUSSION**

On the 4000 Year Overview chart we have seen that the weakening of Egyptian involvement in the Land Between in the centuries after -1200 and the absence of major invasions via the region of Aram in the north allowed for increased competition and hostility among local entities in the country. Canaanite centers, the Philistines (recent, technologically advanced immigrants from the Aegean) and emerging peoples such as the Israelites all sought to achieve their own interests throughout the Land Between. The Philistines wisely settled at strategic points in the southern Coastal Plain and especially around the fertile Philistine Alluvial Plain. From here their five main cities could control trade passing between Egypt and Aram or Mesopotamia. Clearly the Philistines of David’s day were not enamored with the Israelites in the Hill Country, neither with the strong tribe of Ephraim with whom they had battled at Aphek nor with the tribe of Judah whose territory in the Shephelah bordered some of their cities. There was an on-going war with Saul, the leader of the Israelites, whose forces were keeping them out of the hills and had even made a successful campaign to defend the clans of Judah in the Negev. Something had to be done to control the emerging Israelites. Within this context David finds refuge with the Philistines at Gath after his months of fleeing from Saul and is given a specific task at Ziklag by Achish, the king of Gath. What was that task?

Trade caravans were seen in Transjordan long before -1100 carrying precious goods from Arabia to various destinations, including ports on the Mediterranean. Some of this trade passed through the Negev, as finds at Tel Masos (on map SCA) indicate. Its inhabitants appear to have benefited from this trade. Excavations have exposed larger buildings indicative of governmental or commercial use. Material finds point to a non-Israelite population commercially linked with coastal regions to the west. This settlement was destroyed in the decades before -1000, perhaps in the southern campaign of Saul (1 Sam 15: 4-9).

Early accounts of Israelite settlement in the south include interesting episodes, which represent more than a passing interest in the area. Caleb, Joshua’s ally and close friend, received the area of Hebron, which included hill regions south of the city (Josh 14:6-15). He ensured settlement along one of the area’s main routes by giving Debir to his daughter and her husband, Othniel (Josh 15:13-19; Judg 1:11-15). The Kenite clan moved with ‘the people of Judah to the Wilderness of Judah in the Negev of Arad’ (Judg 1:16). The tribes of Simeon and Judah attacked Zephath in the Negev and called it ‘Destruction,’ or Hormah, at T. Masos on map SCA (Judg 1:17). The tribe of Simeon settled in the central and western Negev (Josh 19:1-8; 1Chron 4:28-33). Even Samuel’s sons, who cunningly chose to serve as judges at Beer-sheba, took advantage of what was happening. They not only sought income from the arid Negev’s herders and the area’s limited grain harvests but knew that they could cash in on the Negev’s growing trade network, especially since their father was known ‘from Dan to Beer-sheba’ (1 Sam 3:20; 8:1-3).

All of this shows that the Israelite settlements were well-established in the arid region of the Negev when David fled to Gath and was assigned to be a ‘Philistine’ sheriff at Ziklag. As trade increased in the Negev, Israelite settlement also grew. This must have caused serious concerns among the Philistines, since Negev trade routes reached Gaza, Ashkelon and Gath as can be seen on the SCA map. It was in this context that Achish, king of Gath, gave refuge to a fugitive from Judah, even though that fugitive had earlier killed Goliath, Gath’s hometown champion. David realized that staying at Gath was not in his best interest and asked to be transferred. He no doubt had kept his ears open and knew Achish’s concerns about securing southern trade coming to Gath via the Negev. In what he thought to be an astute geopolitical move, Achish made his claim over the Negev by sending David and his band of fighting men to Ziklag to patrol the area and to secure its trade routes. Achish, however, did not know the astute nature of David with whom he was dealing.

**MARKING ON SCA MAP**

12. HL Hebron, Beer-sheba (T. es-Saba) and Arad (T. Arad)
13. In small, black caps write CALEBITES in open area just above Hebron and elevation
14. In small, black caps write KENITES in open area above Arad (T. Arad)
15. In small, black caps write the tribal name of SIMEON in open area above Beer-sheba (T. es-Saba)
16. Find these sites between the Negev and Hebron: Aroer, Ramoth-negev, Jattir, Eshtemoa and Hebron. Run your finger around the area which includes these sites, plus the areas of Simeon and the Kenites. It was inhabited by southern clans related to Judah. In small, green caps write in SOUTHERN CLANS OF JUDAH (curving to NE) in open space between below Debir but above Eshtemoa and Carmel.
17. In small, orange caps write AMALEKITES under the left side of the km/mi scale

**READING**

1 Samuel 27:8-12

**DISCUSSION**

At Ziklag David had a perfect base of operations, safe from Saul but near Judah. He could also develop good relations with the clans in the Negev and in Hebron. The net result of his actions (which we are about to discuss) was that in less than a year and a half Saul was dead and David was asking for divine guidance. Should he return to Judah? After an affirmative answer he asked for more specific directions. The answer shows how much had changed in that 'year and four months' at Ziklag. The answer was emphatic: 'To Hebron!' This changed Judah and Israel's history (2 Sam 2:1-4).

From Ziklag David conducted his activities with great cunning. He reported to Achish that he was busy raiding various Israelite communities in the Negev, but in reality he and his militia were serving as a defensive force for the Kenites, Jerahmeelites, and Simeonites by controlling desert bands from the great southern Wilderness who raided settled populations in this fringe area. Saul had earlier delivered these communities from the Amalekite threat which may have gained him the loyalty of southern Judah. David was now presenting himself as their defender. As a common saying in the Middle East succinctly states, he was 'making friends before he needed them.'

Regions noted in this account (v. 10) reflect your marking on the SCA map. The 'Negev of Judah' was the arid hill region south of Hebron. The 'Negev of Jerahmeel' extended south, beyond Aroer on the southern border of the SCA map. The 'Negev of the Kenites' was the area around Arad/T. Arad, where excavations have revealed an early Israelite settlement which existed before -1000. We also have an interesting glimpse of Achish's thoughts at Gath as David continued to bluff him from Ziklag: 'David has made himself detestable to his people, Israel, and he will be my servant forever' (v. 12). What follows shows the extent to which this worked, as David and his militia are asked to join the forces of Achish and march north to challenge Saul and his forces in the Jezreel Valley, an area David probably had never seen. Note the setting of this battle on the NCA map you have already marked (Event 9).

**MARKING ON SCA MAP**

18. HL Aphek/*Antipatris* and circle it in blue
19. Blue arrow
  - a. From Lod toward Aphek
  - b. Write on the arrow in small, black caps: PHILISTINE MOBILIZATION
20. Green arrow
  - a. From Gibbethon to the end of the blue arrow
  - b. Write on the arrow in small, black caps: DAVID AND HIS MEN

**READING**

1 Samuel 28:1-6; 29:1-11

**DISCUSSION**

This Philistine campaign north along the International Coastal Highway into the Jezreel Valley seems to represent a policy of protecting highways in the north, perhaps in response to the emergence of the Israelites under Saul. As Saul had mustered his forces to the Jezreel Valley to meet the Philistines, David found himself as part of a force which would be fighting against his own people and thus would contradict the earlier respect he showed toward Israel's first king. David must have had mixed feelings as he marched to Aphek together with the army of Achish. What did his men think? Where had the bluff gotten him? Would he ever be able to return to Judah? The reader of the account also asks questions. Did David do the right thing in going to Achish? Why are the frequent statements of David's faith which we read of earlier missing here? Perhaps the answer is that David was relying upon his own resources as his predicament became more complex. In spite of what he felt, David had to maintain an outward appearance of support for the Philistine cause. Otherwise he could lose all.

Aphek was the natural gathering point along the Coastal Highway for any force which would head north from the Philistine plain (see LB and NCA maps). It was here that the leaders of the Philistine cities mobilized their forces in preparation for the battle with Saul and his army. Many certainly recalled that it was near Aphek that an earlier Philistine army had overrun the Israelites at nearby Ebenezer, captured the Ark of the LORD and later humbled and ravaged the tribe of Ephraim (1 Samuel 4; Ps 78:56-64).

In this account an amusing conversation between David and Achish of Gath adds the finishing touches to David’s long bluff. The other Philistine kings refused to allow David and his men to march north with them. David, pushing his bluff to the limit, demanded to know why. Achish soothingly replied, ‘Although you are as pleasing as God’s messenger to me,... please leave quietly.’ David and his men, together with the reader, breathe a sigh of relief as David turns south with his fighting force. We see in this story the same tactics which those who have lived in the Middle East know only too well.

While David was at Aphek the worst happened. The Amalekites, who no doubt had heard of events in the north, kept track of David’s whereabouts and made a major raid on the Negev and the southern Hill Country of Judah. Then they turned their fury on Ziklag, the city of their chief opponent. David’s bluff had brought personal loss to his men who spoke of killing him. His future looked dark indeed.

#### READING

1 Samuel 30:1-6

#### MARKING ON SCA MAP

21. Sweeping orange arrows
  - a. From the term AMALEKITE toward Beer-sheba/T. es-Saba (in Hebrew T. Sheva)
  - b. From Beer-sheba/T. es-Saba toward Ziklag
  - c. From Ziklag, SW toward AMALEKITES (your orange write in) to the edge of the map
22. Red circle around Ziklag
23. In small, black caps write AMALEKITE ATTACK on arrow ‘a’ and AMALEKITES TAKE SPOIL on arrow ‘c’
24. Sweeping green arrows
  - a. From T. el-Areini toward Ziklag
  - b. From Ziklag SW, parallel to orange arrow 21.c above but not as long
25. In small, black caps write DAVID RETURNS TO ZIKLAG on arrow ‘a’ and DAVID PURSUES on arrow ‘b’

#### DISCUSSION

If there had been TV in that day the breaking news would have covered both fronts: the Amalekite attack on the south and the imminent showdown between Israelites and Philistines in the north. All of Israel was waiting to hear what would happen and what it meant for Israel’s future. The catastrophe at Ziklag, happening as it did while Saul was in the north and as all Israel anxiously awaited the latest news, gave David an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate his qualifications for kingship, politically and spiritually. Our reading above ended in a significant way. It states ‘David found strength in the LORD his God,’ a reminder that through this difficult period of surviving both Saul and the Philistines, David had not forgotten the lessons he had learned as a shepherd in the Wilderness east of Bethlehem (1 Sam 17:31-37). He then called for the ephod (an action which leads us to compare this to Saul’s decision to consult the medium at En-dor in 28:5-25). Twice David inquired of the LORD and twice he was told, ‘Pursue!’ David’s pursuit of the Amalekites carried him beyond the Nahal Besor, the natural southern boundary of the country, and deep into northern Sinai. There he finally caught up with the Amalekites, dealing them a serious blow and recovering all the spoil from their raid in Judah.

#### READING

1 Samuel 30:7-31 (Optional: 1 Samuel 31)

#### DISCUSSION

David demonstrated justice in the division of the spoil with his men, and he showed himself politically astute in his commitment to the people of Judah and the Negev. The generosity exhibited by David upon his return was not, however, without an ulterior motive. He knew all too well the strength of the Philistine force which had left Aphek for Shunem in the north and realized that Saul’s troops were no match for the Philistines. Saul would undoubtedly be captured or killed. At best the future of Saul’s Benjamin-based monarchy was questionable. Samuel had anointed David as king, and Jonathan, the crown prince, had sworn allegiance to David long before his death. It is clear that David knew his hour was at hand. Thus there was all the more reason to cultivate friends in the influential region of Hebron and southern Judah. The events recorded in the optional reading above confirm what David had been thinking while he was at Aphek, Ziklag and throughout his lightning strike against the Amalekites. David had no cause to rejoice, either over his successful retaliatory campaign against the Amalekites or over the prospect of becoming king of Israel. Jonathan his friend was also in the north with Saul. These

must have been days of mixed emotions within David's sensitive spirit, days when he recalled the songs of trust in God composed in the Wilderness when he was a simple shepherd.

You may want to skim 2 Samuel 1 to finish the sequence of events which brings Saul's reign to a close. Do not neglect to read David's lament in 2 Samuel 1:17-27. In it David's inner feelings are exposed. No mention of his successes or possible future kingship is made. There in Philistia his distressed spirit had to tolerate the Philistine joy of victory after their final triumph over the first king of Israel.

David also recalled his relationship with Jonathan at Gibeah and how they had shared experiences of earlier battles with the Philistines, both at Michmash and in the Valley of Elah. In his own way each of them knew what Samuel meant when he said, 'Fix your heart on the LORD, worshiping Him alone, and He will deliver you from the Philistines' (1 Sam 7:3). This, more than any other thing, had drawn their spirits together in those decades before -1000 which brought an end to the period of the Judges and Philistine domination over Israel. Now, at Ziklag in southern Philistia, there was the news of Jonathan's death at the hand of the Philistines on the slopes of Mt. Gilboa.

During these years of varied and unpredictable experiences, David had grown to manhood. At times he no doubt questioned how his anointing by Samuel at Bethlehem would ever be realized. He was pursued by the recognized king of Israel, subject to the Philistines, his nation's archenemy, and exposed to his enemy by members of his own tribe, Judah. However, the events of this period in David's life, perhaps more than any other, proved his patience and complete trust in God. They also served to train a simple shepherd boy in the important regional and political realities of the country he was about to govern. It was this period of testing and training—when David learned the dynamic of the Negev, the Shephelah and the Hill Country as well as the mentality of Amalekites, Philistines and even his own people—which best prepared him for his future place of leadership. Read 2 Samuel 23:3-4 from his 'last words.'

#### EVENT 15: MESHAS REBELLION—'AFTER AHAB'S DEATH, MOAB REBELLED AGAINST ISRAEL'

**REVIEW** (Optional) RR 16-17: The Southern Arena; 20-21: Arabian Gateways: Edom, Moab and Ammon

**CHART: 4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

Find the name '**Mesha**' in the center of this chart above -880. The small tablet to the right of the name signals an inscription. Here it represents the Moabite Stone found near Dibon in 1868. It provides more details on Mesha's rebellion against Ahab. His revolt corresponds with the transition from a period of strength (elevated 'A' and 'J' box = Ahab and Jehoshaphat) to a period of weakness (lowered HD box = Heyday of Damascus). For more details see The Israelite Monarchies: 500 Year Overview chart on RR 39.

#### DISCUSSION

The two decades before -841 were a rare period of cooperation between Israel and Judah. Alliances were sealed by marriages, and the kings of the two nations rode side by side in military campaigns. The two kingdoms each were able to expand into Transjordan. Israel controlled Gilead and Moab, while Judah dominated Edom and the Red Sea port of Ezion-geber.

The rising power of Damascus (the Arameans) could not tolerate this situation in Transjordan.

Throughout the period there is growing confrontation between Israel/Judah and Aram to the east and northeast of Beth-shan (Event 11 on the NCA map). The Arameans also appear with the Moabites (and later with the Edomites) in some biblical texts. It was in Damascus' interest to encourage rebellion in those areas. Anything that weakened Israel's and Judah's control along the Transjordanian Highway could only strengthen the position of Damascus and help it realize its expansionist policy.

Assyrian campaigns in the region of Aram to the north shocked these competing local nations into forming alliances which in -853 successfully halted Assyria at the Battle of **Qarqar** (see chart). In the months that followed local wars broke out again, ending in the death of Ahab, king of Israel. By -841 rebellions in Moab and Edom had successfully thrown off the yoke of Israel's and Judah's domination.

#### READING

2 Kings 1:1; 3:4-27

#### DISCUSSION

The first hint of Israel's move toward Moab in Transjordan is in 1 Kings 16:34, 'In his [Ahab's] days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho.' RR 20, Map B shows the importance of Jericho as a link to Moab from Bethel.

Find the orange arrow which sweeps from Samaria past Bethel and Jericho to the Medeba Plateau.

On the SCA map note that the Jericho-Bethel route is part of a road between Aphek on the Coastal

Highway and Medeba on the Transjordanian Highway. With central Benjamin in Judah's hands, this was an east-west trade route along Israel's southern flank. Other east-west links lay farther north (NCA map). Wars between Damascus and Samaria sapped Israel's strength, and Mesha of Moab knew that the time was ripe for rebellion. With the death of Ahab on the battlefield of Ramoth-gilead (NCA map) and no doubt with encouragement from Damascus after its victory, Mesha made his move (2 Kgs 1:1; 3:5).

Mesha's inscription (the Moabite Stone) claims Ahab was living when Moab's rebellion was in progress. It may depend on how one defines a rebellion. There must have been rumblings before Ahab died, and the wars between Israel and Damascus would have encouraged Mesha to promote his liberation movement openly. Ahab's death added fuel to the fire, and Moab launched an all out campaign.

The natural northern border of Moab was the deep Nahal Arnon, clearly seen on the SCA map. North of it is the small Dibon plateau. It served as Moab's forward position, a natural spring-board for an advance onto the strategic Medeba Plateau with its intersection of trade routes along the Transjordanian Highway. The coveted Medeba Plateau had been a natural staging area for Israel's entry into Canaan and now could serve the same purpose for Moab.

#### MARKING ON SCA MAP

1. HL the Transjordanian Highway; start S of Kir, N via Dibon, Medeba, NE to Rabbah, N off the map
2. HL ARNON, MUJIB CANYON
3. HL Dibon; in small, black caps write MESHAS BASE by Dibon
4. HL Jericho (the northern non-italicized name) and Bethel (in Hill Country) = 1 Kings 16:34
5. Blue box around the regional name MOAB and the city name Dibon

#### READING

The following excerpt from the Moabite Stone introduces Mesha's revolt and illustrates his move north onto the Medeba Plateau.

I am Mesha, son of Chemosh, king of Moab ... Omri king of Israel humbled Moab many years ... and his son followed him ... but I triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel perished forever.

I rebuilt Baal-meon ... I rebuilt **Kiriathaim** ... the king of Israel had built **Ataroth** ..., but I went against the town and took it and slew all the people of the town ... I brought back from there Ariel ... and dragged him before Chemosh in **Kerioth**.

Chemosh said to me, 'Go take **Nebo**!' So I went by night and fought against it ... taking it and killing all.

The king of Israel had built Jahaz and stationed himself there while fighting me ..., but I took warriors from Moab and set them against **Jahaz** and took it.

I rebuilt **Aroer**, and I made a highway in the Arnon. I rebuilt **Bezer**, for it lay in ruins, with fifty men of Dibon ... and I rebuilt **Medeba**, **Beth-diblathen** [=Almon-diblathaim on SCA map], and **Beth-baal-meon**....

#### MARKING ON SCA MAP

- 6 Red on city dot of all city names printed in bold in reading above
- 7 Sweeping blue arrows = Mesha's military moves
  - a. From MOAB across the Arnon to Dibon; in small, black caps write MESHAS on this arrow (Note the difficulty crossing the Arnon and the elevations at the bottom of the gorge and along the northern side at Aroer. Mesha listed his advance north across Arnon canyon among his accomplishments)
  - b. From Dibon along the route to Jahaz
  - c. From Dibon toward Medeba
8. Sweeping orange arrows = Israel's move to Jahaz
  - a. From Jericho via Nebo to MEDEBA PLATEAU; in small, black caps write ISRAEL on this arrow
  - b. From just SE of the MEDEBA PLATEAU to Jahaz
9. Place an orange circle around Jahaz; in small, black caps write ISRAEL'S BASE above Jahaz

#### DISCUSSION

Mesha's campaign left a lasting impression on Israel and Judah. A century and a half later the prophet Isaiah again lists some of the cities which Mesha had destroyed. Isaiah's list, however, heralds Moab's own impending destruction by the invading Assyrians. In contrast to Mesha's boastful statement of

SCA, v.3  
 ARNON (MUJIB)  
 CANYON

victory Isaiah's lament has a sympathetic tone as Judah's distant relative (from whose midst king David descended) falls before the southward march of imperial armies (Isa 15: 1-4).

Ar in Moab is ruined ... Kir in Moab is ruined.  
 One goes up to the temple at Dibon, to the high places to weep.  
 Over Nebo and over Medeba Moab howls.  
 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out, as far as Jahaz their voice is heard.  
 Therefore, the warriors of Moab shriek, trembling seizes them.

#### EVENT 16: A SOUTHERN ATTACK—'MOABITES, AMMONITES, AND SOME MEUNITES CAME TO MAKE WAR'

##### DISCUSSION

Around -850 Israel and Judah jointly responded to Moab's rebellion. Their campaign is described in detail in 2 Kings 3:4-27 with only a brief mention of the revolt itself.

Judah's decision to march with Israel against Moab must have tested Israel-Judah relations. Jehoshaphat, after all, was a descendant of Ruth the Moabitess. His hesitancy is heard in the straightforward question put to him by Jehoram, king of Israel (2 Kgs 3:6). To show support Jehoshaphat pressed Edom into the battle, probably against its will. Together, Israel, Judah and Edom entered the territory of Moab but withdrew after their siege of Kir-hareseth failed. Moab quickly responded to what it saw as Judah's treachery. Probably that same year (-850) Moab mobilized her allies in Transjordan and together they descended to the Dead Sea crossing by 'The Stronghold' and then north to the Wilderness oasis of En-gedi. Here they prepared for a surprise attack on Judah.

##### READING

2 Chronicles 20:1-3, 10, 22, 23

##### OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

The list of Moab's allies is interesting. First were the Ammonites with whom Moab now had a common border. With Israel's decline in Transjordan their hopes were raised for better times. An attack on part of the Israel-Judah alliance would serve them well. To this Moabite/Ammonite force, 2 Chronicles 20:1 adds 'some of the Meunites.' (This reading from the Greek version is preferred to avoid a repetition of the word Ammonites in the original Hebrew. A simple correction in Hebrew allows this reading.) It is thought that the Meunites came from the area of Maan on the eastern edge of Edom. These Meunites may represent troops from Mt. Seir (a general name for the high plateau of Edom) rather than actual Edomites (2 Chr 20:10, 22 and 23). Perhaps some Edomites joined this Moabite expedition since a few years later, shortly after the death of Jehoshaphat, an Edomite revolt liberated them from Judah.

##### MARKING ON SCA MAP

1. Sweeping blue arrow from Kir in Moab, past Bab edh-Dhra, across the Dead Sea and up the western shore to the EN-GEDI SPRINGS (the tel at En-gedi probably was not yet settled)
2. Write in small, black caps on the blue arrow: MOAB, AMMON, MEN OF MT. SEIR

##### DISCUSSION

Moab and her allies wisely approached Judah by a seldom used 'back door,' via En-gedi on the shores of the Dead Sea below a steep ascent to a road which runs through the Wilderness to Tekoa. By the En-gedi springs, which David and his militia had enjoyed in his flight from Saul, the Moabites, Ammonites and men from Mt. Seir organized their next step. It appears that the discussion of strategy turned into a war of words and then turned into an armed conflict. The forces which had been mobilized to attack Judah spent themselves fighting with each other, a phenomenon not uncommon in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Jehoshaphat, his army and his support team began their descent to En-gedi. The road from En-gedi to Tekoa and Bethlehem is not difficult except for the lack of water in the Wilderness and the initial ascent above En-gedi itself, called in this story 'the Ascent of Ziz.' It climbs over 550m/1800f in less than 1 km/0.5 mi. This steep ascent is due to a major geological fault along the western side of the Dead Sea. Once above this escarpment the route levels off and then ascends north-west above the Nahal Arugot through the Wilderness to Tekoa and Bethlehem and reaches Jerusalem.

##### MARKING ON SCA MAP

3. Red circle around En-gedi and EN-GEDI SPRINGS = self-destruction of the Moabite allies
4. Green box around Jerusalem

SCA, v.3

Encircle En-gedi and ASCENT OF ZIZ; note the blue spring dots in the canyon

5. Sweeping green arrow from Jerusalem via Bethlehem, Tekoa to En-gedi; in small, black caps write JEHOSHAPHAT on this arrow

The attack on Judah by Moab is another example of Judah's preparing for battle and trusting God. It was Israel who had initiated the original operation against Moab, but Israel did not come to Judah's aid now. Jehoshaphat was left to his own resources. News of the attack no doubt came from a lookout high above En-gedi to which robust tourists can still climb today. It was up this steep ascent that the men of Judah carried booty from the springs of En-gedi, without even having engaged the enemy.

#### READING

2 Chronicles 20:3-30

### EVENT 17: EDMOM'S INCESSANT ADVANCE—'LEST EDMOM COME'

#### DISCUSSION (WITH RR AND LB MAPS)

In this final event we again look at the great southern crossing which you earlier saw on the LB map: the route from Bozrah in Edom via Tamar to the Negev and on to Gaza. Note that most of the discussions and marking instructions below are related to this LB map, although it is also helpful to keep the SCA map in view.

On Map A, RR 20 two caravan routes are seen crossing Arabia, labeled 'From Sheba' and 'From the Persian Gulf and East.' They both reach the Land Between via Edom. With growing trade through Arabia, the Edomites realized that their position made them middle-men between eastern desert tracks and port cities along the Philistine plain. Arrows '2' on Map B, RR 20 represent 'the flow of traffic between the regions of Edom and Philistia via the Southern Highlands and the Negev.' They also reflect the Edomite's incessant quest to move westward in hope of commanding southern trade through the rugged regions south of the Negev and ultimately the Negev itself. The two arrows '3' on Map B, RR 18 show this same westward look of Edom which reaches beyond the Negev to Gaza and Ashkelon.

#### MARKING ON LB MAP

1. HL the cities Bozrah, Petra and Gaza
2. HL the regions Edom and Philistia
3. HL Negev (on the five letters only) and Southern Highlands
4. HL the Bozrah-Gaza route via Tamar, Aroer (in the Negev) and Gerar

#### DISCUSSION

Edom's desire for the southern crossing to Philistia brought the Edomites into direct conflict with Judah who wanted the Negev as an entrance into the arena of southern trade. A brief history of Edomite-Judean relations reveals this conflict.

- a. [ca. -975] David (and later Solomon) dominated Edom (2 Sam 8:13-14; 1 Kgs 11:15-16).
- b. [ca. -925] Hadad, who escaped David's campaign, returned to revive Edom during Solomon's and Rehoboam's times (1 Kgs 11:14, 17-25).
- c. [ca. -850] The king of Edom appears to have served Jehoshaphat as a vassal king when Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Joram, king of Israel, campaigned against Moab (2 Kgs 3:8-9, 12).
- d. [ca. -850] Allies from the east, led by Moab with Edomite (Mt. Seir) participation unsuccessfully invaded Judah via En-gedi during the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron 20:10).
- e. [ca. -840] Edom revolted against Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:20-22).
- f. [ca. -790] Amaziah, king of Judah, defeated Edom (2 Kgs 14:7, 10).
- g. [ca. -735] When the kings of Damascus and Samaria threatened Ahaz, king of Judah, Edom again revolted and seized the Red Sea port at Elath (2 Kgs 16:6).
- h. With this last revolt Edom launched a programmatic westward migration that took over a century to complete but resulted in Edomite ('Idumean' in Greek) control of the Negev, the southern Hill Country of Judah and the southern Shephelah.

For centuries Edomite pressure was felt across the south. One of history's surprises is that in the decades before Jesus' birth, when the dust had settled, an Idumean called Herod became 'king of the Jews.'

**MARKING ON LB MAP**

5. Blue sweeping arrow from Bozrah to Tamar
6. In small black caps write EDMITE ADVANCE on this arrow
7. Red circle around Tamar

**DISCUSSION**

There is mounting evidence that Edomites took advantage of Judah's fractured infrastructure following the brutal Assyrian campaign of -701. In subsequent decades a settlement reflecting characteristic Edomite culture was established in the Negev alongside Israelite settlement. An impressive Edomite shrine at En Hatzeva (biblical Tamar on the LB map) suggests that this site was overtaken by the Edomites sometime after -700, although it had been a Judean fortress for centuries. (Judah's reformer-king Josiah may have later built a small fortress at the site since the Edomite idols appear to have been smashed.) The Edomites added stronger fortifications to Bozrah, their chief city in Edom, and they also appear to have taken over ports on the Red Sea. The worst, however, was still to come.

Political turmoil abounded in the decades prior to -600. Fifteen years saw five Judean kings. In a battle with pharaoh Neco's forces by Megiddo in -609 Judah's king Josiah was killed. Three months later Neco deposed Josiah's successor, Jehoahaz. In -597 Josiah's second son, Jehoiakim, died in a rebellion against Babylon, and Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin was deported to Babylon after only three months on the throne. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon then placed a third son of Josiah, Zedekiah on Judah's weakened throne. Judah was in disarray.

Written archaeological finds help us reconstruct the end of this dramatic chapter in Edomite-Judean relations. A letter found at Arad/T. Arad reveals the tension of those days. Arad served as an administrative center in the eastern Negev, and the letter which was addressed to Eliashib, the commander of the Arad fortress, ordered Eliashib to send reinforcements to 'Ramat-negev' (Ramoth-negev on the LB map). 'You shall send from Arad 50 [men] and from Kinah ... to Ramat-negev, lest anything should happen to the fortress ... lest Edom should come.'

**MARKING ON LB MAP WITH SCA MAP**

8. HL Arad
9. HL Ramoth-negev (T. Ira) and H. Uza in the Eastern Negev. H. Uza is a small fort at the top of a steep ascent and overlooks much of the route coming from Edom. An on-going discussion debates which of these sites (if either) is the actual Ramoth of the Negev, cited above in its Hebrew form, 'Ramat-negev.' The LB and SCA maps opt for T. Ira.
10. Blue sweeping arrow from Tamar to the Negev by T. Ira = Edomite advance
11. Red circle around Ramoth-negev (T. Ira)
12. In small, black caps write EDMITE ADVANCE on this arrow

SCA, v.3

13. Blue circle around H. Qitmit, a nearby Edomite settlement

**DISCUSSION**

A piece of pottery with Edomite script on it was found at H. Uza and reads, 'Are you well? I bless you by Qos' [an Edomite deity]. The Edomites had reached H. Uza and were on their way to Ramoth-negev. The Edomites must have taken the fortress in their continuing advance across the Negev. We understand better the words of Obadiah as the prophet speaks against Edom (Obad 10-14),

You stood at a distance in the day strangers captured [Judah's] wealth. When foreigners came into [Judah's] gates and cast the lot over Jerusalem, you were like one of them ... you should not rejoice over the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction; you should not open your big mouth in the day of their trouble; you should not enter the gate of my people in the day of [Judah's] calamity; ... you should not have stood at the crossroads to cut down the refugees; you should not have seized the survivors in the day of trouble.

Desire for the Negev routes generated deep hatred between Edom and Judah. As Judah fell before Babylon, Edom benefited and even entered into the slaughter. As captives in Babylon and later back in the Land Between, Judah could not forget (Ps 137:7),

'Remember, O Lord, the actions of the Edomites on Jerusalem's day; they were saying, 'Lay it bare, lay it bare to the foundations!'

JUD, v.3  
 If you have version 3 of RSMAP 6: JUD, notes such as this alert you to important updates in the JUD map

## VI. TAKING OR HOLDING THE SHEPHELAH (JUD MAP)

This chapter focuses on the Shephelah (Lowland), its valleys, its sites and its routes, which became a battlefield between Judah and the Philistines in the early days of the Israelite monarchy. The struggles of that period illustrate how the open valleys of the Shephelah were coveted by people from the Hill Country in their quest to reach branches of the Coastal Highway. Once they overcame those who resisted their advance, these same hill people were faced with the formidable task of defending this open area, not only against local attacks but also against imperial armies coming from the north and from the south. In such times the Israelites often retreated to the refuge of the Hill Country in hopes that their opponents would not follow. In short, the valleys of the Shephelah and their commanding positions were gateways, like the doors of the old saloons. They could swing in both directions, depending upon who was coming or going. It is this historical ‘swinging’ to and fro which makes the Shephelah one of the most intriguing regions in the Land Between.

### REVIEW (optional)

RR 16-17: The Southern Arena

RR 18-19: Philistine and Negev Gateways

### EXPLORING THE JUD MAP (Find bold names on the JUD map unless LB or SCA maps are specified.)

Open the JUD map and have the earlier marked LB and SCA maps handy. Note the area covered by the JUD map on its finder map (bottom right hand corner), which mostly covers the **Shephelah** and the **Hill Country** of Judah. Look at the terrain on the SCA map, from the region of **Ashkelon** eastward across the low hills and open valleys of the Shephelah and up a long line of narrow ridges into the Hill Country. On the JUD map compare elevations in the Shephelah with those in the Hill Country.

### MARKING ON JUD MAP

JUD, v.3  
 Names spread S-N;  
 HL just letters

1. HL these regions: COASTAL PLAIN (top left), SHEPHELAH (LOWLAND), HILL COUNTRY, WILDERNESS
2. Orange box around the tribe of EPHRAIM (top right) = the strongest tribe in the House of Joseph
3. Underline the tribe of BENJAMIN in orange (top right) = tribal brother of the House of Joseph
4. Green box around the tribe of JUDAH (lower center) = the southern House of Judah

### EXPLORING THE JUD MAP

On the SCA map find the area outlined by the major sites of **Gezer**, **Jerusalem**, **Hebron**, and **Lachish**. Each of these four sites occupies a different quadrant of your folded JUD map. Two lie along the western edge of the Shephelah, and two straddle the watershed route through the heart of Judah, known as the Judean Ridge Route. Find this watershed (seen by the lighter color on the JUD map) as it runs north of **Halhul** (near Hebron), the highest part of the Hill Country (**1020m/3346ft**). Branches of this Judean Ridge Route stay on or near the watershed, which drops in elevation around **Bethlehem** and lower still on the **Central Benjamin Plateau**. It ascends again near **Bethel**. Surface water from rain and snow drains east and west from this watershed. The steep western slopes receive more precipitation, but much of the rainfall along the highest summits makes its way down lengthy and secluded canyons through the Wilderness to the Dead Sea. The SCA map shows this well and names some of these canyons.

JUD, v.3  
 Watersheds marked by thin, dotted line; follow line from W of Hebron and N

### MARKING ON JUD MAP

5. HL the route following the watershed ridge along the mountainous spine of Benjamin and Judah. Begin at the top of the map at the phrase ‘To Shechem’ and move S on the route past Bethel, Elasa, Mizpah, Gibeah, staying just W of Bethlehem, Etam, Halhul, Hebron, Debir, to Dhahariya and S off the map by the phrase ‘To Beer-sheba.’ The southern part of the route is the Judean Ridge Route. The entire route (which continues north of the JUD map) has been called the ‘Patriarchal Highway,’ since Abraham, Jacob and Joseph traveled along it in various episodes in the book of Genesis.

### EXPLORING THE JUD MAP

On the LB map you drew green sweeping arrows (‘a’ and ‘b’) representing David’s expansion from the hills and across the Shephelah to the coastal highway. Note the path of arrow ‘a’ and nearby city names. Now find this same area and the **Aijalon Valley** and the site of **Gezer** on the JUD map. Make the same comparison for arrow ‘b’ on the LB map and find the **Elah Valley**, **Azekah** and **Gath** on the JUD map. The Aijalon and Elah valleys in the Shephelah, territories allotted to the tribes of Dan and Judah in the book of Joshua, provided David with the staging area for these moves west.

On the SCA map you wrote numbers at several sites in the Shephelah to represent David’s actions at those sites during his flight from Saul. David was twice at Gath on the western edge of the Shephelah

(‘4’ = 1 Sam 21:10-15; ‘14’ = 1 Sam 27:1-4) and at **Adullam** on the eastern edge of the Shephelah (‘5’ = 1 Sam 22:1-2), as well as at **Keilah** (‘8’ = 1 Sam 23:1-13). Adullam and Keilah are located along a chalk moat which lies between harder limestone in the Hill Country and the softer limestones of the Shephelah. This valley almost runs the full length of the JUD map, from beyond **Aijalon** in the north to **T. Beit Mirsim** and beyond in the south.

#### MARKING ON JUD MAP

- HL names of three valleys along the chalk moat: AIJALON VALLEY, SOREK VALLEY, ELAH VALLEY
- HL the inland branch of the Coastal Highway: begin in the upper left-hand corner of the map at the longitudinal reading of 140 and HL the route running S to Gibbethon, Ekron, Gath, W of T. Zeita, and off the western edge of the map

#### EXPLORING THE JUD MAP

The western slopes of the Hill Country drain into canyons whose streambeds flow into the east-west valleys of the Shephelah and on to the Mediterranean Sea. The softer limestones and chalks of the Shephelah erode into broad valleys compared to the deep V-shaped canyons of the Hill Country which are far more rugged. The three prominent east-west valleys you have just highlighted are much broader than valleys farther south, whose drainage in the Shephelah is more complex.

#### JUD, v.3

The words ‘Guvrin System’ lie W of Hebron, and dotted watershed lines mark out the upper system

You may be able to find three other main valleys south of the Elah Valley. One, the Guvrin Valley, runs from the area of **Tricomias** past **Ir Nahash** and **Eleutheropolis/Beth-guvrin** before turning north and then west past **Libnah/T. Bornat** and **T. Zeita**. Routes through this part of the Shephelah can climb the **Beth-leaphrah/et-Taiyiba** ridge and reach Hebron. Deep canyons, dramatic scarps and breathtaking views make this climb one of the finest in the Land Between. The prophet Micah, who came from this part of the Shephelah, used the sites and stark features of the region to add punch to his preaching. Mountains, valleys, invasions, calamity and hope combine to produce some of the most stirring passages in the Bible. The setting for Micah’s message is here on this part of the JUD map.

For behold, the LORD is coming from his place ... the mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split asunder ... Harness the horse to the chariot, you who live in Lachish ... I will bring a conqueror [the Assyrians] upon you who are living at Mareshah ... Rise, argue your case before the mountains and let the heights hear your voice ... But in the latter days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the Lord’s Temple [then in Jerusalem, on a much lower ridge than the region of Hebron] will become the highest of the mountains ... and you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, small though you be among the clans of Judah, from you shall one come forth who for Me will be ruler in Israel; his coming forth was from the distant past, yea from everlasting. (Mic 1:3-4, 13, 15; 6:1; 4:1; 5:2)

#### JUD, v.3

See ‘Lachish System’ E of Makkedah with dotted lines marking out the upper system

See the upper ‘Adoraim-Shiqma System’ SE of Eglon

The valley to the south, the Lachish Valley, gathers streambeds around **Makkedah/Kh. Beit Maqdam** and flows west past the magnificent site of **Lachish**. Routes up the Guvrin and Lachish valleys join to follow a narrow ridge to **Hebron** and pass **Beth-tappuah** on the way. When Samson transported Gaza’s gate and door posts to Hebron he could have passed this way (Judg 16:1-3). Yet a third valley, the Adoraim, gathers tributaries in the fertile region of **Eglon/T. Eton** and flows westward off the map.

These valleys of the Shephelah are filled with rich alluvial soils washed down from the Hill Country by the run-off from winter rains. A glance at the JUD map shows a varying pattern of routes throughout the valleys of the Shephelah. Many of these routes seek ridges which lead deep into the Hill Country. For example, follow the route from Gezer to the east and note that you have three different options for reaching the **Central Benjamin Plateau**. Run your eye down the Shephelah and note how its pattern of routes changes and how ridge routes into the hills follow various paths. By doing this you are surveying some of the most documented roads in the history of the Land Between. The events studied below are only two of many episodes which could be recounted.

Events in this unit reveal the character of the Shephelah as a buffer zone or battlefield. The first event demonstrates an attempt by coastal peoples to penetrate the Shephelah as a prelude to entering the Hill Country in pursuit of their enemy. The second event illustrates Judah’s need to place its first line of defense in this buffer zone between Philistia and their heartland in the Hill Country. The same line of defense could also be used as a springboard for moving west into the international arena of the Coastal Highway.

- 1) Early in the period of emerging local peoples (the Age of Nations on the 4000 Year Overview chart) the young David thwarted the Philistine advance into the territory of Judah when he defeated Goliath of Gath in the strategic Elah Valley.
- 2) David’s grandson Rehoboam evaluated the approaches to Judah and heavily fortified the western approaches via the Shephelah, either before or after an attack by pharaoh Shishak of Egypt.

**EVENT 18: DAVID PREVAILS—‘THE PHILISTINES GATHERED THEIR FORCES FOR WAR  
AND ASSEMBLED AT SOCOH WHICH BELONGS TO JUDAH’**

**MARKING ON JUD MAP**

1. HL the CENTRAL BENJAMIN PLATEAU in the NE corner of the map
2. HL on city names: Gath and Ekron
3. Blue box around city names with their dots and elevations: Gath and Ekron

**DISCUSSION**

Our marking thus far calls attention to the position of the valleys of the Shephelah between an inland branch of the Coastal Highway via the Philistine cities of Gath and Ekron and the Judean Ridge Route at the heart of the Hill Country. In the book of 1 Samuel the Philistines made numerous incursions through these valleys in their attempt to dominate the Israelites in the Hill Country and contain their increasing nationalistic spirit. These Philistine campaigns centered on the Central Benjamin Plateau since, by controlling this strategic network of routes through a lower part of the Hill Country, they could divide the House of Ephraim to the north from the House of Judah to the south. The plateau was also home to the tribe of Benjamin, and Israel’s first king, Saul the Benjaminite, set up his government at Gibeah, a prominent hill overlooking the region.

In the days of Samuel the prophet and early in Saul’s reign the Central Benjamin Plateau was finally cleared of Philistine garrisons, and the routes approaching it from the Aijalon Valley were no doubt carefully guarded by the growing Israelite militia. The Philistines, however, knew that other routes led to Saul’s capital. As they mounted a fresh offensive, David’s decisive faith and action rescued his people and demonstrated his ability to lead them.

The account of David’s defense of Judah begins along the Judean Ridge Route in the book of 1 Samuel. This book presents two important steps forward in the history of the Israelite monarchy. First, it marked the transition from leadership by Israelite tribal judges to a monarchy united under one national leader. Event 9 (on the NCA map) illustrated this transition in which Saul successfully delivered the Israelites at Jabesh-gilead and proved himself worthy of the title ‘king’ (1 Sam 11).

The second important step was the shift from the Benjamin-based monarchy (always overshadowed by Ephraim of the prominent House of Joseph) to a Judah-based monarchy. The foreshadowing of a needed change first appears in 1 Samuel 13 when the crown prince Jonathan provided deliverance from Philistine oppression, while Saul offered an unauthorized sacrifice and lost his dynastic right. After Saul’s rash act Samuel said, ‘Now your kingdom will not stand; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and commanded him to lead his people’ (1 Sam 13:14).

In 1 Samuel 14 Jonathan again delivered Israel from a Philistine occupying force, while his father Saul issued an unreasonable oath which limited a much needed victory. In chapter 15 Saul again disobeyed in the war with the Amalekites, and Samuel declared, ‘Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king’ (1 Sam 15:23). In panic Saul seized Samuel’s robe and it tore. In the usual Middle Eastern fashion of seeing some meaning in every event, Samuel said, ‘God has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you’ (v. 28).

The foreshadowing gave way to a divine command in 1 Samuel 16 which even took Samuel by surprise. Samuel the Ephraimite, who had overseen the rule of Saul the Benjaminite, received explicit instructions:

‘Fill your horn with oil and *‘lekh*’ (be on your way); I’m sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite [in Judah!], for I have seen among his sons a king who has my approval.’

Samuel’s startled response is especially strong in its Hebrew original: *ekh elekh*, or ‘How shall I go?’ Samuel was not asking for directions, for he knew how to get from his home in Ramah of Benjamin to Bethlehem in Judah. He even stated that he feared to walk by Gibeah, Saul’s capital, on his way to Bethlehem. He well knew that in those days Saul was in no gentle mood after Samuel had chastised him. The phrase might be paraphrased, ‘How in the world can I go and do a thing like that?!’

Samuel, however, made the journey. As he walked south along a time-worn watershed route he had no idea that he was creating a much greater watershed in the history of Israel. Joshua of Ephraim had led the Israelites into this promised land. The Israelite tribes knew they had to respect Ephraim’s leadership, a fact revealed when Barak consulted Deborah, ‘who was judging in the Hill Country of Ephraim,’ and when Ephraimites upbraided Gideon for not consulting them. Early Israelite decisions were made at a central sanctuary at Shiloh in Ephraim, and since Shiloh’s destruction Samuel, an Ephraimite, had become Israel’s spiritual leader and elder statesman. His short trip to Bethlehem changed all of that.

**MARKING ON JUD MAP AND DISCUSSION**

4. HL city names: Ramah, Gibeah, Bethlehem
  5. Small, orange box around dot of Gibeah = Saul's capital
  6. In small, black caps east of Bethlehem and Beth-basi write: DAVID, SON OF JESSE, IN THE WILDERNESS
- On the JUD map follow Samuel's journey from Ramah to Bethlehem. You can calculate the distance by consulting the scale at the bottom of the map. His journey was made as the Philistine threat grew in the Shephelah. To make matters worse, Ephraim had been weakened by the Philistines' earlier triumph at Aphek and subsequent invasion. Under Saul of Benjamin the Israelites had recovered to some extent, but now Saul faced divine rejection. On his way to Bethlehem Samuel would have passed just west of a city inhabited by Jebusites, non-Israelites who at some point had settled there. He would not live to see the day when a young shepherd named David, whom he was about to anoint, would capture this city and make it the spiritual and political capital of all Israelites. The city was Jerusalem.

**READING**

1 Sam 16:1-13. Skim Ps 78 noting Ephraim's prominence, the tragedy which beset Shiloh (SCA map) following the battle of Aphek and the sudden change in verse 65 when 'The Lord awoke as from a sleep.' The implications of Samuel's trip to Bethlehem are heard in the remaining verses of the psalm.

**DISCUSSION** (with JUD and SCA maps)

The geographical setting of Bethlehem serves as the background for this story. Bethlehem is located in northern Judah in the midst of hills covered with grapevines and orchards of olives, almonds and pomegranates. It is situated along a promontory just east of the main north-south ridge route and overlooks the Wilderness to the east. Its north-south connections to the territory of Benjamin and to Hebron are augmented by a ridge route via Hushah/Husan to the Shephelah and a secondary route through the Wilderness to the Rift Valley. This may be 'the other route' followed by the 'wise men from the East' who avoided going through king Herod's Jerusalem on their return trip (Matt 2:1-6, 12).

Between the Wilderness proper and the city are areas of easily plowed soil. With sufficient winter rainfall these can be transformed into fields of grains, such as those owned by a prominent Bethlehemite named Boaz. These grain fields might explain the name Beth-lehem, 'House/place of Bread/food,' although some feel that 'lehem' is a form of the Hebrew word 'to wage war' and perhaps the name of a local god. It was in this setting, east of Bethlehem, that the story of Ruth the Moabitess took place.

Since Boaz and Ruth were the grandparents of Jesse (David's father), now might be an appropriate moment to skim the book of Ruth. The four short chapters of this book not only provide information on David's family background but also recreate the setting of the region around Bethlehem during late April and May when the grain is harvested in this part of the Hill Country. The story also describes travel and religious/ethnic exchange between Moab and the people of Bethlehem. This could have taken place via the En-gedi route but more likely along the route which crosses the Rift Valley north of the Dead Sea. These events occurred at the end of the period of the Judges. The story takes on added meaning when one recalls the advance of the 'king of Moab' and Israelite deliverance by Ehud the Benjaminite who then 'sounded the trumpet in the Hill Country of Ephraim' (Judg 3:12-30).

Farther to the east of Bethlehem grain fields give way to the chalky slopes of the Wilderness. With sufficient winter rain a light covering of grass allows hearty shepherds to graze herds of sheep and goats. Northern slopes, shaded from the low winter sun, may remain green for a few months. After the first weeks of hot weather in late spring, often accompanied by dry eastern breezes, the grass turns brown and dies. The prophet Isaiah applied the certainty of this annual occurrence to human experience and added a potent spiritual message in one of the Bible's best known passages (Is 40: 1-11). In the summer, after the grain harvest, shepherds often bring their herds into the harvested fields of grain to eat the stubble. The Wilderness remains dry and dusty until reviving rains of winter fall again.

Shepherding is a great responsibility. It is the job of the shepherd to find food and water for his herds in the Wilderness and to protect them from the heat of the day and from wild animals which prey upon them at night. If water is not available at the right time, an entire herd may perish. Since herds of sheep and goats represent an important investment for the farmer (sometimes the only investment for the Bedouin), the task of tending the herd is a very serious task which takes constant care and wise planning. A lesser member of a farmer's family, old enough to be trusted, or a hired servant tends the herds, taking them out into the Wilderness to pasture for days or weeks at a time. Alone in the Wilderness the shepherd must take full responsibility for the herd with nowhere to turn for help.

While being vigilant, shepherds have time to reflect. To pass time and keep them company in lonely surroundings, shepherds often improvise simple musical instruments to play, such as an easy to carry flute. Some become versatile playing such instruments. It was in this context that the young shepherd David reflected upon spiritual realities which later became ‘psalms.’ Their imagery often includes grass, paths (especially level paths), sure-footing, heat, thirst and even threshing floors (for processing grain), which Bethlehem’s shepherds today still pass as they lead their herds to and from the Wilderness.

#### READING

Psalms 23, 63; 1 Samuel 16:13-23

#### DISCUSSION

The reading in 1 Samuel (above) contrasts ‘the Spirit of the Lord which came mightily upon David from that day forward’ to Saul’s tormented spirit. Earlier we hear that Samuel himself had to be reminded that ‘the Lord looks on the heart’ (1 Sam 16:7), an observation that points back to the prophet’s earlier statement, ‘the Lord is seeking a man after his own heart’ (1 Sam 13:14). Such remarks are meant to remind us of the writer’s purpose, which goes far beyond recording mere events of the period.

Our reading mentions two trips along the ridge route from Bethlehem to Ramah and Gibeah. One was Samuel’s return trip from Bethlehem to Ramah after anointing David. Along the way Samuel must have pondered many issues and wondered what the future would bring. The other trip was David’s walk from Bethlehem to Gibeah at the request of Saul, who knew nothing of Samuel’s earlier mission. As commander of Israel’s army Saul kept his eye out for ‘any brave man or courageous fellow’ whom he might add to his ranks, and David’s musical skills (developed in the Wilderness) were also now needed at Saul’s court (1 Sam 14:52).

David, like the Levite returning from Bethlehem to Ephraim in Judges 19, walked north leading his donkey which was loaded with presents for Saul (a custom which anyone who has lived in the Middle East knows is required in such circumstances). Like the Levite, David walked along the ridge route which bypassed the Jebusite enclave in Jerusalem, and like the Levite, at Gibeah David found a self-centered attitude which showed less and less respect for both God and man. As Saul’s armor-bearer, David came to know the king’s deep-seated insecurities. Later in the Wilderness, as Saul was trying to kill David, David drew back from killing Saul when he had the opportunity. Perhaps in part this was because he had the sensitive spirit of a shepherd and knew Saul’s threatened personality.

#### MARKING ON JUD MAP (see SCA map for larger context)

7. HL three important ridges connecting the main Hill Country ridge route with the Shephelah
  - a. Begin at the intersection just SW of Ramah; HL the route to the W and then NW just before Gibeon to a relatively short ridge which descends to Upper Beth-horon and then drops to Lower Beth-horon before continuing NW off the map near Modiin. This is the Beth-horon Ridge Route.
  - b. Go back to Lower Beth-horon and this time HL SW (middle road, just N of the name ‘Aijalon Valley’) to Gezer and on to the inland coastal route (already highlighted). This is the Aijalon Valley approach to the Beth-horon Ridge Route.
  - c. Begin at the intersection by Etam SW of Bethlehem; HL the route to Socoh in the Elah Valley via Hushah/Husan and Timnah. At 756m/2480f routes from the W merge along a common ridge.
  - d. Begin on the Judean Ridge Route between Halhul and Beth-zur; HL the route running NW past Beth-zur and turn N by Adullam to Socoh in the Elah Valley. This is the Beth-zur Ridge Route.

#### DISCUSSION

1 Samuel records several Philistine incursions that used or may have used the routes leading from the Gezer region along the Beth-horon Ridge Route to central Benjamin. The Philistines entered Benjamin to disrupt Samuel’s tribal assembly held at Mizpah, just north of Ramah along the Central Ridge Route (1 Sam 7:7-11). After Saul successfully dealt with the eastern threat in the Ammonite battle at Jabesh-gilead, the Philistines responded from the west with another move into central Benjamin which established an occupying force at Geba (just east of Ramah; 1 Sam 13:2-4). Jonathan’s attack on the Philistine force brought a much bigger Philistine force which set up camp near Michmash, an area beyond the Central Benjamin Plateau and the deep Suweinit Canyon. Jonathan’s tactics again forced their quick and disordered retreat from Michmash. This time the Bible records that Saul’s forces, together with Israelite troops ‘hiding in the Hill Country of Ephraim..., that day struck down the Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon’ (1 Sam 13:5-14:31). The Philistines were not at all happy.

JUD, v.3

Note that the ridge route follows a watershed line

**MARKING ON JUD MAP**

8. HL two routes from Philistia into the Elah Valley
  - a. Beginning on the edge of the map W of Ekron HL the route SE across the highway by Ekron and on to Azekah, passing N of Azekah and continuing to meet the earlier HL at Socoh
  - b. Beginning on the edge of the map just SW of Gath HL the route E across the highway by Gath on to Azekah, passing S of Azekah and continuing E to meet the route by Socoh
9. HL city names (not dots) of Socoh and Azekah
10. Sweeping blue arrows
  - a. From near Ekron toward Azekah staying S of the HL route
  - b. From near Gath toward Azekah staying N of the HL route
11. Write in small, black caps along one of the arrows: PHILISTINES TO ELAH VALLEY
12. Blue circles = Philistine main and forward camps
  - a. One circle SE of Azekah on the convergence of routes between Azekah and elevation 305m/1001f
  - b. A second circle around the name and dot of Socoh large enough to include the intersection N of the city and the small valley just W of the city
13. Write in small, black caps to the west of Socoh: PHILISTINE CAMPS (stacked)

JUD, v.3

Simply circle city name and dot

**DISCUSSION**

The Philistines, barred from the Hill Country and still angry from their defeat near Michmash, wisely chose the Elah Valley for their campaign against Saul. This valley was a spring board into the Hill Country, as seen on the JUD map. Rugged Hill Country east of the Sorek Valley made a campaign into the Hill Country from there infeasible. The Elah Valley, on the other hand, provided access both to Bethlehem via the Hushah/Husan Ridge and to Hebron via the Beth-zur Ridge. Thus, anyone commanding the Elah Valley was in the best possible position to attack northern and southern Judah from the west. This makes the following biblical headline of prime importance: ‘the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Socoh (in the Elah Valley) which belongs to Judah’ (1 Sam 17:1).

The Bible does not specifically state what led to this particular Philistine-Israelite confrontation. There may, however, be a pattern in the Philistine response. Saul’s success over the Ammonites in the north (1 Sam 11) was followed by a Philistine campaign in central Benjamin (1 Sam 13), and now Saul’s victory over the Amalekites in the south (1 Sam 15) is followed by a Philistine campaign in the Elah Valley (1 Sam 17). One thing is certain, the Philistines did not again use the Aijalon Valley and Beth-horon Ridge Route to attack Saul. Something had changed which was not in the Philistine’s favor. All of this makes the Philistine campaign in the Elah Valley take on prime importance. The Philistines mustered their best men (such as Goliath) and were set on winning. If they won, it was certain that Judah and Benjamin would have suffered the same fate as Ephraim and its sanctuary at Shiloh.

To achieve their goals the Philistines made careful preparations. The location of their main camp (Ephes-dammim) may well have been at one of the intersections in your blue circle below Azekah. As in the case of their Michmash campaign, they needed lookout posts to protect this main camp. Azekah’s impressive location (on the northern end of the long ridge seen on the JUD map) provided them an excellent view in almost every direction. Their forward position at Socoh allowed their scouts to climb to the summit of a ridge southeast of Socoh (by the elevation mark 457m/1499f) and overlook every ridge into the Hill Country. This was a perfect staging area for traditional Philistine battle tactics and a major campaign against Judah. They were so confident that they used simple scare tactics to lure the Israelite forces out of the hills or to force Saul’s capitulation before an actual battle began.

**MARKING ON JUD MAP**

14. Two sweeping orange arrows: one from Gibeah to Hushah (keeping E of the HL ridge route) and a second from Hushah to the descent just W of Timnah (keeping N of HL route)
15. Write in small, black caps along this arrow: SAUL TO ELAH VALLEY
16. Small, orange box on the road near W end of Timnah Ridge Route due E of Elah Valley = Saul’s camp
17. Write in small, black caps above this box: SAUL’S CAMP (stacked)
18. An orange dot on small rise just SE of 300m/984f elevation (W of road) and a blue dot on slope just NE of the ‘m’ in the 457m/1499f elevation = Forward positions for Philistine-Israelite conversations. You may want to add very short lines in appropriate colors radiating from each dot toward the other.

**DISCUSSION**

This marking no doubt looks quite specific, but details in the story make this scenario very plausible. Look at the area around the Elah Valley and the chalk moat separating the Shephelah from the higher Hill Country. It would have been extremely dangerous for the Israelites to venture beyond this chalk moat into the Shephelah where the Philistine forces could have encircled them. Saul and his troops, ‘terrified and extremely fearful’ (1 Sam 17:11), would have stayed in the Hill Country, high enough along the Timnah Ridge to overlook the broad Elah Valley and to make a quick escape if that became necessary. The Philistines, for their part, would have thought twice before immediately pursuing the Israelites into the Hill Country where canyons, limestone terraces and places of ambush gave their enemy an advantage. Thus, Saul’s camp is located on the edge of the Hill Country. Here, for well over a month, the Philistines challenged Saul and his forces. Meanwhile young David had returned to Bethlehem and was tending his father’s sheep in the Wilderness. Jesse’s concern for his three older sons (who had been conscripted by Saul) led him to send David to the battlefield to check up on them. Jesse also sent presents to the commander of his sons’ unit, which raises some interesting questions.

**MARKING ON JUD MAP**

19. Green line under your earlier marking DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS
20. Green arrow from DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS to Bethlehem
21. Green sweeping arrow from near Bethlehem, following the route SW to Etam, and then past Khadr and via Hushah to Saul’s camp (parallel but below Saul’s arrow)
22. Write in small, black caps along the arrow: DAVID TO ELAH VALLEY

**DISCUSSION**

Here in the strategic Elah Valley the stage was set for one of the most well-known and best loved stories in the Bible, the battle of David and Goliath. There are many interesting details in the story. David’s brothers became upset with David, perhaps because they were jealous of Samuel’s anointing of David. It was highly irregular in Middle East tradition to bypass older sons in favor of the youngest. It may also have been due to David’s special connection to Saul’s court. This was their opportunity to prove their skills, and all of a sudden young David appeared. The eldest brother snapped at David and then broached the question of responsibility: ‘And who’s tending the sheep in the Wilderness?’

It may appear that the central theme of the story is the surprising deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistine threat. The careful reader of 1 Samuel, however, discovers a more far-reaching theme. The David-Goliath contest comes at a critical juncture in the book and serves as a watershed between Saul and his irredeemable Benjaminite monarchy and David, who a few years later became the first king of the new Judean monarchy. The centerpiece of the story comes from David’s mouth as he stands amidst the weapons of war and considers Goliath’s elaborate armor and spear. David’s simple statements to king Saul set the tone for David’s later reign:

Don’t let anyone’s heart fail because of this fellow—your servant will go and fight with this Philistine ... the Lord who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear [in the Wilderness] will save me from the hand of this Philistine!

As David approached Goliath he carried the same simple weapon he used in the Wilderness. Goliath, however, was covered with protective armor, carefully described in terms of number, size and weight at the outset of the story. This explains his remark: ‘Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks?’ David reiterated his statement of faith. ‘You come with sword and spear and javelin, but I come in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel.’ They drew nearer and David slung his stone. The text stops momentarily to emphasize, ‘without a sword in his hand David struck down the Philistine.’ The message of the writer is clear. The LORD, the God of Israel, was with David. His ‘last words’ (in 2 Sam 23:2-7 at the very conclusion of the book of Samuel) echo the same theme as the rest of the book: God’s abiding presence remained with David in the midst of those who could have harmed him.

For does not my house stand firm with God? For he has made an eternal covenant with me, arranged in every detail and well-secured—for has he not brought forth my every deliverance and each desire?

As you read the account, picture the Philistine forces along the slope in the Shephelah (blue dot on JUD map) and Israelite forces on the edge of the Hill Country (orange dot), with a dry streambed between them. This streambed drains the Hill Country as far south as Beth-zur but here cuts through a ‘defined passage,’ a specific Hebrew term (*gai*) used in the story in order to distinguish this point in the

larger Elah ‘Valley’ (*emeq* in Hebrew). The biblical writer’s detailed description of the stage adds to the drama of the confrontation which was about to unfold (1 Sam 17:1-3).

Now the Philistines gathered their fighting forces, mobilizing at Socoh—which belongs to Judah!— and setting up their [main] camp in Ephes-dammim between Socoh and Azekah. Meanwhile, Saul and the men of Israel were mobilized and encamped at the Elah Valley (*emeq*) [above the broad, open area at the eastern end of the valley, on higher ground as we soon learn], arrayed for battle with the Philistines. The Philistines stood on a hill on one side and the Israelites stood on a hill on the other side. Now there was a narrow passage (*gai*) between them [where conversation between Goliath and the Israelites easily could have taken place].

#### READING

1 Samuel 17

#### MARKING ON JUD MAP

23. Red confrontation mark ✱ between your blue and orange dots
24. Blue flight and orange chase arrows = Israelites under Saul chase Philistines back to their cities
  - a. One set of arrows from the name ‘Elah Valley’ toward Azekah
  - b. From Azekah toward Ekron staying N of the HL route
  - c. From Azekah toward Gath staying S of the HL route
25. HL the site name Shaaraim

JUD, v.3

See new location at Kh. Qeiyafa; p70 at 1 Sam 17

#### DISCUSSION

In the description of the rapid Philistine retreat before the Israelites, more interesting geographical details emerge within a verse which is often mistranslated (1 Sam 17:52).

The men of Israel and Judah arose with a war cry and chased the Philistines as far as the place where you enter a ‘narrower passage’ (*gai*), even as far as the gates of Ekron. The wounded Philistines fell along the way of the ‘pair of gates’ (*shaaraim*) as far as Gath and as far as Ekron.’

A glance at the JUD map shows that the Philistine retreat down the open Elah Valley was interrupted by what we call the ‘Azekah Ridge.’ There are two ways around the high site of Azekah, one to the north (the way the streambed flows) and one across a small rise which separates the hill of Azekah from the rest of the ridge. These are no doubt the ‘pair of gates’ (*shaaraim* in Hebrew) spoken of in the Philistine retreat. However, elsewhere the Bible mentions a city called ‘Shaaraim.’ This city may well be located at the place shown on the JUD map, and if so, perhaps its name comes from the nearby ‘pair of gates.’ In addition, this passage mentions the Israelite chase up to the gates of the nearby Philistine cities (and no farther). This is conclusive evidence that Philistine Gath and Ekron are not far removed from each other and that Gath must be located here and not far to the south as some propose.

Finally, we return to the story’s main theme, that of David and his approaching reign. David’s unwavering faith presented him as ‘a man after God’s own heart’ who can lead Israel. In the same way Saul’s early victory at Jabesh-gilead demonstrated his leadership ability. However, the difference was David’s simple faith. We heard of the need for such a faith from the mouth of Samuel when the Philistines were approaching the defenseless Israelites: ‘Fix your heart firmly on the Lord, worshipping Him alone, and He will deliver you from Philistine domination’ (1 Sam 7:3). This same need for faith in times of crisis was evident in the book of Judges. In one sense the story of David in the Elah Valley culminates a long series of contests between ‘champions’ of faith and their opponents (Heb 11). An additional theme in this story is that David’s faith stands in stark contrast to Saul’s fear prior to the battle and Saul’s frustration after the battle, when young David from Bethlehem of Judah usurped Saul’s claim to fame. The writer underscores this when he speaks of ‘Socoh—which belongs to Judah.’

David often challenged the Philistines later in Saul’s reign, but few details of these contests are given. We are told that ‘David was able to achieve more through his good sense (on the battlefield) than Saul’s entire army’ (1 Sam 18:30). David’s popularity increased until ‘all Israel (the House of Joseph with the northern tribes) and Judah loved David’ (1 Sam 18:16). Saul had sought this acceptance from the first day of his reign, but David knew a better way which ensured his well-being and granted him a peace within, no matter how difficult his way—through the Wilderness as a young shepherd or through his years as king of Judah and Israel (from Ps 23).

The LORD is my Shepherd; I have need of nothing else [David knew what was required of a shepherd] ... Though I walk through a dreadful ‘narrow passage’ (*gai*) [could David be recalling his contest with Goliath?] ... Only good things and undeserved mercy pursue me all the days of my life [as David recalled in his ‘last words’], And my home is in the House of the Lord—on and on [David’s abiding confidence in God’s constant care].

**EVENT 19: REHOBOAM PREPARES—'REHOBOAM FORTIFIED CITIES IN JUDAH AGAINST SIEGE'**

**CHART: THE ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

When Rehoboam came to the throne of Judah after Solomon's death in -930, the northern Israelite tribes (Israel) staged a successful rebellion which was led by Jeroboam of Ephraim. Tension between northern Israel (orange on the chart) and southern Judah (green) began long before -930, but the tribes had been held together by the political wisdom and military strength of **David and Solomon**. After the -930 split a period begins which some call the **Divided Monarchy**. Two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, lasted until Israel's capital at Samaria fell before the Assyrians in -721.

The opening period of the Divided Monarchy was dominated by battles between Israel and Judah for the tribal territory of Benjamin with its strategic network of routes between the two prominent tribes of Ephraim and Judah (see JUD and SCA maps). The chart calls this period the **Battle of Benjamin**, seen in a lower box which indicates a period of relative weakness for Israel and Judah. The red line across the box represents the conflict over the territory of the tribe of Benjamin and its approaches.

In this context Rehoboam, king of Judah, evaluated his kingdom's security and must have conducted a careful evaluation of strategic sites along routes approaching Judah's Hill Country heartland. His choices appear to supplement fortifications of his father Solomon (1 Kgs 9:15-19). The chronicler records that Rehoboam decided to strengthen specific sites, and his text provides the best single statement on the western defense of the Hill Country of Judah via the Shephelah (2 Chron 11:5-12).

**CHART: 4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

'In king Rehoboam's fifth year' pharaoh **Shishak** attacked Jerusalem (1 Kgs 14:25). His campaign therefore occurred around -925 or -924. The dating of Rehoboam's defense project is not recorded in the Bible, but it precedes Shishak's campaign in the Bible (2 Chron 11:5-12 and 2 Chron 12:1-9). Economically, Judah more easily could have financed such a project prior to Shishak's invasion since Shishak took much of Jerusalem's treasures which had accumulated under Solomon. This view is supported by the fact that archaeological evidence from Lachish seems to suggest that Rehoboam had strengthened Lachish prior to Shishak's invasion. If this is true, then Rehoboam's fortifications may reflect an attempt to delineate an area he could reasonably defend.

**MARKING ON JUD MAP**

1. Place a small, green triangle around the city dot of cities that Solomon fortified: Gezer, Lower and Upper Beth-horon, Kiriath-jearim/Baalath S of Upper Beth-horon (1 Kgs 9:15, 18; 2 Chron 8:5-6)
2. Read 2 Chronicles 11:5-12 and beginning with v. 6 put a small, green box around the dot of each city mentioned in this text. NOTE: For 'Soco' (v. 7) mark 'Socoh.' For Gath (v. 8), mark Moresheth-gath, not Gath of the Philistines. Note any geographical order which you discover in the list.
3. With careful attention to regional perspectives (ridge routes in the Hill Country, valley routes in the Shephelah, strategic crossroads and approaches to Jerusalem from the east, south and west), HL the following natural routes
  - a. From Bethlehem to Tekoa and then SE off the map past the phrase 'To En-gedi and Moab'
  - b. From Bethlehem to Hebron (partly already HL) and on to Ziph and S to the phrase 'To Arad'
  - c. From Hebron to T. Halif (bottom, left corner of map) via Adoraim and T. Beit Mirsim
  - d. The diagonal route from Lower Beth-horon to Lachish via Aijalon, Eshtaol, Beth-shemesh, Azekah, Eleutheropolis, Mareshah, Lachish and off the map by the elevation reading 257m/843f
  - e. From the intersection 1in/2cm NW of Aijalon to Gibeon via Aijalon and Kiriath-jearim

JUD, v.3  
 To the phrase 'To Arad in the Negev'

**DISCUSSION**

Sit back and compare the route system you have just highlighted with the green triangles (Solomon's fortifications) and green boxes (Rehoboam's fortifications). Note the main north-south ridge route from Jerusalem to Hebron through Judah's Hill Country heartland. Also note side ridge routes radiating from this heartland to the west into the Shephelah, to the south off the edge of the map into the Negev and even eastward to the Dead Sea beyond the SE edge of the map. Rehoboam had a secure hold on the Hill Country in these three directions. One wonders what policy he followed to the north in Benjamin (mentioned in 2 Chron 11). Since the fate of Benjamin was not yet decided and Rehoboam may not have wanted to establish a northern border with Israel (in hopes of winning the north back to Judah), he may not have applied the same priority in the territory of Benjamin as in Judah proper.

Note that Rehoboam's supply depots and military installations along the diagonal route of the Shephelah secured the western approaches to Judah's heartland. Special attention was given to the approaches to Hebron from the south and via the Shephelah where Rehoboam strengthened Socoh and Adullam along the route leading to Beth-zur. David had used Adullam as a stronghold in his flight from Saul (2 Sam 23:13-14; also 1 Sam 22:1-2), and from the hill to the north of Adullam the Philistines had surveyed Saul's camp. Like the Philistines, Rehoboam's garrison had a splendid view over the Hill Country and perhaps eye contact using signal fires.

#### MARKING ON JUD MAP

4. Red underline of sites from pharaoh Shishak's campaign list: Gezer (damaged on inscription but probable), Rubute, Aijalon, Kiriath-jearim and Baalath, Gibeon, Zemaraim (top right corner)
5. Blue sweeping arrows
  - a. From Gezer to Gibeon and passing near Rubute, Aijalon and Kiriath-jearim
  - b. From Gibeon to Zemaraim
6. Write in small, black caps along the first blue arrow: SHISHAK'S ATTACK

#### DISCUSSION

The Bible does not list Shishak's conquests. However, the pharaoh recorded his conquests in the Land Between on the walls of the Amon Temple at Karnak in Upper Egypt. He depicted the god Amon in large relief with a sickle-sword in his right hand. His left hand tightly holds cords which lead to small figures. Names on these figures represent the cities Shishak had conquered. Names from central Israel are included in the list and no doubt follow Shishak's route if the lines of the inscription are read in the proper order (like a snake twisting from left to right, then right to left, then left to right, etc.).

After taking Gaza on the southwestern coast, Shishak probably captured Gezer (a damaged name on the inscription) and from Gezer proceeded via the Aijalon Valley to Gibeon, destroying Beth-horon and Kiriath-jearim on the way. Shishak does not list Jerusalem as a conquered city. With Egypt's army poised for an attack from Gibeon, Rehoboam apparently decided to give Shishak what he had come for, the riches accumulated by Solomon. Shishak no doubt felt these belonged to Egypt in the first place since his predecessor had allowed Solomon to exploit commercial links along the Coastal Highway.

Jerusalem was saved from a siege and sacking, but Judah's infrastructure and its financial base were severely damaged. Shishak's list of conquests includes many sites in the Negev and farther south. Thus the extent of damage in Judah went far beyond the JUD map. Shishak could not have been happier. As usual, the Chronicler provides the spiritual reasons which lay behind Egypt's lightning attack.

#### READING

2 Chronicles 12:1-9

#### AN OVERVIEW FROM AZEKAH—VIEWS AND SELECTED EVENTS IN THE SHEPHELAH

As in our study of early regions, we again turn to the writing of George Adam Smith for a portion of his colorful description of the Shephelah in the Nineteenth Century (1966 reprint:143; 148-149):

Over the Plain, as you come up from the coast, you see a sloping moorland break into scarps and ridges of rock, and over these a loose gathering of chalk and limestone hills, round and featureless, with an occasional bastion flung out in front of them. This is the Shephelah—a famous theatre of the history of Palestine—debatable ground between Israel and the Philistines, the Maccabees and the Syrians, Saladin and the Crusaders.

Altogether it is a rough, happy land, with its glens and moors, its mingled brushwood and barley-fields; frequently under cultivation, but for the most part broken and thirsty, with few wells and many hiding-places; just the home for border-men like Samson, and just the theatre for that guerrilla warfare, varied occasionally by pitched battles, which Israel and Philistia, the Maccabees and the Syrians, Saladin and Richard waged with each other.

The chief encounters between those foes naturally took place in the wide valleys, which cut through the Shephelah maze. The strategic importance of these valleys can hardly be overrated, for they do not belong to the Shephelah alone. Each of them is continued by a defile into the heart of Judea, not far from an important city, and each has at its other end one of the five cities of the Philistines [but some misidentified in Smith's day]. To realise these valleys is to understand the wars that have been fought on the western watershed of Palestine from Joshua's time to Saladin's.

For an overview of the Shephelah we climb the lofty site of Azekah and enjoy the vista from its summit (347m/1138f). To the west one looks out onto the Coastal Plain beyond the cities of Gath and Ekron.

The hill of Gath (213m/699f) is clearly seen above lower surroundings at the mouth of the Elah Valley. Considering the prominence of both sites they no doubt were used as signal stations, perhaps by Philistine scouts from Gath when its troops invaded the Shephelah but certainly by Judah when its troops at Azekah relayed information to those watching from the edge of the Hill Country.

The view to the east presents an overwhelming panorama. The strength of the Judean Arch, the great upfold which formed the Hill Country, dominates the scene. It is a solid bulwark running from north to south where it rises over 670m/2200f above our vantage point and is clearly seen on the JUD map. Any army invading Judah from the west sooner or later came face to face with this limestone bulwark and had to search out the most practical ridge to follow to reach the interior. If we were to transport ourselves to the top of the Judean Arch (the high ground between Beth-zechariah and Adoraim), we could look down upon Azekah beyond these same ragged defiles and strong ridges and feel secure, far removed from the wars and rumor of wars along the Coastal Highway.

Back at Azekah we take a short walk around the circumference of the site and look down its steep slopes ('as high as an eagle's nest' as one Assyrian king wrote) to trace the network of routes which surround the site. The southern 'gate' between Socoh and Gath cannot be seen, but on the north we look straight down to the valley floor to the northern 'gate.' We are now ready to survey selected events which transpired here in the Shephelah. As you read, locate sites on the JUD or SCA maps mentioned below (not printed in bold). A few of these sites do not appear on either map.

#### EGYPTIAN DOMINANCE

During the period of Egyptian Dominance, **Joshua** led his militia in a surprise attack on those besieging Gibeon on the Central Benjamin Plateau. Forces from Jerusalem and Hebron in the Hill Country and from Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon in the Shephelah were routed before Joshua and fled down the Beth-horon Ridge Route into the Aijalon Valley. From there they turned south to the Sorek Valley. Some (perhaps all) fled south along the Diagonal Road 'as far as Azekah.' If Makkedah lies farther south along this route, perhaps at T. el-Judeida (Moresbeth-gath? on our map) as some believe, then we need look no further. However, others place Makkedah at Kh Beit Maqdam (in the southern Shephelah), which would mean some fled due south of the Aijalon Valley via the chalk moat and through a more complex region to Makkedah. Of course they also could have reached this Makkedah via other routes from Azekah. Thus the phrase 'as far as Azekah and as far as Makkedah' engenders considerable discussion.

Josh 10

After Israel settled in the Hill Country some problems persisted in the valleys and plains and access routes to the International Coastal Highway. Joshua had overcome the 'Hill Country of the Anakites,' but some still lived in the coastal cities of Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. Along with the remnants of these Anakites the Philistines still controlled the five principal cities of the coast: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron. We can see many of these regions from our position high on Azekah.

Josh 11:21-23

Josh 13:1-3

The tribe of **Judah** received the bulk of the Shephelah within its inheritance, including sites occupied by Anakites and Philistines. Some of Judah's three Shephelah districts can be seen from Azekah, and it is not surprising that Azekah is listed in Judah's second district, beside Shaaraim (see below).

Josh 15:33-47

#### NATIONS EMERGE AND COMPETE

'During **Saul's** entire reign there were difficult battles with the Philistines.' One battle was when young David prevailed over Goliath (studied above), and the Philistines rushed back to Gath and to Ekron. Scouts high on Azekah no doubt observed the flight of their comrades through passes (gates) on either side of Azekah. In 1 Samuel 17:52 we read that they fled 'until the narrow passage (*gai*)' which curves around north of Azekah while 'wounded Philistines fell along the way toward a pair of gates (*shaaraim*),' exiting the valley to Gath and Ekron. The name 'Shaaraim' (above) may have been given to the nearby and recently excavated site of Kh. Qeiyafa from David's days—which indeed has 'two gates.'

1 Sam 14:52

1 Sam 17

**David** continued the struggle against the Philistines. He relieved a Philistine raid on the threshing floors of Keilah, stood his ground against a raiding party at Lehi (probably northeast of Zanoah) and twice met the Philistines in battle when they blocked the main ridge route to Bethlehem, isolating David (who was in Jerusalem) from Judah. Most, if not all, of these Philistine raiding parties passed by Azekah, a sentinel along a principal route between Judah and Philistia. Other conflicts with the Philistines during David's years in Saul's service are probably not recorded, but as king in Jerusalem David secured Azekah and the rest of the Shephelah and overcame the Philistines, gaining access to the Coastal Highway.

1 Sam 23:1-13

2 Sam 23:9-14

2 Sam 5:17-25

1 Sam 18:12, 27, 30

2 Sam 8:1

1 Chron 18:1

cf. 1 Chron 20:4-8

Ironically, when Saul and Jonathan died in battle against the Philistines, David was living in Philistine territory and lamented their deaths, 'Tell it not in Gath; do not make an announcement in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.'

2 Sam 1:19-20

The location of **Rehoboam's** fortifications in the Shephelah suggests that he lost some of the western holdings of his father and grandfather to the Philistines and therefore decided to strengthen sites along the Diagonal Route, including Azekah, which became a border fortress.

2 Chron 11:5-12

**Asa**, Rehoboam's grandson, marched his armies past Azekah to face a Cushite (Ethiopian) invasion in a valley by Mareshah. Otherwise the invaders probably would have advanced up the Diagonal Route.

2 Chron 14:9-15

**Jehoshaphat**, Asa's son, recovered some of the western territories, placed garrisons in fortified cities and received tribute from some of the Philistines. Azekah probably was strengthened.

2 Chron 17:1-13

2 Kgs 8:20-22

2 Chron 21:16-17

**Jehoram**, Jehoshaphat's son, lost ground as Philistines in the west and Arabs to the south revolted, while his own Levites at Libnah (at one of the sites south of us) rejected Jehoram's apostasy. Azekah may have changed hands once again. Jehoram's loss was only the beginning of Judah's troubles.

2 Kgs 12:17-18

2 Chron 24:23-24

**Joash** (also Jehoash) saw Hazael's army of Damascus reach as far south as nearby Gath (if that is the Gath intended in the text and not Gittaim by Gezer). From Gath, Hazael prepared to march to Jerusalem and could have led his troops past Azekah had he not been paid off by Judah's king.

2 Kgs 14:11-20

2 Chron 25:20-28

**Amaziah**, Joash's son, challenged Jehoram of Israel, but Jehoram defeated Amaziah at Beth-shemesh in the Sorek Valley just north of Azekah and then ascended into the Hill Country to sack Jerusalem. Amaziah later escaped from a coup in Jerusalem, and his flight to Lachish probably took him past Azekah. His opponents followed, killed him and brought his body back to Jerusalem.

In almost every generation during this period something recorded in the Bible occurred in the regions we can see from the vantage point of Azekah. The worst, however, was yet to come.

#### EMPIRES CONTROL

2 Chron 26:1-16

Azekah witnessed expansion under **Uzziah**, who pushed through the Shephelah and captured Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod and built Judean settlements in the vicinity of Ashdod.

2 Chron 28:1-6, 16-21  
cf. 2 Kgs 16;  
Isa 7; 9:8-12;  
14:28-32

**Ahaz**, Uzziah's grandson, lost ground. An attack from the north, led by Pekah of Samaria and Rezin of Damascus, occupied his full attention. The Philistines were able to capture sites in the Negev and the Shephelah and place settlers in Aijalon, Beth-shemesh, Gederoth, Socoh, Timnah and Gimzo. Ahaz called to **Tiglath-pileser** of Assyria for help, and Tiglath-pileser annexed Philistia.

2 Kgs 18:1-8  
cf. Isa 30:1-5; 31:1-3

With Egypt's encouragement **Hezekiah**, Ahaz's son, expanded. He rebelled against Assyria, moved into Philistia, deposed the Assyrian puppet king of Ekron and prepared for the Assyrian reprisal.

**Sennacherib**, king of Assyria, retaliated. From his annals and the biblical text we can reconstruct his systematic campaign through the Shephelah. He came down the coast from the north and recaptured Aphek and Joppa along with other lesser cities in that area. He continued on to Timnah and then west to Ekron but had to engage an Egyptian army at Eltekeh, northwest of Ekron. When free to move against Judah again, he laid siege to Azekah and recorded his actions there in an address to his deity,

... against the land of Judah I marched ... the province of Hezekiah of Judah ... against the city of Azekah, his stronghold, which is between my border and the land of Judah ... like the nest of the eagle located on a mountain ridge, like pointed iron daggers without number reaching high to heaven ... its walls were strong and rivaled the mountains, to the mere sight as if from the sky appears its head ... the city Azekah I besieged, I captured ...

2 Kgs 18:13-19:37  
2 Chron 31:20-32:31  
Isa 36-37

From Azekah Sennacherib no doubt marched west to nearby Gath, then south to lay siege to Lachish and later attacked Libnah. His conquest of Lachish was a trophy, and on his return to Assyria he chose to decorate an inner room of his palace with reliefs illustrating his cruel siege of Lachish.

Azekah again witnessed expansion and rebuilding under **Josiah**. A Hebrew ostracon found at a coastal fort speaks of an Israelite governor residing there. This and other factors in Josiah's reign point to Judean expansion at the expense of the Philistines. The final chapter on the Judean Monarchy again focuses attention on the Shephelah and the significant fortresses of Azekah and Lachish. When **Zedekiah** rebelled against **Babylon**, Nebuchadnezzar moved against Judah. **Jeremiah** marked the steady progress of the Babylonian campaign with the bitter note,

Jer 34:6-7

Jeremiah the prophet spoke all of these words to Zedekiah, king of Judah, in [Judah's capital of] Jerusalem as the army of the king of Babylon was fighting at Lachish and Azekah—the only fortified cities left in Judah.

An ostracon from the gate area at Lachish notes further progress in the Babylonian campaign and records a message written a short time after Jeremiah's note above, perhaps by someone eagerly watching each night from a position high in the Hill Country of Judah.

Lachish Letter  
(4:10-13)

We are watching for the signal fires of Lachish ... we cannot see Azekah.

BEN, v.3

If you have version 3 of RSMAP7: BEN, notes such as this alert you to important updates in the BEN map

## VII. A WAY THROUGH THE HILLS BETWEEN IMPERIAL HIGHWAYS (BEN MAP)

(The following discussion also uses the ME, LB, NCA, and SCA maps.)

Our final regional study concentrates on the small but strategic Central Arena (Map A, RR 22). In spite of obstacles across this arena, it is the easiest way from the Transjordanian Highway to the Coastal Highway. A plateau in Transjordan, an oasis in the Jordan Valley, lower hills and a western valley all contribute to this passage which conveniently avoids the Dead Sea. Its importance is shown by the fact that the majority of biblical events which can be traced on a map of the Land Between occurred within this small Central Arena.

Of the many events which could be studied on the BEN map, the following have been chosen because they best illustrate the map's regional realities. The opening event, Event 20, relates entirely to the ME, LB, NCA and SCA maps and provides the context for the rest of the chapter. The specifics of Events 21-24 require the detailed terrain seen on the BEN or JUD maps. The events studied in this chapter are as follows:

1. Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness to the Medeba Plateau, the Central Arena's eastern staging ground for entry into Canaan; from there Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan River and mounted an assault on the oasis city of Jericho.
2. Joshua's subsequent tactics took his Israelite force across the Central Benjamin Plateau, down into the Shephelah and south along its routes, a sequence of events which cut across the Central Arena.
3. As Philistine forces held the Central Benjamin Plateau and highways descending to Jericho, Jonathan's single act of faith brought deliverance to the Land of Benjamin.
4. In the midst of David's confrontation with the Philistines his understanding of the local terrain allowed him to outmaneuver a larger force whose only retreat was via the Central Benjamin Plateau.
5. The story of 'Baasha, king of Israel,' and 'Asa, king of Judah,' recounted in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles, provides the clearest illustration of the importance of the Land of Benjamin for Ephraim and for Judah.

The chapter ends with an overview from the hilltop of Nebi Samwil where we survey Jerusalem's setting to the south, the strategic Central Benjamin Plateau to the north and the hills around Bethel beyond.

### EVENT 20: ISRAEL'S ENTRANCE—'GO UP INTO THE ABARIM RANGE TO MOUNT NEBO IN MOAB, ACROSS FROM JERICHO, AND VIEW CANAAN'

This event summarizes events leading up to Israel's entry into Canaan and provides the background for Event 21. As you read discussions below you will need four different maps: ME, LB, NCA and SCA.

**CHART: 4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

This chart presents five different chronologies of **Israelite Origins**. Chronologies #1, #2 and #3 accept the historicity of Jacob's move to Egypt (Gen 46), centuries of Israelite life in Egypt and Israel's miraculous exit ('exodus') from Egypt (Exod 12:33-50). Note colored boxes on these chronologies: brown for the period of the patriarchs, blue for the period spent in Egypt, red for the period spent in slavery and **Ex** for the Exodus. According to these views the period of slavery and the Exodus occurred during the era of **Egyptian Dominance** in the Land Between and along its imperial highways.

Chronologies #1 (followed here) and #2 place the Exodus around **-1445**, toward the beginning of the period of Egyptian Dominance. Egyptian chronology in this period remains fluid, but this date could point to the great **Thutmose III** of Egypt's Dynasty **18** (Event 12, GAL map) as the pharaoh who oppressed the Israelites. If so, his son, the powerful **Amenhotep II**, would be the pharaoh of the Exodus. Interestingly, Amenhotep II's first born son did not succeed him (cf. the Passover plague of Exod 12:29-32), but rather another son, Thutmose IV, whose unexpected ascension was foretold in his dream during an afternoon siesta between the paws of the great Sphinx.

Chronology #3 also accepts the historicity of the biblical accounts but considers the famous **Ramses II** of Egypt's Dynasty **19** (Event 5, LB map) to be the pharaoh of the Exodus. This would place the event toward the end of the period of Egyptian Dominance. In any case, during centuries of exceptional Egyptian strength, Israel left Egypt and waited in the Wilderness to enter the Land Between.

**DISCUSSION ON ME AND LB MAPS** (Find bold names on one of these maps.)

Open the ME and LB maps and place the lower part of the LB map over the top part of the ME map. On the ME map locate **Egypt**, **Sinai Peninsula**, **Elath**, **Kadesh**, **Gaza** and a shallow sea N of **Tjaru** in the eastern Nile Delta, on the **PRE-IRON AGE SHORE**. On the LB map locate **Gaza** and **Kadesh [barnea]**, an oasis area in the northern Sinai.

For centuries Israelites lived 'in the land of Goshen ... the best of the land' (Gen 46:34; 47:11) on the eastern side of the Nile Delta around **Avaris** (ME map). Egypt's new and nationalistic Dynasty 18 no doubt looked with disfavor upon the status Israelites had enjoyed under Egypt's former alien rulers (the so-called 'Hyksos'). Soon the Israelites became forced laborers in an ambitious building program. It is well known that Thutmose III built extensively at **No-amon**, modern **Luxor** in southern Egypt. Evidence also suggests that he built in northern Egypt and in the eastern Nile Delta.

Thutmose vigorously campaigned in Canaan, the Land Between. His armies would have had to exit Egypt via Tjaru since the area to the N was still part of the Mediterranean Sea. New evidence reveals Egypt's fortifications guarding this important 'Way of Horus,' gateway into Egypt and its pharaoh's direct commercial and military link with Canaan. Within this setting Chronology #1 places Israel's exodus around -1445, in the days of Amenhotep II, son of Thutmose III. Two centuries later, Ramses II extensively built in the Nile delta, and he attached his name to one of the region's chief cities (Exod 1:11).

When Israel left Egypt 'God did not lead them by the route to the land of the Philistines [the "Way of Horus" leading to **Gaza**], since it was near' (Exod 13:17). Traveling along it would have brought the Israelites face to face with pharaoh's security forces, and they soon might have found themselves back in Egypt. Instead Moses was instructed to lead the children of Israel 'in the direction of the Wilderness of the **Red Sea** (*yam suf* which could be translated "Sea/Lake of Reeds").' This path took them through the **W. (WADI) TUMILAT** and by Pithom. It was here that Moses was told, 'Return' to the region 'between *migdol* (fortress) and the sea' (i.e., the Mediterranean Sea, Exod 14:2). The Israelites thus returned precisely to where pharaoh's pursuing army easily could corner them. We are given the reason for this apparent suicide strategy, a thrice repeated divine declaration, paraphrased in order to catch its profound meaning: 'What is about to happen to pharaoh and his forces will show to all that *glory* is mine alone' (Exod 14:4, 17, 18). To appreciate this fully one has only to consider Egypt's glory and military might.

Once delivered on the other side of this inland sea, the Israelite sojourn in Egypt was over and there was no turning back. Something much more important, however, had transpired: a conversion experience, for 'Israel had seen the mighty act that the LORD had performed against Egypt and had recognized who the LORD is and put their trust in the LORD—and in Moses his servant' (Exod 14:31). This event, above all others in the Exodus story, demonstrated where true greatness and glory reside, and it was not in the courts of imperial Egypt in the days of Moses. His song of salvation makes this clear (Exod 15:4-7).

#### OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Israel's deliverance from imperial Egypt has been recounted on each Passover for millennia. As succeeding generations spiritually participated in this feast they were reminded that on the first Passover Israel's deliverance came against all human odds and without any human assistance. In this context the writer of the Gospel of John introduces Jesus' final Passover in Jerusalem. We are told that religious leaders in Jerusalem decided to take action in order to deliver the Jewish nation from potential destruction by the greatest worldly power of that day (John 11:45-53). 'Six days before Passover,' after some Greeks requested an audience with Jesus, we hear a three-fold proclamation of Heaven's 'glory' followed by the prediction that 'this world's ruler will soon be driven out [make his *exodus*!]' (John 12:20-33). From this point on, the theme of 'glory,' heard throughout the Gospel of John, takes on a special meaning in the context of Passover, especially as Jesus spiritually prepares to meet Jerusalem's religious authorities and Pilate, the representative of Rome, and 'this world's ruler.' The first mention of 'glory' in the Gospel of John (1:14-18) should be understood in light of what happened at Passover, to Moses and to Jesus.

**DISCUSSION ON ME AND LB MAPS** (Find bold names on one of these maps.)

The lesson Israel learned at the seashore on the way to the Wilderness appears to have been forgotten throughout subsequent months as Israel made its way to Mt. Sinai, received the Law at Mt. Sinai and journeyed to **Kadesh** on the edge of Canaan (LB map and ME map). There was still no option of entering the land via the region of Gaza where Egyptian garrisons continued to maintain their strong hold on Egypt's 'front door' into the Land Between. An option, however, was to enter the land via the **Negev** and the hill country of **Hebron** without the fear of Egyptian garrisons. Israel's refusal to trust the LORD of the Exodus and to enter Canaan from Kadesh caused a delay, and for forty years the same LORD of the Exodus refused to grant entrance to Israel (Num 13-14).

When the forty years came to an end, Egyptian armies still controlled the region of Gaza, and we find Moses and the children of Israel making their way far to the south in the direction of **Elath** on the **Red Sea** (ME map), then heading north along the Desert Highway in Transjordan to avoid the regions of

**Edom and Moab** (LB map) and finally making preparations to enter the Medeba Plateau, the 'back door' to the Land Between (Num 20:14-21:30; Deut 1:46-2:37).

**MARKING/DISCUSSION ON LB MAP** (The context of later work on the BEN map)

1. HL the regional names of MOAB and AMMON (EDOM should already be HL)
 

Biblically the Edomites, the Moabites and the Ammonites claimed distant relationships with Israel through Abraham—Moab and Ammon via Abraham's nephew Lot, and Edom via Abraham's grandson Esau. By using the Desert Highway Israel circumvented the Edomites and Moabites, not confronting them nor claiming their land (Deut 2:4-5, 9). In the same way Israel avoided the Ammonites, whose territory surrounded the Ammonite center of Rabbah (Deut 2:19).
2. Write in small, black caps
  - a. Find Zoar just S of the Dead Sea at the mouth of the Zered Canyon. Follow the deep Zered Canyon E to the second highlighted route, the Desert Highway. Write ZERED CAMP at the E end of the Zered Canyon near the Desert Highway.
  - b. Find Aroer and Dibon on the northern side of the Arnon Canyon. Follow the Arnon Canyon E (not the SE branch) to the second highlighted route, the Desert Highway. Write ARNON CAMP near the Desert Highway but S of the canyon.

Details in Numbers 21:13 and the language of Deuteronomy 2:24-26 suggest that Israel had not yet crossed the Arnon when Moses asked the Amorite king Sihon at Heshbon for peaceful passage.

They camped on the opposite side of the Arnon, which is in the desert that goes out/away from the Amorite border, for the Arnon was the border between Moab and the Amorites.
3. Red on the city dot of Jahaz (northeast of Aroer) = Israel's confrontation with Sihon
4. Blue box around dot of Heshbon = Sihon's capital
5. Four sweeping green arrows
  - a. From near the bottom of the map northward along the Desert Highway to the ZERED CAMP
  - b. From the ZERED CAMP to the ARNON CAMP
  - c. From the ARNON CAMP to Jahaz
  - d. From Jahaz to Heshbon
6. E of arrow 'a' above write in small, black caps: MOSES MOVES AROUND EDOM AND MOAB
7. Underline Heshbon in red = Israel's victory over Sihon and the Amorites
8. Red on city dots of Jazer (north of Heshbon) and Edrei (in Bashan) = other victories over Amorites

#### READING

Numbers 21:10-31; Deuteronomy 2:24-37

#### DISCUSSION

Israel planned to move northwest from the Arnon Camp across the network of routes on the Medeba Plateau, an area controlled by Sihon, the Amorite king at Heshbon. Moses sought safe passage from Sihon but the Amorite king sent troops to stop Israel at Jahaz. The Amorites were defeated, and Israel took possession of Sihon's land from the Arnon to Gilead but 'did not approach the land of the Ammonites' (Deut 2:37). It was in this context that the Amorite site of Jazer on the road between Heshbon and Jogbehah was taken (Num 21:32).

The poem in Numbers 21:27-30 is interesting on two levels. First, it appears to be an Amorite victory-song from an earlier era when the Amorites took the Medeba Plateau and mercilessly pursued Moab. Israel turned this Amorite song into a taunt, from the opening mocking challenge, 'just try rebuilding Sihon's city' (v. 27), to judgment on Sihon at the end as 'we totally destroyed' (v. 30). More important for our study is the fact that this song tells us how three entities, each in their own time, controlled the strategic Medeba Plateau: the Moabites, Sihon the Amorite and now the Israelites.

The Bible records that the Israelites carefully respected regional claims of Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites when they arrived in the Land Between. In later history, however, as east-west trade developed, Israel and these same peoples bitterly fought for control of major trade routes, including those through the Medeba Plateau. Ammonites made exaggerated claims that their land had originally extended from the Arnon Canyon in the south to the Jabbok Canyon in the north and westward to the

Jordan (Judg 11:13). Jephthah countered this claim by recalling events discussed above (Judg 11:14-27). Eglon of Moab asserted Moabite control over the Medeba Plateau, pushing west of the Jordan to seize Jericho, 'the City of the Palms' (Judg 3:12-14). Mesha of Moab carried out a merciless campaign against Israelites on the Medeba Plateau (Event 15, SCA map). Farther south, Judah challenged the Edomites for control of southern trade, and Edomites encroached upon Judah (Event 17, SCA map). The record of Israel's respect for Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites in the days of Moses stands in stark contrast to later violent relations and presents difficulty for those who claim that the story of Israel's arrival was contrived centuries later to establish Israel's claims. The burden of proof is not upon the biblical text.

#### MARKING ON NCA (NOT LB) MAP

1. HL on city names: Heshbon, Jazer (Kh. es-Sar), Edrei
2. Three sweeping green arrows
  - a. From Heshbon to Jazer
  - b. From Jazer directly N to Gerasa via Jogbehah to join the route N by the name Abu Nuseir
  - c. From Gerasa to Edrei
3. Write in small, black caps to the E of the last arrow: ISRAEL AGAINST OG
4. Underline Jazer and Edrei in red = battle against Og of Bashan

#### READING

Numbers 21:32-35; Deuteronomy 3:1-11

#### DISCUSSION ON NCA MAP

The necessity of passing through the Medeba Plateau on the way to Canaan explains Israel's confrontation with the king of Heshbon (LB map). Southern Bashan, however, was not on their intended route, and no reason is given for Israel's battle with the Amorites in the region of Edrei. In addition, Bashan is an area of Egyptian influence. The NCA map shows that Edrei was located at an important crossroads south of Ashtaroth, the main Egyptian center in the region of Bashan. Edrei was also included in the list of cities conquered by Thutmose III (Event 12, GAL map), and the area was known by Egyptian scribes in the times of Ramses II (Event 5, LB map). Map B, RR 14 shows the importance of this area.

The Bible, however, consistently associates early Israelite settlement with the regions of Gilead and southern Bashan. Numbers 32:40-42 seems to reflect a three-fold process of Israelite settlement beginning in Gilead, expanding to villages called 'Havvoth [encampments of]-jair' (on NCA map W of Edrei) and finally reaching Kenath on Jebel (Mt) Druze (both E off NCA map). This process may have begun in the reign of pharaoh Thutmose IV and continued during the reign of pharaoh Amenhotep III. Unlike their forefather Thutmose III, they were busy elsewhere. A letter of complaint (Amarna No. 197) sent to the next pharaoh (Amenhotep IV, called 'Akhenaten') in his Egyptian capital at el-Amarna notes problems in the region of Bashan, including chariots given to 'alien renegades,' a term which could well apply to the Israelites. Numerous verses associate the site of Ramoth-gilead with the tribe of Gad, and by the period of the Judges we hear of 'Jair of Gilead' and 'thirty cities called Havvoth-jair ... in the land of Gilead,' and of 'Jephthah of Gilead ... in the land of Tob' (Map B, RR 14; Judg 10:3-5; 11:1-3; 1 Chron 2:22). In later centuries Solomon administered from Ramoth-gilead (1 Kgs 4:13), and northern Israel's claim on this area emerges in descriptions of later battles in the region (Event 11; 1 Kgs 22; 2 Kgs 9).

Early phases of Israelite settlement in Gilead could have resulted in a confrontation with Edrei, the major Amorite settlement standing in the way of the expanding Israelites. This could have occurred in the period between the arrival of the Israelites on the Medeba Plateau and their crossing of the Jordan in Joshua 1. The length of this period is not specified, and some time may have elapsed as reflected in the detailed accounts of the tribal settlement by Reuben and Gad and the intermingling of Israelites with local populations (Num 25:1-9). Finally, Israel formally prepared to enter Canaan.

#### MARKING ON NCA MAP

5. HL on name: Beth-jeshimoth, Abel-shittim, Jericho (the northern, non-italicized name), JORDAN RIVER, MT. NEBO and Pisgah
6. Write in small, black caps in two lines: PLAINS (above Livias, Julias), OF MOAB (below Beth-ramatha); first place HL on the areas where you will write the name
7. Sweeping green arrow from Heshbon to the Plains of Moab

NCA, v.3  
 PLAINS OF MOAB  
 appears on the map;  
 HL the name

**READING AND DISCUSSION**

Numbers 22:1; 33:47-49

From the Desert Highway to the Plains of Moab

Numbers 27:12-23; Deut 3:21-29; 32:44-52

Reciting the Law, Moses denied entry, Joshua chosen

Deuteronomy 34

Moses 'at the top of Pisgah' on Mt. Nebo

Moses' words to the children of Israel before they crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan lie at the core of the biblical message (Deut 1-11, especially 6-11). They are the fundamental building stones of biblical faith and lean heavily upon the geographical and political context the Land Between to demonstrate how this land would become a 'testing ground of faith' for Israel (see RR 5, 6). Through the millennia these words have remained Israel's 'credo,' and in the nearby Wilderness, Jesus countered the tempter by quoting exclusively from these words of Moses (Matt 4:1-11). With this in mind we join Israel; prepare to cross the Jordan and enter 'a good land' but a land in which 'you can quickly perish' (Deut 11:10-17).

**MARKING ON SCA (NOT NCA) MAP**

1. HL on names: Abel-shittim, Beth-jeshimoth, Pisgah, and MT. NEBO
2. Write in small, black caps on SCA map (cf. NCA map but S of Beth-ramatha): PLAINS OF MOAB

**DISCUSSION ON SCA MAP**

Like Moses, climb from the Plains of Moab to Mount Nebo (on the SCA map) in order to view the land of Canaan and the obstacles which lay before Israel. Three great difficulties lie directly west of Medeba: 1) steep slopes (in Hebrew the *Abarim*, or 'Regions Across' from Canaan) drop some 1200m/4000f to the Dead Sea, 2) the pungent waters of the Dead Sea itself, and 3) sheer limestone cliffs west of the Dead Sea which rise to the arid Wilderness. These features are clearly seen on the SCA map.

The obstacles noted above force traffic across the Lower Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea. Routes from the Medeba Plateau to Jericho are attractive for various reasons. First of all, ridges descending to the valley from the Medeba Plateau are easier to navigate. Secondly, travel across the valley is hindered only by the Jordan River, a sluggish, meandering stream today, but difficult to cross in antiquity during its spring flood stage. Thirdly, fertile farmland can be found on both sides of the Jordan, in the Plains of Moab, where alluvial soil and small streams encourage settlement, and in the region of Jericho, where springs create lush oases. A steep limestone scarp rises directly west of Jericho, but nearby slopes afford easier ascents to ridges leading to the central Hill Country. Explore the approach to Jericho from Medeba on the SCA map and note how Jericho is the natural 'back door' to central Canaan.

Jericho's strategic position is underscored by routes linking it to the central Hill Country. Note them on the SCA map west of Jericho: 1) to Bethel with a side route to Gibeon via Michmash and Ramah, 2) to Jerusalem, and 3) to Ophrah. The Ai/Michmash area is particularly important since it is the first line of defense against invaders coming from Jericho and leads to Gibeon and routes descending to the 'front door' of central Canaan, the Aijalon Valley with convenient links to the Coastal Highway. Run your finger across the SCA map from the Medeba Plateau through Jericho and Gibeon to the Aijalon Valley and Coastal Highway. This is 'A Way Through the Hills Between Imperial Highways,' the name of this chapter of the Guide. The majority of events recorded in the Bible can be traced along these routes.

Many others besides Moses and the Israelites have stood on the high scarp of the Medeba Plateau near Nebo and Pisgah and looked west across the Rift Valley to Jericho and the Hill Country beyond. They included Moabites, traders with their camel caravans, Arameans from Damascus, Nabateans from Arabia, Greek merchants and even imperial armies from Assyria and from Rome. They sought either commercial gain or military conquest, but all understood that this 'back door' of central Canaan offered direct access to regions and routes west of the Jordan. Moses contemplated this view and deeply desired to cross the Jordan River, but it was Joshua who led Israel into their promised land.

**MARKING ON SCA MAP**

3. Optional: trace the Jordan River with a light blue pencil
4. HL on names: JORDAN RIVER, Adam, Gilgal (near Jericho)
5. Red circle around Jericho (the northern site)
6. Sweeping green arrows (either below or above the orange arrows already drawn on this map)
  - a. From Mt. Nebo to the Plains of Moab (written in); write in small, black caps: MOSES
  - b. From the Plains of Moab to Jericho's red circle; write in small, black caps: JOSHUA

**DISCUSSION AND READING**

A sequence of momentous events occurred as Israel entered Canaan. Joshua of the prominent tribe of Ephraim took command, Israel crossed the Jordan (in spring when the river is normally running high), the feast of Passover was celebrated, manna ceased as Israel ate the produce of the land and Jericho was conquered. In this context we are given geographical information about Jericho and the surrounding region (seen on the BEN map). After conspiring with Rahab in Jericho, Joshua's spies hid in a nearby limestone canyon or in the secluded hills of the chalky Wilderness west of the city.

They left [Jericho] and headed for the hills [west of the city] and stayed there for three days until their pursuers [gave up and] returned to Jericho. Their pursuers searched every route but found nothing. The two men [in hiding] then turned back [toward Jericho], and descending from the hills, crossed over [the Jordan] and came to Joshua son of Nun. They told him all about what had happened to them. (Josh 2:22-23)

Read Joshua 1-6 keeping the SCA map in view.

**DISCUSSION OF JERICHO'S HISTORY**

The most remarkable feature of Jericho is the region's oases. Springs emerge in several places, and one of the largest is at the base of ancient Jericho, in Arabic called Tel es-Sultan (the site circled in red on the SCA map). The combination of water (emerging from underground springs fed from limestone hills farther west), soil (deposited on the plain from canyons in these same hills) and climate (warm and sunny during most of the year) makes Jericho renowned for a wide variety of agricultural products, especially dates and balsam (used in ancient ointments).

Jericho's fame began in the New Stone Age/Neolithic Period. Walls, a tower and other finds at the site reveal a society organized into what could be called the world's first 'city.' Its ruins were millennia old by the time Abraham and his nephew Lot arrived in the land, and other cities had arisen. After returning from the lush Nile Valley of Egypt Abraham and Lot kept herds in the Hill Country northeast of Bethel, an area with stunning panoramic views of the Jordan Valley. Following a disagreement we read that 'Lot looked out and saw all the broad plains of the Jordan—all under irrigation ... like the garden of the LORD, like Egypt ... and chose [to move to] these broad plains of the Jordan' (Gen 13:10-11). Lot's departure from the harsh hills to the watered plains signalled his departure from Abraham's journey of faith.

After the fall of Jericho Joshua placed a curse on the city (Josh 6:26). The archaeological record confirms that the long tradition of building at the site halted sometime around -1400. The king of Moab coveted and for a short period controlled this 'city of palms' and its resources (Judg 3:12-30), but it was Ahab, king of Israel, who blatantly ignored Joshua's curse, rebuilt Jericho and made it his oasis gateway to the Medeba Plateau, an area which attracted growing caravan commerce from Arabia (1 Kgs 16:34).

In later periods the region of Jericho could not be ignored, and when Mark Anthony of Rome wanted to impress Cleopatra of Egypt he gifted the region's taxes to her. When King Herod finally gained control of the area, he used its natural resources to improve on what the Jewish Hasmonians (Maccabees) had already done by constructing a beautiful winter palace with supporting facilities at Jericho (the italicized name on the SCA and BEN maps). Destroyed at king Herod's death, Jericho was rebuilt by his son Archelaus and remained a thriving center, rich in taxes as we hear in the story of Zacchaeus, who exploited his position as tax collector in this coveted area (Luke 19:1-10; top of RR 37). During this period Jesus and his disciples often passed through this affluent and historic region.

All of this points to Jericho's unique character and unusual natural setting. The account of Joshua's conquest contains two statements about Jericho which stand out against this background. The first occurred in the season of Passover when the 'products of the land' were readily available here.

The Israelites set up camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover on the eve of the fourteenth day of the month, there on the plains of Jericho. Starting the day after Passover, right on that day, they ate what came from the land itself—unleavened bread and roasted [grain]. And the day after they ate off the land, the manna ceased. The Israelites had no more manna, and that year they ate the produce of the land of Canaan. (Josh 5:10-12)

The second statement was Joshua's interdiction on resettling Jericho, which for millennia had been one of the most attractive locations in the land. No reason is given, but Joshua no doubt saw it as potentially dangerous, especially in light of Lot's fate after he left Abraham and the stern warning of Moses about the danger of success for those called to walk by faith in the Land Between (Deut 8, especially vv. 17-18).

Cursed be the man—before the LORD—who shall come out here and reconstruct this city Jericho. On [the life of] his oldest son he shall lay its foundations, and on [the life of] his youngest son shall he set up its gates. (Josh 6:26)

BEN, v.3

Note three site dots at 'Jericho Palaces'

**READ**

RR 22-23: The Central Arena

RR 24-25: Gateways In and Out of Benjamin

**MARKING ON SCA MAP**

7. HL on city names: Joppa (on the coast), Gezer (SE of Joppa) and Gibeon (NW of Jerusalem)
8. HL the route from Medeba to Jericho (via Pisgah and Livias, Julias); from Jericho to Gibeon (via Michmash and Geba); from Gibeon to Joppa (via the two Beth-horons); from Joppa to Aphek

**DISCUSSION**

Our work thus far provides the larger setting for events which will be studied on the BEN map. The Joppa-Aphek-Gezer Triangle, an important part of the route highlighted above, is partly seen on the BEN map. This important region along the Coastal Highway was used as a staging area for imperial armies intent upon invading the central Hill Country from the west. Event 19 (JUD map) shows how king Rehoboam of Judah strengthened defenses along this western approach by adding Aijalon (a box) to Solomon's fortifications (triangles). It also shows the routes pharaoh Shishak's army used in its march from the Gezer through the Aijalon Valley to the Central Benjamin Plateau. Pharaoh Shishak, however, was only one of many to make use of this staging area, as we now hear in the words of George Adam Smith, who gives a punctuated historical review of this 'front door' on central Canaan.

Throughout history we see hosts swarming up this avenue [the Aijalon Valley with Gezer at its mouth], or swept down it in flight. At the head of it invading Israel emerged from the Jordan Valley, and looked over the Shephelah towards the sea. Joshua drove the Canaanites down to Makkedah in the Shephelah on that day when such long work had to be done that he bade the sun stand still for its accomplishment [Josh 10:10]; down Aijalon the early men of Ephraim and Benjamin raided the Philistines [1 Chron 7:21; 8:13]; up Aijalon the Philistines swarmed to the heart of Israel's territory at Michmash, disarmed the Israelites, and forced them to come down the Vale to get their tools sharpened ... down Aijalon Saul and Jonathan beat the Philistines from Michmash [1 Sam 13-14], and by the same way, soon after his accession, King David smote the Philistines—who had come up about Jerusalem either by this route or the gorges leading from the Vale of Sorek—from Gibeon until thou come to Gezer [2 Sam 5:25; 1 Chron 14:31], that looks right up Aijalon. Ages later this rout found a singular counterpart. In a.d. 66 a Roman army under Cestius Gallus came up from Antipatris on the 'Aujeh by way of Aijalon. When they entered the gorges of the Central Range, they suffered from the sudden attacks of the Jews; and, although they set Jerusalem on fire and occupied part of it, they suddenly retreated by the way they had come. The Jews pursued, and, as far as Antipatris, smote them in thousands, as David had smitten the Philistines [Josephus, Wars ii.19].

... it was in the time of the Maccabean wars and in the time of the Crusades that this part of the Shephelah was most famously contested.

We have already seen that the Plain of Aijalon, with its mouth turned slightly northwards, lay open to the roads down the Maritime Plain from Carmel. It was, therefore, the natural entrance into Judea for the Syrian armies who came south by the coast;... The battles rolled—for the battles in the Shephelah were always rolling battles—between Beth-horon and Gezer, and twice the pursuit of the Syrians extended across the last ridges of the Shephelah to Jamnia and Ashdod [1 Macc 3, 4, 7, 9]. Jonathan swept right down to Joppa and won it [1 Macc 10:75-76]. (The Historical Geography of the Holy Land, 1966 [reprint]:149-151)

One point in the Northern Shephelah, round which these tides of war have swept, deserves special notice—Gezer, or Gazar. It is one of the few remarkable bastions which the Shephelah flings out to the west ... the most prominent object in view of the traveller from Jaffa towards Jerusalem.... The name occurs in the Egyptian correspondence of the fourteenth century,... A city of the Canaanites, under a king of its own—Horam—Gezer is not given as one of Joshua's conquests, though the king is [Josh 10:33]; but the Israelites drove not out the Canaanites who dwelt at Gezer [Josh 16:3, 10; Judg 1:19], and in the hands of these it remained till its conquest by Egypt whose Pharaoh gave it, with his daughter, to Solomon, and Solomon rebuilt it [1 Kgs 9:15-17]. Judas Maccabaeus was strategist enough to gird himself early to the capture of Gezer, and Simon fortified it to cover the way to the harbour of Joppa, and caused John, his son, the captain of the host, to dwell there [1 Macc 13:43, 53]. It was virtually the key of Judea at a time when Judea's foes came down the coast from the north; and, with Joppa, it formed part of the Syrian demands upon the Jews [1 Macc 15:28]. But this is by no means the last of it....

Shade of King Horam, what hosts of men have fallen round that citadel of yours! On what camps and columns has it looked down through the centuries, since first you saw the strange Hebrews burst with the sunrise across the hills, and chase your countrymen down Aijalon—that day when the victors felt the very sun conspire with them to achieve the unexampled length of battle.... If all could rise who have fallen around its base—Ethiopians, Hebrews, Assyrians, Arabs, Turcomans, Greeks, Romans, Celts, Saxons, Mongols, and English—what a rehearsal of the Judgement Day it would be! (The Historical Geography of the Holy Land, 1966 [reprint]:153-154)

**EVENT 21: JOSHUA'S MARCH—'AFTER AN ALL NIGHT CLIMB FROM GILGAL ...****ISRAEL PURSUED THEM ALONG THE ASCENT OF BETH-HORON'****EXPLORING THE BEN MAP** (Find bold names on the map.)

Our work on the SCA map introduced the larger context of the BEN map. By comparing the BEN and SCA maps you can see how the BEN map offers a detailed view of part of the SCA map. It may also be helpful to compare this area on the BEN finder map (lower right) with the Central Arena (RR 22-23).

The lower left quadrant of the BEN map shows part of the **Shephelah**, including the **Aijalon**, **Sorek** and **Elah Valleys** and ridges rising steeply to the Hill Country of **Judah**. The Philistine cities of **Gath** and **Ekron** lie along the southwestern limits of the map. You may want to compare this area to the entire Shephelah on the JUD map. Although the JUD and BEN maps are not drawn to the same scale, overlapping common areas on these maps gives you a good idea of how they relate to each other.

The top left quadrant of the BEN map shows the **Coastal Plain** dominated by the cities of **Lod** and **Aphék**. The site of **Ono** along the main branch of the International Coastal Highway is situated on higher ground above a flat plain where the term 'Coastal Plain' appears. Modern Israel's international airport is located here. Low limestone hills rise to the east of this plain, but unlike the Shephelah to the south there are no convenient valleys reaching eastward to the foot of the Hill Country. These hills soon become a maze of high ridges and deep V-shaped canyons in an area the Bible calls the '**Remote Interior of Ephraim**' (Judg 19:1, 18). Early Israelites and later Maccabees found refuge in this secluded area. The inheritance of the faithful Joshua of Ephraim was around **Timnath-serah/heres** along the region's most beautiful ridge route, while the birthplace of the renegade Jeroboam of Ephraim, who led the northern tribes into full-blown apostasy, was the site of **Zeredah** at the end of a nearby ridge.

The top right quadrant of the BEN map includes some of the most scenic parts of the Hill Country of Ephraim, including a fertile valley just south of the early Israelite sanctuary of **Shiloh**. Shiloh lies off of the highway which makes its way north from **Bethel** (Judg 21:19). It soon descends to canyon floors, passes beneath **Jeshanah**, climbs to the edge of the valley near Shiloh and then falls into the beautiful valley of **Lebonah**. From nearby **Anuathu Borcaeus** it makes its way north to Shechem, a full morning's walk beyond the northern border of the BEN map. To the east lies the deep **Rift Valley** and within it the smaller river valley of the Jordan with a major ford across the river near the site of **Adam**.

The lower right part of the BEN map is undoubtedly the map's most famed quadrant. **Jerusalem** and **Bethlehem** can be seen along the north-south highway through the Hill Country. Like Shiloh, Jerusalem lies off the main highway. North of Jerusalem the sites of **Gibeah**, **Gibeon** and **Mizpah** outline the strategic **Central Benjamin Plateau**, a bitterly disputed area between Judah in the south and Ephraim in the north. To the east the chalky canyons of the **Wilderness** drain to the **Rift Valley** and the **Dead Sea**. The arid character of this desolate area is relieved by lush oases around **Jericho**.

Sit back and survey this map. Its contrasting regions—the Shephelah, the Remote Places of Ephraim, the Central Benjamin Plateau and Judah's uplifted Hill Country—were bordered by the cosmopolitan Coastal Plain in the west and the secluded Wilderness and the Jordan Valley in the east. Find the network of routes between the Aijalon Valley and the oases of Jericho. These were used by Philistines, Assyrians, Greeks, Romans and others who reluctantly invaded the Hill Country to contain zealous nationalists. Both Ephraim and Judah needed these same routes in order to move out of the hills and overtake important trade routes to the west and to the east. This made the Land of Benjamin a battlefield between northern and southern Israelites. Within this setting the Benjaminites became warriors *par excellence*, a fact echoed in Jacob's strange blessing on his youngest son, Benjamin (Gen 49:27).

Benjamin is a ferocious wolf; in the morning he is devouring the prey,  
and until nightfall he is dividing up the spoil.

**READING**

RR 26-27: Central Benjamin Plateau and Approaches

**CHART: 4000 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

Event 21 chronologically follows Israel's entrance into the land (Event 20). According to Chronologies #1 and #2 (4000 Year Overview chart) Israel left Egypt around -1445 during Dynasty 18. Campaigns through the Land Between by **Thutmose III** and **Amenhotep II** had established an Egyptian empire which reached into Aram to the border of the kingdom of **Mitanni**.

BEN, v.3  
Where the name  
'Ono Alluvial Plain'  
appears

BEN, v.3  
Find near Timnah-  
serah: 'Joshua's/  
Joseph's spring-filled  
inheritance'

Forty years later, after the short reign of Thutmose IV, Egypt entered a period of satiated opulence and overindulgence. Thutmose IV and his successor Amenhotep III maintained their hold on the Land Between but no longer campaigned against Mitanni. Both married Mitannian princesses in order to establish a united front against a new and growing power, the **Hittites** from **Anatolia**.

Egypt seemed self-assured during this period and had little need of a conquering pharaoh like Thutmose III or daring leaders in sport and campaign such as Amenhotep II. Militarism was giving way to a more relaxed state of affairs, one in which Amenhotep III could devote himself to extensive building programs in Egypt and to the south in Nubia and Sudan. Monumental building, sometimes in a unrefined style, introduced larger proportions which became popular during Dynasty 19 over a century later. Works with more intimate design foreshadowed the **El Amarna Age** when Egypt looked inward and lost sight of the politics of Canaan. Local leaders in the Land Between vainly sent letters to pharaoh **Akhenaten** (Amenhotep IV) complaining about incursions by neighboring city-states and by marauding renegades called 'Apiru. According to Chronologies #1 and #2, toward the beginning of this period Joshua and the Israelites entered the Land Between and settled the central Hill Country. They then conducted campaigns which ensured a continued Israelite presence in a country which nevertheless remained under the control of Egypt. The Israelites may well have contributed to the general disorder in the land, clearly expressed in scores of complaints sent by leaders in Canaan to pharaoh Akhenaten.

**MARKING ON BEN MAP**

1. HL Jericho (non-italicized, just below the -224m/-735f elevation mark)

The site name just highlighted, Tel es-Sultan in Arabic, is the ancient site of Jericho. The italicized name of Jericho near the fortress of Threx, Tulul Abu el-Alaiq in Arabic, marks a later site of palatial and industrial buildings in the days of the Hasmoneans and Herodians (the late Greek and early Roman period). 'Byzantine Jericho' became a center during the centuries of Christian Byzantine rule, and it remains the center of today's Jericho.

BEN, v.3

'WILDERNESS'  
spread S-N;  
HL just letters

2. HL WILDERNESS and BENJAMIN
3. HL on route: the main north-south route through the Hill Country, from the northern edge of the map (above Anuathu Borcaeus) S along the black road past Lebonah, Jeshanah, Bethel, Elasa, Mizpah, Gibeah, Jerusalem and Beth-haccherem, continuing S along the black route E of the term 'JUDAH,' west of the site of Etam and off the map at the grid mark (165 km)

**DISCUSSION ON BEN MAP** (Find bold names on the map.)

Regional features on the BEN map illuminate the story of the Israelite entry into the Hill Country after the fall of Jericho. **Jericho** lies at -224m/-735f (below sea level) while the mountains around Bethel rise to 914m/2999f. The climb from Jericho to the area of **Bethel** therefore represents an ascent of over 1100m/3600f in some 20km/12mi. Joshua told his spies to 'climb up and scout out the land.' They made the ascent to the region of Ai and upon their return told Joshua, 'don't let all the people make the climb ... don't make all the people toil up there ...' (Josh 7:2, 3). They knew the difficulties of the ascent. Examine the Jericho-Ai route via the **Zeboim Valley** noting elevations along the way.

BEN, v.3

In this paragraph,  
note that the route  
often stays near dot-  
ted watershed lines

We now look at elevations in the Hill Country along the north-south route you highlighted above, remembering that higher ground on the BEN map stands out as a lighter color. Note elevations around **Bethel** and along the route as it passes through the **Mt. Zemaraim** area. Elevations are lower on the **Central Benjamin Plateau** south of **Mizpah** but rise slightly by **Gibeah** as the route makes its way south along a ridge. The route crosses another plateau west of **Jerusalem** before crossing the upper reaches of the Rephaim Valley south of Jerusalem and continuing by **Bethlehem**. The entire route stays on higher ground near the top of the watershed ridge, the natural divide between the eastern and the western drainage systems, seen as the deep, V-shaped canyons on either side of the route. Our study now turns to connections between the strategic oasis of Jericho and this Hill Country route.

**MARKING ON BEN MAP**

4. HL canyon names on the eastern side of the map from N to S: AUJA, MAKKUK, KELT, MUKALLIK, KIDRON, and SUWEINIT and FARAH to the W of the KELT
5. Optional: trace canyons with blue pencil (stream beds printed in light blue=canyon bottom)
  - a. KELT CANYON: begin between italicized Jericho (by Threx) and Cypros and trace W passing on top of the dot of St. George Monastery, past the arrowheads of KELT CANYON and FAWWAR SPRING; 1cm/.5in W of the FAWWAR SPRING the canyon splits; one branch moves WNW past the arrow-

BEN, v.3

These instructions  
are for earlier ver-  
sions; you can now  
follow stream beds  
easily within their  
watersheds

head of the SUWEINIT CANYON, by the dot and between the 'T.' and 'M' of T. Maryam and turns N, then NW and then N to Bethel; the other branch continues W from the FAWWAR SPRING and past the arrowheads of the FARAH SPRING and FARAH CANYON where it splits to Gibeah and to Ramah

- b. MAKKUK CANYON: begin by Gilgal, trace W and then NW past Naaran but turn abruptly SW (do not cross road) and continue W past the arrowhead of the MAKKUK CANYON and follow the twisting path of the streambed westward until it ends at the 914m/2999f elevation by Bethel where the streambed is called the JAYA CANYON; one tributary to this canyon turns abruptly N above the 'n' of 'The Ruin' toward Baal Hazor; another ascends to Ophrah by Rimmon

6. HL on routes

- a. From Byzantine Jericho HL NW past the non-italicized Jericho and Naaran; continue up into the Hill Country past Ophrah to the central ridge route (a route already highlighted above)
- b. From Byzantine Jericho HL W past the italicized Jericho and up through the Zeboim Valley to Deir Dibwan, Ai and Bethel
- c. Find the 'LOOKOUT' along the route you just HL, and begin HL at the fork just above the Lookout W toward Michmash; from Michmash turn S to cross a portion of the Suweinit canyon and HL past Geba and Ramah to the central ridge route
- d. From the italicized Jericho HL SW between Threx and Cypros and past Mar Jiryis and the Ascent of Adummim; at the fork W of the Ascent of Adummim HL both routes to the central ridge route
- e. From Byzantine Jericho HL E past Bethabara and off the map

7. HL on city names: Ai and Bethel

**DISCUSSION ON BEN MAP** (Find bold names on the map.)

Erosion has cut deep canyons in the area between **Jerusalem**, **Bethel** and **Jericho**. These canyons have different Arabic names along their courses. To simplify matters we use general names for large canyon systems, such as the **Suweinit** and the **Farah** which drain into the **Kelt**. The sides of this canyon sometimes rise over 230m/750f above their rocky floors and present impressive obstacles which seriously restrict travel. These canyons therefore keep most traffic to higher ridges.

Find the **Farah Spring** on the BEN map. Deep gorges in this area and the 'dead end' ridge between the Farah and Suweinit canyons offer little help to anyone trying to descend to Jericho. Ridge routes to the north and south of this area avoid these difficulties and offer much easier travel. The rugged region around the Farah Spring was therefore an ideal refuge for a rebel militia bent on disrupting an enemy's control of nearby routes. The Philistine garrison at Geba in the days of Saul, for example, thought twice before flushing out king Saul's forces hiding around the Farah Spring.

Such areas of difficulty make the Jericho-Bethel route an attractive 'high way,' in spite of its two steep ascents, one near Jericho and the other by the 'Lookout' noted on the BEN map. This route not only leads to Bethel but also reaches the **Central Benjamin Plateau** by way of the site of **Michmash**. To reach this plateau, however, it must descend into the Suweinit, cross 'THE PASS' and climb to **Geba** and/or to **Ramah**. The BEN map shows that the terrain along this part of the Suweinit is not as difficult as elsewhere. Map B, RR 26 shows another view of this area and locates 'The Pass' across the Suweinit but with one less road. This pass plays an important part in our later study of Philistine and Israelite tactics.

The Makkuk canyon system north of the Jericho-Bethel route discourages north-south travel. Passage is easier on the route south of **Rimmon**. After crossing the Makkuk, one branch of this route climbs to Ai and Bethel via Deir Dibwan. Another crosses unrestricted terrain to Michmash. This open area is 'the valley' (*emek* in Hebrew) of Joshua 8:13. We call it the '**Region of Ai**' or 'the region of Michmash.' Its small network of routes, served by passes across the Makkuk and Suweinit systems, played a major role in the history of central Canaan. Joshua's successful campaign in the region of Ai is a clear example of this. His carefully calculated campaign, however, came only after a disastrous Israelite defeat.

**READING**

Joshua 7:1-5

**DISCUSSION ON THE MAP** (Find bold names on the map.)

Joshua's attempt to penetrate the Hill Country focused upon the region of **Ai**. This term (*HaAi* in Hebrew) simply means 'The Ruin,' a term used throughout the Bible from Genesis to Nehemiah. Since the name of the city which once stood here has been forgotten, 'The Ruin' has no name of its own and

BEN, v.3

Find Adummim  
(Red) Ascent

BEN, v.3

Reads 'PASS' and  
marks two such  
crossings

must be identified throughout the Bible by its proximity to **Bethel**, the largest city in the region. At Ai the Jericho-Bethel route becomes restricted to a narrow ridge which ascends to Bethel. The ruin itself is very impressive, and from its summit one surveys a network of routes stretching from **Ophrah** to the **Lookout** overlooking the **Zeboim Valley**. This area is Bethel's first line of defense and also the gateway to the Central Benjamin Plateau. It cannot be ignored by invaders coming from Jericho.

Ai's strategic location no doubt accounts for the prosperity of the large city which existed here in the period called 'Early Bronze' (4000 Year Overview chart). The last days of this fortified city came around -2400 when it was violently destroyed (a millennium prior to Joshua according to Chronology #1). The site was never resettled as a major city, probably due to the overriding importance of nearby Bethel, and the name of the Early Bronze city was therefore forgotten. Joshua's first objective in the Hill Country was the conquest of the region of 'The Ruin.' Victory in this strategic area was a natural and necessary first step to overcoming Bethel and settling the secluded Hill Country to the north of Bethel.

BEN, v.3  
 'BROKEN PLACES'  
 appears on v.3

The first force sent by Joshua must have followed the main Jericho-Ai-Bethel route via the Zeboim Valley. The 'broken places' (*shebarim* in Hebrew) mentioned in its retreat can be seen on the BEN map SE of Ai/Deir Dibwan just above the 635m/2083f elevation mark. Here the Makkuk system cuts a deep, serpent-like path through rugged limestone, resulting in broken terrain far different than the open plains and rolling hills to the west in the region of Ai. It also should be noted that the thirty-six Israelite fallen, out of 2000-3000, does not match the scale of the disaster recorded. It is far more likely that the 'two or three *eleph*' in the Hebrew text actually means 'two or three *units*,' perhaps as low as twelve to fifteen fighting men to each unit which some military experts consider to be the most efficient size of a small fighting team. A smaller number such as this would correlate with the disaster of loosing thirty-six and fits the initial statement about the number of enemy, 'they are but few.'

After finding why this crucial initial campaign in the Hill Country failed, Joshua punished the offender (Josh 7:6-26). He did not automatically assume imminent victory, however, but rather devised a campaign plan which would ensure victory. He began by sending a main force from the region of Jericho into the Hill Country along the northernmost route in the direction of Ophrah, but they turned off to the area which will later be known as Rimmon. From the nearby hill 842m/2762f his commanders had a panoramic view of the region of Ai, as we read, 'arriving opposite of the city they [Joshua's main force] set up camp north of Ai with a gorge (*gai* in Hebrew, not 'valley') between it [their camp] and Ai' (Josh 8:11). More important is the fact that the eyes of their opponents (which now included troops from nearby Bethel) were fixed northward, beyond the Makkuk (known in this area as the 'Jaya' Canyon).

Meanwhile, Joshua with an ambush force ascended by night to secluded hills SE of Bethel or, in biblical terminology (functional rather than compass oriented), 'west of Ai.' A number of locations could have afforded Joshua a view of the battlefield and a hiding place for his ambush. The next day his main force, N of the Makkuk, descended to the pass across the Makkuk. Their opponents dutifully left their camp, climbed over a slight rise near Deir Dibwan and confidently descended to meet the Israelites, who were fighting an uphill battle. At this moment Joshua signaled his ambush force near Ai, which rushed to the abandoned enemy position and lit fires, a signal to Joshua's main force to stop retreating and counterattack. Their comrades from the ambush suddenly appeared on the horizon, and the battle was over.

#### OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Appealing to archaeology to locate remains from Joshua's days rather than trusting the biblical text and the actual terrain has led some to propose new locations for Ai and Bethel. However, the persistence of the name Ai ('The Ruin') in the Bible supports the fact that the site was not inhabited, for had it been inhabited it would certainly not have been called 'The Ruin.' Middle Eastern culture is suspicious of negative connotations and carefully avoids them in naming villages and cities. On the other hand, a temporary camp or fortification at or near 'The Ruin' could have been erected by Israel's opponents, everyone from 'Ai and Bethel' as specified by the Bible (Josh 8:17). It would be natural for such a position to be nicknamed for the region's most impressive feature, which in this case was Ai, 'The Ruin.'

Details in the story such as the terms 'king,' 'city' and 'gate' need not conjure up images which the Bible clearly does not intend in other contexts. A newly discovered site, Kh. el-Makater on the BEN map, may provide more information. However, whatever answer is proposed, it must take into account: 1) the underlying strategic importance of the region of Ai and Michmash; 2) the geographical details in the story which perfectly fit this strategic region; and 3) the biblical statement which precedes the entire operation, 'for they [the people living in the region of 'The Ruin'] are but few' (Josh 7:3).

**READING**

Joshua 8

Joshua's remarkable campaign described above could provide the basis for detailed markings on the BEN map. Since there are varying opinions as to the locations of sites and battles, markings related to this campaign are omitted. Students and teachers can follow their own interpretations, but it may be best to delay marking the campaign of Ai until the end of this chapter to avoid overlapping other marking. Markings below reflect events after the campaign at Ai and should be completed on the BEN map.

**MARKING ON BEN MAP**

8. HL CENTRAL BENJAMIN PLATEAU
9. HL on city name of Gilgal (near Jericho) and a solid green box around the city dot
10. HL on city name of Gilgal (modern Jiljilya near Shiloh, top center of map)
11. Write in small, black caps beside the green box of Gilgal (No. 9 above): JOSHUA'S CAMP
12. Orange on dot of Gibeonite cities on and around the Central Benjamin Plateau: Gibeon, Chephirah, Kiriath-jearim, Beeroth (S of Gibeon), although another very plausible view places Beeroth N of Mizpah, just SW of Bethel, at the modern city of el-Bira)
13. HL on city name of Jerusalem

**OPTIONAL DISCUSSION ON BEN MAP**

'Gilgal' is another term whose meaning and location requires comment. Gilgal means a 'circle' of stones or the 'rolling' of a circular object as inferred in the book of Joshua (4:20; 5:2-9). Various places in the land are associated with this term, but only two are relevant to our present discussion, a Gilgal near Jericho (whose location is uncertain and may never be found) and another preserved in the name Jiljilya, a modern Arab village due north of Bethel on the BEN map.

Gilgal first appears in the book of Joshua as the place where the Israelites encamped in the period between the crossing the Jordan and the fall of Jericho. References to Gilgal in this period are linked to momentous spiritual events, a period which begins and ends with a text specifying that this Gilgal was in the area of Jericho (4:19; 5:10). The concluding reference stresses this: 'The Israelites were encamped at Gilgal and kept the Passover on the fourteenth of the month in the evening—*on the plains of Jericho.*' None of the subsequent references to Gilgal in the book of Joshua mentions Jericho.

After the fall of Jericho and the successful campaign in the region of Ai there was no reason for the Israelites to remain in the area of Jericho. There was a ban on settlement at the site, and the next event recorded in the book of Joshua is the rehearsing of the Law by 'all Israel' on Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim near Shechem, beyond the northern limit of the BEN map (Josh 8:30-35). This order of events strongly suggests that the Israelites had already begun settling the Hill Country north of Bethel. If so, the next reference to 'Gilgal' in the book of Joshua, when a Gibeonite delegation met 'Joshua in the camp at Gilgal' and deceptively negotiated a peace treaty (9:6), is probably located in the Hill Country.

The above scenario suggests that we are introduced to the second Gilgal in Joshua 9, the Gilgal north of Bethel in the mountain refuge of the early Israelites, the rugged Hill Country of Ephraim. It was in this area that Joshua received his inheritance (Timnath-serah) and the Israelite's spiritual center of Shiloh later arose. If this Gilgal is intended, then the Gibeonite bluff occurred in the Hill Country of Ephraim and not in the region of Jericho. More importantly, Joshua's later rescue operations as recorded in the book of Joshua were initiated from this Hill Country region, the emerging Israelite heartland.

**OPTIONAL READING**

Joshua 9:3-27

**DISCUSSION ON BEN MAP** (Find bold names on the map.)

The Israelite victory in the region of Ai and Bethel and the entry of the Israelites into the Hill Country north of Bethel must have greatly troubled the Gibeonites who lived in and around the **Central Benjamin Plateau**. They realized that they had to make peace, not war, with the Israelites and successfully bluffed Joshua into making an alliance with them. The king of **Jerusalem** was shocked to hear of the Israelite victory in the region of Ai, but when word came of the Gibeonite-Israelite alliance he issued a call to leaders in the south to mobilize an all out campaign against the city of **Gibeon**. Joshua's reaction to the threat upon Gibeon was to plan a skillful campaign to rescue the Gibeonites. A look at the BEN map helps explain this sequence of events which no doubt took some time to develop.

The BEN map shows that the Central Benjamin Plateau is not perfectly flat. Its low hills and shallow valleys, however, differ greatly from the V-shaped canyons and narrow ridges which surround it. The most important feature of the plateau is that travel across it is not restricted. Roads entering the plateau split in different directions and provide convenient connections to other routes and regions.

A major theme in the history of the central Hill Country has been the struggle for control of the Central Benjamin Plateau and its approaches. Gibeon, with its water source, was the region's prominent site. **Mizpah**, guarding the plateau's northern gateway, is also blessed by a spring. **Ramah** controlled the main north-south/east-west intersection. **Bethel** to the north naturally coveted the plateau and routes which linked the region of **Michmash** to Gibeon. The security and economic well-being of Jerusalem to the south was inseparably tied to the plateau and ridge routes leading to the **Aijalon Valley**, the Coastal Highway (**Lod** and **Ono**) and the port of **Joppa**. Indeed, Jerusalem's history (as well as today's knotty conflicts) is best understood in light of the strategic importance of the Central Benjamin Plateau. The reaction of the king of Jerusalem following the Gibeonite-Israelite agreement clearly illustrates this.

#### READING

Joshua 10:1-5

**DISCUSSION ON SCA/JUD MAPS** (Find bold names on one of these maps.)

Our study of the Ben map has led us from Jericho along routes leading into the Hill Country. Joshua's attack on the forces of the Jerusalem coalition gathered at Gibeon ultimately led Joshua's militia into totally new territory to the west. The geographical breadth of what happened can best be seen on the SCA map. Locate familiar sites and regions on this map such as **Jericho**, nearby **Gilgal**, **Bethel** and **Ai**. Find the Central Benjamin Plateau between **Gibeon**, **Mizpah** and **Ramah**, and **Jerusalem** to the south.

Jerusalem's king knew that growing Israelite influence on the Central Benjamin Plateau had serious implications for the southern Hill Country and the Shephelah to the west. His call to the Hill Country cities of **Hebron** and **Debir** (SW of Hebron) as well as to the Shephelah cities of **Jarmuth** and **Lachish** (farther to the SW) did not go unheeded. Together with forces from Jerusalem they mobilized at Gibeon on the Central Benjamin Plateau. Tel Eton, a site between Lachish and Debir, is the best candidate for **Eglon**, Jerusalem's other ally. In subsequent campaigns Joshua also attacked the Shephelah cities of **Makkedah** and **Libnah** whose locations are still not certain (SCA and JUD maps).

#### MARKING ON BEN MAP

Keep the SCA or JUD map in view to see the larger context of your marking below on the BEN map.

14. HL COASTAL PLAIN, SHEPHELAH, AIJALON VALLEY, SOREK VALLEY, ELAH VALLEY (in the Shephelah)
15. HL on names: CHESALON CANYON, SOREK CANYON and REPHAIM CANYON (all W of Jerusalem)
16. Optional: trace the bottom of each canyon with a light blue pencil to show more clearly the large area of obstacles which discourages direct travel between Jerusalem and the SOREK VALLEY
  - a. SOREK CANYON: begin just E of Gibeon and trace S through the 'a' in WATERS OF NEPHTOAH; W through the 'a' of Colonia; winding S and W past the arrowhead of SOREK CANYON; W following sharp canyon curves which finally empty out to the SOREK VALLEY
  - b. REPHAIM CANYON: begin where the Rephaim empties into the Sorek (just W of elevation reading 637m/2090f); E up the winding canyon and along the canyon road by Bether past the arrowhead of REPHAIM CANYON into the Rephaim Valley rising to the 740m/2427f elevation reading
  - c. CHESALON CANYON: begin just E of the elevation reading 880m/2854f (between Kiriath-jearim and Biddu); S and SW past the arrowhead of CHESALON CANYON; W past MT. SEIR and Chesalon to the mouth of the canyon near Eshtaol; SW to join the Sorek in the SOREK VALLEY
17. HL on routes
  - a. The main branch of Coastal Highway via Ono and Aphek and N off the map by 'TO GALILEE'
  - b. An inland branch of Coastal Highway from Aphek S via Lod, Gibbethon, Ekron to Gath and off the SW corner of the map by the 120 grid number
  - c. Begin at the crossroads just W of Ramah; HL W across the Central Benjamin Plateau; NW to the ridge route to Upper Beth-horon, Lower Beth-horon and Lod; off the map by 'TO JOPPA'
  - d. Begin at Lower Beth-horon; HL the shortest route to Gezer and then W off the map

#### BEN, v.3

These instructions are for earlier versions; you can now follow stream beds easily within their watersheds

- e. Begin at Lower Beth-horon: HL SW past Caphar-laqitayah, Aijalon, Eshtaol, Beth-shemesh and S off the map passing just E of Azekah and following a valley route to the S edge of the map
- f. Begin S of Eshtaol; HL S past Zanoah and off the map
- g. Begin at intersection by Gibeon: HL SW past Gibeon and Biddu to Kiriath-jearim; bend NW to Aijalon and on to the intersection N of Emmaus to join road highlighted above
- h. Begin at Lod: HL SE through Rabbah and E to the ridge route ascending to Kiriath-jearim

#### DISCUSSION ON BEN MAP

The marking above focuses our attention upon the western limestone slopes of the central Hill Country where deep canyons make north-south travel impractical and limit east-west travel to a few convenient ridge routes. The Sorek Canyon is a major feature in this area. Its serpentine flow south from the Central Benjamin Plateau slowly makes its way to the west. This creates a natural moat which leaves Jerusalem without a direct ridge route connecting it to the Shephelah. The BEN map shows that this uplifted, deeply eroded region extends far to the west where beds of limestone suddenly descend and disappear beneath weaker rocks in the Shephelah. Its western limestone promontories, high above V-shaped canyons, offer spectacular views over the Shephelah. Seen from the Shephelah, however, this natural limestone bulwark discourages any army which would invade the Hill Country. They prefer shorter and less rugged ridges to the north and to the south even though these do not lead directly to Jerusalem.

Survey the routes you have highlighted on the BEN map. Note the south-north route through the Hill Country. Now note the south-north routes through the Shephelah and that they only reach as far north as Lower Beth-horon. There are no other practical south-north routes except along the Coastal Plain. Anyone entering or leaving the Hill Country must carefully consider which connecting ridge route to follow. Once the choice is made there is no easy way to alter it, a fact which perplexed invaders, aided defenders and destroyed armies who took victory in the Hill Country for granted.

As you highlighted these routes you no doubt noticed the importance of the Beth-horon area with its connections to the Coastal Highway and its ridge route to the Central Benjamin Plateau. While there are other ways to enter the Hill Country, the Beth-horon ridge route is the shortest and most convenient and leads directly to the Central Benjamin Plateau. History illustrates its importance again and again. Both invaders and defenders realized this and tenaciously sought victory at 'the ascent of Beth-horon.'

Two other ridge routes connect Gibeon with the northern Shephelah. A convenient road from Gibeon to Kiriath-jearim makes the latter site an important defensive position against invaders ascending from the region of Aijalon. Another ridge route descends from the village of Biddu to the Aijalon Valley via el-Qubeiba and continues through rolling hills to Lod on the Coastal Highway. Routes south of the Sorek system (see the JUD map, Event 18) link Jerusalem and Bethlehem with the Elah Valley. One branch of this route heads northwest and then descends steeply into the Sorek Valley.

The king of Jerusalem issued his call to leaders in the southern Hill Country and the Shephelah within this geographical context. All knew the importance of the Central Benjamin Plateau and the ridge routes connecting it to the Aijalon Valley. The area could not be forfeited to the Israelites. The following marking puts Joshua 10:1-5 on the map.

#### MARKING ON BEN MAP

18. HL on city names: Gibeon and Jarmuth (between the Sorek and Elah valleys)
19. Blue circles around city names: Jarmuth and Jerusalem
20. Write in with black pen and circle each name in blue
  - a. In the bottom margin of the map at the 165 grid mark (between 160 and 170): Hebron
  - b. In the bottom margin of the map at the 145 grid mark (between 140 and 150): Lachish, Eglon
21. Sweeping blue arrows
  - a. From the blue-circled write-in 'Hebron' N along the central ridge route between Beit Jala and Bethlehem and continuing north to Jerusalem
  - b. From Jarmuth E by Timnah and Hushah to join the arrow coming N from Hebron in the area between Beit Jala and Bethlehem; write on arrow in small, black caps: COALITION AGAINST GIBEON
  - c. From the blue-circled write-in of 'Eglon and Lachish' N and then E through the Elah Valley to join the blue sweeping arrow from Jarmuth

- d. From Jerusalem via Gibeah and Adasa to Gibeon
22. Red circle around city name of Gibeon = the siege of Gibeon by the Jerusalem coalition

**DISCUSSION**

Chronology #1 (4000 Year Overview chart) places Joshua's actions in the Land Between in the decades which followed -1400. During this time Egypt took its rule of the land for granted, some local rulers began asserting themselves, and regional conflicts arose. This situation culminated in the EL Amarna Age when complaints sent to Egypt were generally ignored by pharaoh Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV). During the EL Amarna Age we hear specifically of Jerusalem's leadership in the southern Hill Country and some of the actions it took against cities in the Shephelah.

The formation of a coalition such as the one led by Jerusalem in Joshua 10 could well have taken place in the years prior to the EL Amarna Age. The combination of Jerusalem's leadership, its geopolitical dependence upon routes across the Central Benjamin Plateau and the Gibeonite capitulation to Joshua explains the determined action taken by the king of Jerusalem. Israelite settlement in the Hill Country north of Bethel was one thing; Israelite cooperation with the Gibeonite cities was another. Jerusalem issued a call to arms, and the coalition forces of five Canaanite cities set up camp by the gates of Gibeon.

**MARKING ON BEN MAP**

23. HL on city names: Upper Beth-horon, Azekah (at important crossroads not far from Jarmuth)
24. Green arrow from between the word PLATEAU and Ramah to the small hill just E of Gibeon  
Joshua either marched from Gilgal by Jericho or from Gilgal in the hills by Shiloh, locations discussed above. What is important for this marking is that Joshua attacked at day break after 'having marched all night.' This meant that Joshua's forces could remain hidden behind low hills east or southeast of Gibeon and catch the coalition forces off guard. The natural location for the coalition's camp was in a semi-sheltered valley east of Gibeon itself, although it also could have been on a rise just north of the city. These conditions offered no chance for the coalition to retreat to Jerusalem.
25. Blue (Canaanite) flight and green (Joshua) chase arrows
- from Gibeon W (below route) to Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon
  - S to Aijalon area (passing E of Aijalon)
  - S along route to the area of Azekah (passing E of Azekah); on one of these blue arrows write in small, black caps: CANAANITE FLIGHT BEFORE JOSHUA

**DISCUSSION**

When Jerusalem and its allies laid siege to Gibeon, the Gibeonites called on Joshua for help. Joshua responded immediately, marched all night from Gilgal (either from the Gilgal by Jericho or more likely from the Gilgal north of Bethel) and arrived by Gibeon early in the morning. He took the coalition forces by surprise and had the advantage of the rising sun shining directly in the eyes of his opponents.

The coalition forces had to flee in the direction of the western canyons and along the Beth-horon ridge, 'the way of the ascent of Beth-horon' (Josh 10:10), the fastest way to the Aijalon Valley. Once on the ridge there was no chance of regrouping. At the 'descent of Beth-horon' (v. 11), with the sun to the east over Gibeon and the moon to the west over the Aijalon valley, Joshua proclaimed, 'O Sun, over Gibeon, be still! And O Moon, [be still] over the Aijalon Valley!' (v. 12). The retreating coalition forces turned south along the edge of the Hill Country where seasonal storm clouds hit the hills and often drop precipitation, this time in the form of large and dangerous hail stones.

**READING**

Joshua 10:6-15

**OPTIONAL DISCUSSION**

The Bible states that retreat took the coalition forces 'as far as Azekah and as far as Makkedah' (v. 10). This wording raises the question if Makkedah lies along the same road but beyond Azekah or if Makkedah lies along a totally different road than Azekah. The BEN and JUD maps clearly show how either scenario is possible. When the coalition forces reached the area of Eshtaol on the BEN and JUD maps, they all could have followed the diagonal route through the Shephelah which passes Azekah (a major intersection in the Shephelah) and then continued south to the next major intersection which is in the area of T. el-Judeida, a site some believe may be biblical Makkedah.

If, however, the coalition forces split in the area of Eshtaol, some of them could have fled directly south along a route which stays closer to the Hill Country. It follows a natural chalk valley (trough) formed by erosion between the limestone of the Hill Country and the softer rock-types of the Shephelah. The JUD map displays this road in its entirety and reveals the sharp contrast between uplifted and deeply eroded limestone to the east of this route and the Shephelah's rolling hills and broad valleys to the west. The JUD map also shows that this route ultimately leads to the region of Kh. Beit Maqdam which some identify as biblical Makkedah. Note that the possible site of Eglon, the fifth member of the coalition, is farther south at T. Eton while Debir is in the Hill Country to the southeast of T. Eton.

The above discussion shows that Joshua's action at Makkedah (Josh 10:16-27) could be located in two different areas of the Shephelah. The route of his subsequent campaign begins at Makkedah and continues to Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron and finally to Debir. It is interesting to try to trace this route on the JUD map, especially since the locations of Libnah and Eglon are still uncertain. It does appear, however, that these events were generally located in the southern Shephelah and southern Hill Country. Note that the king of Gezer engaged Joshua in the southern Shephelah after Joshua's attack on Lachish. Interestingly, the Bible makes it clear that Joshua did not attack the site of Gezer at the mouth of the Aijalon Valley above the Coastal Highway, a site located beyond the low hills of the Shephelah.

#### OPTIONAL READING

Joshua 10:16-39

#### DISCUSSION

The exciting account of Joshua's confrontation with the Jerusalem coalition opened with the arrival of a shabby delegation of Gibeonites at Joshua's camp and ended with Joshua's stunning and surprising victory. Subsequent history shows that Joshua's actions are repeated in a long list of later events featuring the Central Benjamin Plateau and the Beth-horon ridge. Numerous local conflicts in the Hill Country were played out in this part of the Central Arena. Those who led armies along the Coastal Highway also knew that the Beth-horon ridge route led to the Central Benjamin Plateau, an area essential to their control of unruly Hill Country kingdoms. The arrows seen on the BEN map are therefore repeated many times in later history. This time they illustrate the main theme of the book of Joshua (1:8-9).

Don't let this Book of the Law [how to walk by faith in the Land Between] leave your lips; think about it day and night so that you keep doing all that is written in it. For then you will prosper in your plans and act wisely. Am I not giving you a charge to keep? Be strong and be full of courage; don't be terrified and don't be fearful—because wherever you go the LORD your God is with you.

#### EVENT 22: JONATHAN'S FAITH—'SEEK AND DESTROY DIVISIONS WENT OUT FROM THE PHILISTINE CAMP ... TOWARD OPHRAH ... BETH-HORON AND ... THE VALLEY OF ZEBOIM'

**CHARTS: 4000 AND 500 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on one of these charts.)

Our study of the Central Arena moves forward in time to the establishment of the Israelite monarchy in the days of Samuel and Saul just prior to -1000. This was the Age of Nations when local peoples in the Land Between emerged and competed for their share of the country's growing trade. The 4000 Year Overview chart shows this period as a small orange and green box labeled **SS** in the middle of the chart. This is the **Samuel and Saul** box on the 500 Year Overview chart which offers a brief introduction to the period and shows that the prophetic figure of this transitional time was Samuel.

Two centuries earlier, around -1200, the **Philistines** (4000 Year chart) settled along the southern Coastal Plain and became a major threat to Israelite expansion. Equipped with the advanced technological armaments of that day, weapons of iron, the Philistines controlled the Coastal Highway west of Ephraim and Judah, the two most prominent Israelite tribes. During the period of the **Late Judges** (4000 Year chart) we meet the Philistines in various contexts.

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

Samson, the hero (judge) from the tribe of Dan, terrorized nearby Philistines in the **Sorek Valley**, but the Philistines nevertheless 'ruled Israel' (Judg 14:4). A brave but misguided militia from the tribe of Ephraim tried to halt Philistine expansion on a battlefield near **Aphek** (NW corner of BEN map), but the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant and decimated Ephraim (1 Sam 4, Ps 78:59-64). Samuel, Israel's last judge, brought temporary relief at **Mizpah** above the Central Benjamin Plateau

(1 Sam 7:3-14), but Israel's tribal militia was no match for the Philistines. It needed to be organized under a leader who was recognized by all the tribes, and it needed adequate armaments.

Within this depressing context the book of 1 Samuel records events during a period of unspecified length when the prophet Samuel confronted Saul of Benjamin, whom he had anointed as Israel's leader, declaring, 'God is with you' (1 Sam 10:1-8). The book of 1 Samuel places this internal Israelite struggle against the background of an aggressive Philistine policy of containing Israel and crushing its emerging monarchy. Thus 'there were bitter battles with the Philistines throughout all of Saul's reign' (1 Sam 14:52). Saul's quest for Samuel's approval continued even after Samuel's death as Saul faced his final battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 28:3-25). He was again rejected and his army was put to flight. The Philistines 'beheaded him, stripped him of his armor and spread the news all around the land of the Philistines, to the temples of their idols and to the people' (1 Sam 31:8-10). They rejoiced, thinking that the Israelite monarchy had seen its last days. In a few decades, however, the Philistines found themselves serving David, king of the Israelites.

The process of finding a king who had the spiritual and leadership qualifications to shepherd Israel through this difficult period is the overriding theme of the books of Samuel. Saul of Benjamin delivered the Israelites of Jabesh-gilead and was proclaimed king. According to the prophet Samuel's standard, however, Saul failed to meet the requirements of an Israelite leader. Samuel was then told to go to the home of Jesse in Bethlehem to anoint a new king, the young David of Judah. David brought deliverance from the Philistines when he slew Goliath in the Elah Valley, entered the court of king Saul and married the king's daughter. He did not, however, claim the throne.

As the story of the Israelite monarchy continued, the Philistines played a crucial part in the rise of David of Judah to the throne. After escaping Saul's wrath and being betrayed by his own people, David found refuge with the Philistines. It is they who placed him in a position to win over the people of southern Judah (Event 14, 'A "Philistine" Sheriff' on the SCA map). In effect, the Philistines unknowingly helped train David, both militarily and geopolitically, as David observed them in action. Some Philistine leaders even prevented David from participating in their final battle with Saul in which David's friend, Jonathan died, together with his father (Event 9, 'Saul's Battles' on the NCA map). One wonders if David would have otherwise become king of Judah, much less of all Israel. It is true that in the book of 1 Samuel the Philistines are the arch-enemy of Israel. However, in the program of the God of Israel these same Philistines were key players in the rise of David of Judah to the throne of Israel.

The book of 1 Samuel leads us through this fascinating process of finding a truly qualified Israelite king. The process began when Samuel from the prominent of tribe of Ephraim was recognized as the prophetic leader of Israel. As nationalism grew among Israel's neighbors, the Israelites pressed Samuel for a strong leader, and Saul from the tribe of Benjamin became the first 'king' of Israel. Finally, David of Judah emerged as one who, unlike Saul, was qualified in every way to rule. Our current study (Event 22) is set within this fascinating triangle of personalities which formed the early Israelite monarchy. The Philistines, Israel's archenemy, provide the challenge which shows us who is qualified to lead Israel. The star of our current study, however, is Jonathan, son of king Saul and crown prince of Israel. As our story opens, the Philistines are in control of the Central Benjamin Plateau, and Jonathan decides to attack their garrison stationed at Geba. (A discussion of Geba and Gibeah appears at the end of this event.)

#### READING

1 Samuel 13:1-4

#### MARKING ON BEN MAP

1. HL on names: Gibeah, Geba, Michmash
2. HL 'THE PASS' between the sites of Geba and Michmash

This region along the Suweinit Canyon is much easier to cross than areas farther up or farther down the canyon. There are various ways to cross this pass. Two main routes are shown on the BEN map, one via T. Maryam (perhaps Beth-aven) and one via Geba. The 'Pass of Michmash' refers to this entire area where the canyon is more easily crossed and ends due south of Michmash after it bends sharply to the south. From here to the southeast it is very difficult to scale the canyon's walls.

3. Write PASS in small, black caps S of Rimmon, E of Deir Dibwan, by route crossing Makkuk Canyon  
This is the easiest point to cross the Makkuk Canyon. It becomes much deeper to the W. To the E it cuts a deep and serpentine path through limestone before entering the chalk Wilderness. This rugged

BEN, v.3

HL 'PASS

1 Sam 14:4'

BEN, v.3

'PASS' appears on v.3

S of Rimmon

area is no doubt what is meant by the 'broken places (*shebarim* in Hebrew) ... at the descent' in Joshua 7:4-5. Some translators, however, understand this phrase to mean 'stone quarries.'

We call the area between these two passes (which you have marked) by various names: the 'REGION OF AI,' the region of Michmash or the region of Michmash/Ai. In Event 21 we noted that Joshua 8:13 specifies this region as 'the valley' (*emeq* in Hebrew). In geological terms it is a small trough (syncline) between two steep uplifts, one running through the Lookout east of Michmash and the other through the Hill Country around Bethel. This means that the terrain is far less rugged in the region of Michmash/Ai and that the canyons on either side are far more shallow.

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

Previous study of routes and canyons on the BEN map has prepared you for the reading from 1 Samuel 13 above. The Philistines had garrisoned the site of **Geba** overlooking the pass to the region of Michmash. Therefore they must have controlled the **Central Benjamin Plateau** and maintained a supply line to the **Coastal Plain** via the **Aijalon Valley**. With tactical wisdom they saw the **Suweinit Canyon** as their natural line of defense to the east. Thus they controlled the central tribal territory of **Benjamin** (Saul's home territory!) and effectively cut the central Hill Country in two. This 'divide and control' policy placed a wedge between Israel's two prominent tribes, **Ephraim** to the north and **Judah** to the south. The Philistines knew the terrain, appreciated geopolitical realities and made wise tactical decisions.

For his part Saul chose a safe position in the area of **Michmash**, near his opponents but north of the Suweinit Canyon. Some troops stayed in the hills by **Bethel** where they could easily join him via the **Ai** ridge or attack the Philistines along a route due south of Bethel. Meanwhile, Jonathan, the crown prince, was with another group of Israelite militia south of the Philistine garrison at Geba. When the Bible states that he was at **Gibeah** (his father's home base city) it may well mean in the region of Gibeah. A glance at the area east of Gibeah shows that tributaries to the **Farah Canyon** descend to the rugged area around the **Farah Spring**. This area provided a safe refuge for Jonathan and his troops since no Philistine force dared enter these secluded canyons. From ridges around Gibeah, however, Jonathan could easily monitor the nearby Philistine garrison at Geba.

Jonathan's first brave act in this story was to make his way to Geba and attack the Philistine garrison. His success (claimed later by Saul) led to an angry and determined response by the Philistines whose strategy now was aimed at total control. Saul realized that the worst was about to happen and retreated to **Gilgal** by Jericho, a safer position than the Hill Country and a place where he could rally his retreating troops. The Philistines had successfully divided Saul from his forces around Bethel. The stage was set for one of the Bible's most well-documented and exciting stories, one which begins in utter discouragement but ends in totally unexpected deliverance. From the vantage point of the BEN map we look on as the book of 1 Samuel carefully plots events. As discussed earlier in Event 21, the Hebrew term *eleph* used in the story probably is some type of military 'unit' rather than the translation 'thousands,' numbers precluded by geographical realities of the terrain in this part of the Hill Country.

**READING**

1 Samuel 13:5-7

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

To take total control of this part of the Central Arena the Philistines had to cross the **Suweinit Canyon** beyond **Geba** and occupy the region of Michmash/Ai. This had been Saul's foothold in the Hill Country and a direct link to his troops around Bethel. By taking it the Philistines could control key routes in this part of the Hill Country and divide Saul's forces. Their tactical move and Joshua's earlier calculated campaign in this region of Michmash/Ai clearly show its strategic importance. It could not be ignored by combatants in this part of the Central Arena.

The Philistine plan proceeded like clockwork. They moved their armaments across the Suweinit Canyon (probably via the easier pass northeast of Ramah). Saul and his troops retreated to **Gilgal** while other Israelites hid in the **Wilderness** and even 'crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead' where they were guaranteed safety from the Philistines. This was a major military move by the Philistines and demonstrates their commitment to crushing the emerging Israelite monarchy.

In addition to the strategic value of the region of Michmash its geographical characteristics lured the Philistines to set up a major military camp there. The Hill Country's uplifted limestone is far less tilted here than in surrounding areas, and the region's small, fertile plains are bypassed by surrounding canyons.

This inviting terrain ends to the east where layers of limestone suddenly plunge beneath the chalky Wilderness scarred by the deep **Makkuk** and **Kelt Canyons**. The shallow **Zeboim Valley** lies between these two canyons and provides an attractive route to reach Jericho. It was along this route that Saul and his troops retreated from Michmash to Gilgal. In many ways Saul's actions follow Joshua's entry into the Hill Country, but in reverse, and were characterized by retreat, fear and then disobedience, a clear contrast to the charge given to Joshua as he entered the Land Between.

**READING**

1 Samuel 13:8-15; Joshua 1:8-9

**MARKING ON BEN MAP**

4. Blue box around the city dot of Michmash
5. Write PHILISTINE CAMP in small, black caps just above the name Michmash
6. HL on names: Ophrah (N of Rimmon), Zeboim Valley, and Upper Beth-horon (already HL)
7. Blue sweeping arrows = Movements of three Philistine divisions in order to control the area's routes
  - a. From Michmash N via the Pass across the Makkuk Canyon toward Ophrah = northern route
  - b. From Michmash W via the Pass across the Suweinit Canyon by Beth-aven toward the name 'Central Benjamin Plateau' = Philistine supply route to the Coastal Plain via Beth-horon
  - c. From Michmash E toward the 'Lookout' = the Zeboim Valley route

**DISCUSSION**

Saul issued a call to gather at Gilgal where Samuel was to meet him. Samuel had ministered each year at Gilgal (1 Sam 7:15-17), he had planned to consecrate Saul at Gilgal (1 Sam 10:7-8) and 'all the people' had gathered to proclaim him king at Gilgal following Saul's first victory (1 Sam 11:14-15). If these events occurred at Gilgal by Jericho (rather than at Gilgal by Shiloh), Saul would have had good reason to believe that another religious gathering here would bring deliverance. He no doubt also recalled how deliverance had come at Mizpah on the Central Benjamin Plateau after Samuel called a gathering in response to Philistine oppression: 'On that day the LORD thundered with a mighty noise above the Philistines and brought bedlam, and they were struck down before Israel' (1 Sam 7:3-11).

Saul waited at Gilgal seven long days, a number which brings to mind the Israelite victory march around Jericho and Samuel's earlier instructions to Saul (Josh 6:12-16; 1 Sam 10:7-8). When Samuel did not appear, Saul found it increasingly difficult to wait as people left him. Samuel may well have delayed his appearance to see what Saul's reaction would be under these trying circumstances. Finally, thinking he could force Heaven's hand, Saul stepped into Samuel's sandals and offered the burnt offering.

When Saul assumed Samuel's position and then excused himself because of his fear of the Philistines and the loss of support, he overstepped his authority and failed the basic requirement of an Israelite leader, faith in the God of Israel to deliver—in spite of any human circumstances. Samuel's response was the most serious indictment a prophet could make.

You are totally lacking wisdom. You have not kept the mandate with which the LORD your God charged you—for until now the LORD was permanently establishing your kingdom over Israel (1 Sam 13:14).

This episode closes with one of the most discouraging phrases in the book of 1 Samuel: 'Samuel stood up and departed from Gilgal' leaving Saul alone to face the Philistines. Samuel's initial assurance that 'God is with you' (1 Sam 10:7) was now withdrawn, and Saul was on his own. The lack of prophetic blessing plagued Saul until his death and reverberates throughout the Israelite monarchy when kings failed to walk by faith in the Land Between.

**READING**

1 Samuel 13:15-23

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

You have just read verses which underscore the importance of the region of Michmash/Ai. Routes and passes in this region allowed the Philistines to assign separate divisions to control surrounding routes. One 'headed for **Ophrah**,' where an important ridge route ascends from Jericho into the Hill Country, a second 'headed for **Beth-horon**' in order to keep the Philistine supply line open to the Aijalon Valley and a third 'headed for the edge of the region [of Michmash/Ai] which overlooks the **Valley of Zeboim**,

in the direction of the Wilderness.' The only route omitted is the route via Ai to Bethel, which was not a Philistine priority since by holding the region of Michmash/Ai they had achieved their goal.

The picture presented here is one of a tightening Philistine grip on the routes linking the Jericho region and the secluded Hill Country of Ephraim north of **Bethel** where part of Saul's forces were still stationed. The Philistines had taken the land of Benjamin, cut Saul off from his homeland and isolated him from his troops in the Hill Country. When the dust settled, the main Philistine camp was at **Michmash** forcing Saul, his troops and Jonathan to return to the Hill Country along the only route open to them, the ridge south of the **Kelt Canyon** which gave them access to the region between **Gibeah**, **Geba** and the rugged ravines around the **Farah Spring**. To add to this picture of despair we are informed that the Philistines had carefully guarded the art of making iron implements of farming and warfare, leaving Saul and his son Jonathan as the only Israelites bearing sword and spear. A brief note then puts the seal of success on the Philistine strategy: 'Now a unit of Philistines went out to the Pass of Michmash.'

**DISCUSSION AND MARKING ON BEN MAP** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

The Philistine outpost watching the 'Pass of Michmash' served as an early warning system for the main camp at Michmash. Had this outpost been positioned deep within the pass itself it would have little military value and easily could have been bypassed or even attacked. The most suitable position for such an outpost was along the lofty ridge southeast of Michmash which forces the deep Suweinit Canyon to turn sharply to the south. The top of this ridge is due east of where the Geba-Michmash road crosses the bottom of Suweinit Canyon. Find the top of this ridge on the BEN map (a narrow, light strip above the steep slope descending into the Suweinit Canyon).

8. Blue dot on top of the ridge SE of Michmash (as per locating instructions above)
9. Write **OUTPOST** in small, black caps to the right of this blue dot
10. Optional: a few short blue lines radiating W, SW and S showing the scope of the outpost's monitoring
 

This ridge is linked to Michmash and affords a sweeping view in all directions, northwest into the area where routes cross the **Suweinit Canyon** (the Pass of Michmash), west beyond the Suweinit Canyon and a small plain to **Geba**, southwest toward **Gibeah** and south across the Suweinit Canyon to ridges above **Farah Spring**. In short, this ridge offered the best possible location for an early warning post to monitor Israelite movements and possible attacks from the south or southwest. This precisely fits the next episode in the story, one which sets Jonathan totally apart from his father, king Saul.
11. A curved, orange arrow from the 661m/2168f elevation mark S of Geba toward the Outpost
12. Write in small, black caps below the 661m/2168f elevation mark = **JONATHAN**

#### READING

1 Samuel 14:1-15

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

The small and fertile plain of **Geba** extends east of the city and then ends as rugged slopes suddenly descend into the **Suweinit Canyon** over 200m/650f below. Matching layers of bedded limestone line the sides of this canyon, but one especially stands out since it is some 15m/50f thick. It appears in canyons throughout the region but is especially clear along the slopes of the deepest part of the Suweinit which begins after a sharp bend in the canyon south of **Michmash**. Here this thick layer of limestone emerges as two perpendicular rocks separated by the canyon floor, each called a 'tooth [cliff] of stone' in Hebrew. This limestone layer continues as sheer cliffs southwest along both slopes of the canyon.

Our reading above makes specific mention of this pair of rock cliffs, which marks the beginning of this massive bed of limestone, Bozez on the Michmash side of the canyon and Seneh along the Geba side of the canyon. Again we see that the Bible regards directions as functional rather than according to compass readings. These rock faces are actually oriented east and west but the Michmash side of the canyon functionally lies to the north while the Geba side lies to the south. As in other instances of biblical directions, it is not necessary to make ancient perspectives fit our modern but narrow way of thinking.

This dramatic setting allows one person to call out from one side of the canyon and be heard by someone on the other side, yet neither can reach the other without descending hand and foot into the deep ravine and then climbing steeply up the other side. Any one who has contemplated this scene is struck by the faith and courage, as well as the physical condition of Jonathan who crossed the canyon, climbed up the other side and with his armor bearer overcame the Philistine outpost. Jonathan's words to his

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Just above '14' in  
the reference

1 Sam 14:4

armor bearer prior to this feat are biblical headlines which redeem his father's lack of faith and make Jonathan of Benjamin a true disciple of Samuel the Ephraimite—a future soul mate of David of Judah: '... for there is nothing that can prevent the LORD from bringing deliverance—be it by many or by few.'

Since the Philistine outpost was high on a ridge above the Suweinit Canyon (rather than in the pass in full view), no one in the main Philistine camp could determine what was happening or how many Israelites might have been scrambling out of the canyon. The very outpost which was to have given an early warning of an Israelite attack had fallen, and word soon spread that a major attack was under way. We do not read that 'the LORD thundered' (1 Sam 7:10) but rather that 'the earth quaked and became a trembling of God.' Confusion compounded at the well-organized Philistine camp by Michmash.

The three Philistine divisions were far flung, communication was difficult and news from the main camp back at Michmash no doubt became exaggerated when it reached each division. The strategic features of the region of Michmash/Ai which had first lured the Philistines into this strategic area now worked against them. Their policy of commanding routes and passes in different directions now backfired, and panic gripped each division as escape became everyone's priority. The only practical routes of escape, however, either led to **Bethel** via Ai, directly into the hands of the Israelite troops stationed in the nearby Hill Country, or through the passes which cross the Suweinit Canyon to the **Central Benjamin Plateau**, the **Beth-horon** Ridge and the **Aijalon Valley**. To make matters worse, local Israelites who had been cooperating with the Philistines now turned upon them. The Philistines now needed deliverance.

#### READING

1 Samuel 14:16-31

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

The beginning of this story descended to depths of despair and left little hope of Israelite deliverance as the Philistines systematically took control of the land of Benjamin. Their well-planned strategy in the region of Michmash/Ai, however, actually put the Philistines at great risk. They had not contemplated, much less planned, an organized retreat. Their arrogant overconfidence was challenged by the faith and action of a single Israelite with his faithful helper, and their disastrous rout spread across the BEN map.

While confusion spread throughout the Philistine camp at **Michmash**, Saul observed the movement from a vantage point near **Gibeah**. (He probably did not dare enter Gibeah itself for fear of the Philistines.) As he tried to discern what was happening and what his response should be, he made his decision; he would engage the Philistines. As his troops around **Bethel** joined the battle the Philistines found themselves fighting on two fronts and began fleeing westward across the **Suweinit Canyon**.

In the midst of the battle we read that 'the LORD delivered Israel that day, and fighting passed to the other side of Beth-aven' (1 Sam 14:23). Some prefer to read 'Beth-horon.' 'Beth-aven,' however, specifies this regional context elsewhere in the Bible. It may be an actual site (see **Beth-aven/T. Maryam** by the Pass of Michmash on the BEN map) or actually may denote the region of Michmash/Ai, a unique and strategic area situated between the higher Hill Country to the west and the Wilderness to the east. In any case, the phrase indicates that Saul's forces pursued the Philistines westward out of the region of Michmash/Ai and beyond the Suweinit Canyon—and from there across the **Central Benjamin Plateau** and down the **Beth-horon** ridge. What happened that day is tersely stated and compensated for earlier despair: 'That day they struck down the Philistines from **Michmash** to **Aijalon**' (1 Sam 14:31). The path of this Israelite victory followed closely that of Joshua when he defeated the Canaanite coalition encamped by **Gibeon**. The parallel does not end there, for Joshua and Jonathan shared a common faith.

#### MARKING ON BEN MAP

13. Two sets of blue flight (Philistine) and orange (Israelite) chase arrows
  - a. From Central Benjamin Plateau to Lower Beth-horon (N of the Beth-horon ridge route)
  - b. From Lower Beth-horon bending S toward the site of Aijalon
14. Write in small, black caps anywhere along the flight and chase arrows = PHILISTINE FLIGHT BEFORE SAUL AND JONATHAN

#### READING

1 Samuel 14:31-46

**DISCUSSION**

An important result of this victory in the region of Michmash/Ai is often overlooked. In their hasty and disorganized retreat the Philistines must have left considerable armaments, some beside the bodies of their comrades who had been slain. They had brought these well-sharpened weapons deep into the Hill Country and to the very edge of the Wilderness in hopes of using them against the Israelites. But there they left them, and they were now in the hands of the Israelites whom they had planned to kill. With the 'help' of the Philistines the ill-equipped Israelite militia was becoming an army.

A postscript to this stunning victory reveals Saul's attitude during that day. The restless leader felt the necessity for some religious act in order to ensure an Israelite victory beyond the Hill Country and show his people that the LORD was still with him. He declared a fast until nightfall, placed a curse of death on any who disobeyed and clearly stated his aim: to fight 'until I have taken out my revenge upon my enemies' (1 Sam 14:24). As the story ends Saul appears to have gained the support which he so coveted from his people. Twice they tell him to do as he pleases. However, when Jonathan (the hero of the day) submits to the death penalty Saul (who placed the ban) concurs, but the people ransom Jonathan. Saul's rash move and Jonathan's submission to his father's recklessness underscore the difference between father and son. The people's final choice is not Saul, but Jonathan. The king's words and actions are again undermined.

**READING**

1 Samuel 14:47-48

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

Having led us through the mounting evidence of Saul's deficiencies, the writer of the book of Samuel pauses to give this first king of Israel credit for his significant achievements, including battles not recorded elsewhere. Saul lived in a period of increasing competition for trade passing from Arabia to Mediterranean ports. We should not be surprised that he fought against Transjordanian peoples, with those from the area of Zobah in the north to those from the area of Edom in the south, as well as with the Moabites and Ammonites east of his homeland in Benjamin. Saul reduced the risk of Philistine oppression and made the Negev free from the Amalekite threat. Given the fact that he started with an ill-equipped Israelite militia, his accomplishments are admirable. Indeed, this list demonstrates that he possessed leadership qualities since he could not have carried out such wide-reaching campaigns without the support of all the Israelite tribes.

**CONCLUSION**

In many respects our study of Event 22 (Jonathan's Faith) parallels Event 18 (David Prevails, JUD map) when David overcame Goliath the Philistine in spite of all the odds against him. Both stories fall within the historical and textual bracket of king Saul's opening and closing battles (Event 9, NCA map). Both stories contain abundant geographical information which can be traced upon the detailed terrain of the JUD and BEN maps. Jonathan, with a strong and constant faith, turned defeat into victory during a major Philistine invasion and thereby delivered Israel. David emerged from obscurity, by faith prevailed over the Philistines and also delivered Israel. Words from the mouth of Jonathan and later from the mouth of David reveal that they walked by faith and not by sight, proclaiming to Israel and to the reader of the book of 1 Samuel that the God of Israel can bring deliverance. This was the message that the prophet Samuel, mentor of both Jonathan and David, consistently had preached.

The overriding theme of walking by faith is also woven into the on-going development of the Israelite monarchy in this period. The prophet Samuel anointed Saul of Benjamin, but in the eyes of the people Saul won his right to rule by delivering Jabesh-gilead (Event 9, NCA map). Above we saw that Saul lost that right when he crumbled under Philistine supremacy in his own land of Benjamin. Jonathan's act of faith delivered Israel and in the eyes of the people established his right to rule: 'He has brought about this great deliverance ... with God he has brought it about this day' (1 Sam 14:45). As Saul's behavior went from bad to worse the Benjaminite royal house was discredited (1 Sam 15), and Samuel of Ephraim had the uncomfortable task of travelling to Bethlehem and anointing David of Judah as Israel's new king (1 Sam 16). After delivering Israel from the Philistines (1 Sam 17) David entered the court of Saul and the king's family (1 Sam 18) as people recognized his right to rule. The people saw two possible leaders emerging: Jonathan, the Benjaminite crown prince, and David, son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah.

It is here that Jonathan's character shines most brightly. Rather than force his way to the throne as David's popularity rose and his father's anger raged, Jonathan safe-guarded David, who in human terms was his arch-rival (1 Sam 19, 20). Saul faced Jonathan with the stark truth, 'as long as [David] the son of Jesse is alive on the earth, not you nor your kingdom will be established' (1 Sam 20:31). Jonathan's faith in God and loyalty to David, however, remained strong, as we hear in his last words to David, 'Go in peace, because the two of us have sworn by the name of the LORD, "May the LORD be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever"' (1 Sam 20:42).

Unlike his father, the crown prince Jonathan (who earlier had proven his right to rule) recognized who God is and acted accordingly. He not only forfeited to David his right to rule but also followed his father into a battle which he no doubt knew could not be won. The stories of Jonathan and David provide us with striking examples of two individuals who walked by faith in the Land Between and, in the midst of great challenges and stunning victories, avoided the pitfalls of personal 'kingdom building.' It is no surprise that one of David's deepest laments was uttered when he received news that Saul and his son Jonathan, David's friend, had been killed by the Philistines in whose service David was employed.

#### READING

2 Samuel 1:17-27

#### OPTIONAL DISCUSSION OF GEBA, GIBEAH AND GIBEAH OF GOD

'Geba' and 'Gibeah' are very similar Hebrew terms which mean 'hill' but are associated with specific sites mentioned in this story. The BEN map shows Geba above a pass which crosses the Suweinit Canyon to reach Michmash. Gibeah is a prominent hill located along the highway between Bethlehem and Bethel and is usually identified with 'Gibeah of Benjamin' and 'Gibeah of Saul,' Saul's home base in Benjamin. When the term 'Geba-Benjamin' appears in Hebrew (1 Sam 13:15), a translator must decide if the site of Geba or Gibeah is intended. Thus different translations may use one name or the other. Geography and tactics also come into play in making a decision, as you will see in later readings.

'Gibeath-elohim' appears in 1 Samuel 10:5. This problematic reference only occurs here and can mean 'Gibeah of God' or simply 'Hill of God.' The mention of 'a garrison of the Philistines' here leads some to identify Gibeath-elohim with the Geba mentioned in our reading above (1 Sam 13:3). Others prefer a prominent hill south of Gibeon rising some 180m/600f above the plain. Today this hill is called 'Nebi Samwil' (tomb of the prophet Samuel according to a late tradition). Solomon may have worshiped here when he 'went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, since this is the largest high place/shrine' (1 Kgs 3:4).

A third possibility is that 'Gibeah of God' refers to Gibeah itself, the home of Saul. If so, the use of the term 'Gibeah' in 1 Samuel 10:5-11:4 may reflect an important shift in the book of 1 Samuel. The rule of God (God's kingdom) which Saul experienced at 'Gibeah of God' would soon fade. In its place a human king would establish the rule of man. 'Gibeah of God' was about to become 'Gibeah of Saul,' a message carefully outlined by Samuel in 1 Samuel 12. The only other time the term 'Gibeah of Saul' is used was when Samuel totally rejected Saul's kingship: 'This day the LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you' (1 Sam 15:24-35). Saul's departure from Gibeah of God 'to his house' was with Samuel's blessing (1 Sam 10:25-27). This time, however, Saul departs 'to his house' as a rejected leader with no recourse to the God of Israel. This departure 'to his house' was the end of the house of Saul of Benjamin. It is only a short walk from Gibeah to Ramah, but Samuel and Saul never saw each other again.

Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. Samuel never again saw Saul to the day he died, though he grieved deeply for him. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

As the next chapter opens, Samuel receives specific orders which changed the course of Israel's history.

'Fill your horn with oil and 'lekh' (be on your way); I'm sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite [in Judah!], for I have seen among his sons a king who has my approval.'

In the ongoing story of the book of Samuel the rule of God as seen in David and in Jonathan shines brightly against the somber background of Saul's rule at Gibeah of Saul in the land of Benjamin. It assures us that the kingdom of God endures. The preaching of Samuel was not in vain.

**EVENT 23: DAVID'S MANEUVER—'AND THEY SMOTE THE PHILISTINE FORCES FROM GIBEON TO GEZER'****READING**

RR 28-29: Jerusalem, City of David

**CHART—THE ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

This event occurred in between the **Samuel and Saul** and the **David and Solomon** periods shown on this chart. It was during this time that the Israelites **Needed a United Government—But Under Whose Control?** They sought a leader to defend them from outside oppression and to expand their control in the Land Between. No line is drawn on the chart between the orange and green portions of these boxes indicating that this leader would rule over all of the Israelite tribes.

This chart tells us something more about these periods. During the 'Samuel and Saul' period the Israelites were moving from **Prophet to King** and leadership was concentrated in Israel, the larger orange area on the chart. However, the Israelites were weak among the emerging peoples of the land, as seen by the relatively low position of this box on the chart. By contrast, during the 'David and Solomon' period the Israelites were strong among the emerging peoples, as seen by the high position of this box. The Israelites were dominated by Judah, the larger green area on the chart. The term '**United**' **Monarchy** does not imply Israelite tribal unity but rather the recognition of a common leader.

Event 23 happened as the Israelites went through a major transition between these two periods. This began only seven and a half years after Saul's death when David moved from Ziklag to Hebron (Events 9, 14 on NCA, SCA maps). There he was anointed 'king over the house of Judah' (2 Sam 2:1-4). A two year period of conflict ensued between supporters of the house of Saul in Israel and supporters of the house of David in Judah, but 'David grew stronger and stronger' (2 Sam 3:1). When the war ended, 'all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron ... and anointed David king over Israel.' It was a stirring moment as leaders of the northern tribes, including those from the prominent tribe of Ephraim of the House of Joseph, came to Hebron and recognized David of Judah as king: 'You shall shepherd my people Israel, and you shall be ruler of Israel.' A command which had been given to Samuel of Ephraim to go to Bethlehem of Judah and anoint a new king resulted in one of the most radical changes in all of Israelite history (1 Sam 16:1-13; 2 Sam 5:1-5; Ps 78:67-72).

Meanwhile, the activities of the Philistines went unchallenged. They enjoyed the control of some of the country's main routes and apparently felt no need to confront David as long as he was in Hebron. The two year conflict between Israel and Judah no doubt confirmed the Philistine view that the united Israelite front had crumbled after Saul's death. David's Hill Country kingdom around Hebron certainly did not yet threaten Philistine control of the Coastal Highway. After David became king of both Judah and Israel the Philistines must have carefully monitored his actions. However, as long as David stayed in Hebron, this 'Hill Country kingdom' did not yet warrant Philistine military action.

We enter the story with David as king over both Judah and Israel but still ruling from Hebron. We will see why David had to make a move and how his new capital at Jerusalem had far-reaching implications. We will also see why his action brought an immediate response from the Philistines, who understood the geopolitical significance of this move but did not respond with sufficient force to deter David. David's decisive action would take him and the Israelites out of the Hill Country and on to the major highways in the Land Between (Event 7, LB map). David's action and the Philistine reaction are better understood by considering the position of Hebron as compared to that of Jerusalem.

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the JUD map.)

**Hebron** was a natural place for David to begin his rule. Its patriarchal roots were as deep or deeper than those of Shechem or Bethel. Abraham had built an altar by the great trees of Mamre near Hebron (Gen 13:18). He had received a divine visit there (Gen 18:1-15), bought the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre in order to bury Sarah and was buried there himself (Gen 23; 25:7-11). Isaac had pitched his tent at Hebron (Gen 35:27), and Jacob lived there when he sent Joseph to find his brothers in the north (Gen 37:14). The Hebron region could be called the patriarchal homeland in the Land Between.

When the Israelites returned from Egypt to the Land Between, Hebron again entered Israelite history. The spies sent from Kadesh entered and left the Hill Country via the Hebron area (Num 13:22-25). Hebron joined Jerusalem in the siege of Gibeon (Josh 10:3), and in his southern campaign Joshua returned and attacked the city he had once visited as a spy (Josh 10:36-37). The book of Joshua lists Hebron as a city of refuge (Josh 20:7), assigning it to the Kohathite clan of the Levites (Josh 21:11-13).

Caleb, Joshua's fellow-spy and close friend, was allotted the fields and villages around Hebron (Josh 14: 13-15; 21:12) but had to conduct another campaign to bring the area under his control (Josh 15:13, 14). A candid account of the conquest of **Debir** illustrates Calebite expansion from Hebron into the hills south of Hebron. Caleb promised his daughter to the man who extended Judean control to Debir, an impressive site which overlooks the route descending from Hebron to the region of the Negev. Otniel did this and was given Caleb's daughter in marriage. As she travelled south, however, she realized that the area was considerably drier than her home in Hebron and she made a special request to her father, 'Since you have given me *arid* land (the word *negev* in Hebrew means both 'south' and 'dry'), give me also the sources of water; so Caleb gave her the **Upper Source** and the **Lower Source**' (Josh 15:19; Judg 1:15). These lie some distance from the hill of Debir and are the only water source for the site.

#### OPTIONAL MARKING ON JUD MAP

1. HL on city names: Hebron and Debir
2. Red circle on city dot of Debir
3. Sweeping green arrow from Hebron toward Debir
4. Write in small, black caps
  - a. CALEBITES (on sweeping green arrow above)
  - b. JOSH 15:13-19 (near Debir)
5. A blue dot at the point of each arrow showing the Upper and Lower Sources (NW of Debir)

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Blue dots appear on map; HL 'UPPER AND LOWER SOURCES'

#### OPTIONAL READING

Josh 15:13-19 (Judg 1:11-15)

#### DISCUSSION (Find bold names on the SCA map.)

As David considered Hebron's past he no doubt also recalled what had happened shortly after the death of Samuel (see SCA map, #12, Event 14). Abigail, the wife of Nabal, the influential Calebite from **Maon** near **Carmel** (south of Hebron), had wisely restrained David from taking revenge on her husband for Nabal's dishonoring remarks against David's family. Had David carried out this attack he no doubt never would have received the support from leaders in Hebron (who included prominent Calebites). As it turned out, Nabal died and David then married Abigail, whose connections could not have harmed David's standing in Hebron (1 Sam 25). David, however, could not consider only the past. He had to consider the future of an Israel which was at risk of being dominated by surrounding peoples who were taking control of the country's highways and growing caravan trade. Hebron's geographical setting explains David's response to this serious situation. Note the following features on the SCA map.

**Hebron** sits on a high plateau of valleys and rolling, terraced hills in the southern Hill Country of Judah, which rises to 1020m/3346f. Deep V-shaped canyons to the west of this plateau isolate it from the much lower **Shephelah** and restrict travel to high, narrow ridges. The dry, chalky **Wilderness** east of Hebron ends as cliffs plunge to the shores of the Dead Sea with its pungent waters. Lower and dryer hills to the south of Hebron descend into the basins of the **Eastern Negev**. A ridge route north of Hebron links the area with **Bethlehem**, **Jerusalem** and central Benjamin. Therefore the Hebron plateau with its fertile soil, sufficient rainfall and nearby grazing lands may be a secure and beautiful place to live, but it offers very little opportunity to influence the political life of the Land Between, particularly along the Coastal and Transjordanian highways. From horseback and tent George Adam Smith drew the same conclusions on his travels through the Hill Country of Judah in 1841 (1966 reprint: 215):

Yet neither Beth-lehem nor Hebron, nor any other part of that plateau [the watershed ridge through Judah], bears tokens of civic promise. Throughout Judea these are lacking. She has no harbours, no river, no trunk-road, no convenient market for the nations on either side. In their commerce with each other these pass by Judea, finding their emporiums in the cities of Philistia, or, as of old at Petra and Bozrah on the east of the Jordan. Gaza has outdone Hebron as the port of the desert. Jerusalem is no match for Shechem in fertility or convenience of site. The whole plateau stands aloof, waterless, on the road to nowhere. There are none of the natural conditions of a great city.

Similar thoughts must have filled David's mind during his five silent years at Hebron after having been made king of all Israel. To lead all of Israel effectively in this age of nations he knew that he could not remain in Hebron. His previous travels (1 Sam 22:3), his service to Saul (1 Sam 18:5-6, 30) and his time working for the king of Gath (1 Sam 27) had exposed him to what was happening in the Land

Between. The flow of goods along the country's major highways was increasing—along the coast, across the Jordan, in the south and throughout the north. Moreover, no international power now choked local nationalism, which meant that local peoples were quickly taking control of the country's economic network. As long as David remained in Hebron he would not have access to this network. The Israelites would be left behind as others grew stronger both economically and militarily.

David's experience of living in Saul's court at Gibeah had allowed him to learn literally the ins and outs of central Benjamin. He knew the advantages this region offered in terms of travel, trade and expansion. These can be reviewed by noting the highlighted routes across the land of Benjamin on the SCA and the BEN maps. Unlike the Hebron Plateau, the Central Benjamin Plateau offered access to the Coastal Highway via the Aijalon Valley and a way to reach the Medeba Plateau and the Transjordanian Highway via Jericho and the Rift Valley. This convinced David that he had to leave Hebron and move north.

The logical area for David to establish his new capital would have been the Central Benjamin Plateau. This, however, would have seriously threatened his relationship with the northern tribes of Israel. The plateau had been the homeland of Saul, Israel's first king. There was a close family relationship between the prominent northern tribe of Ephraim and the tribe of Benjamin, and the bitter struggle by northerners to keep the monarchy under their control had only been contained by David's astute actions. Now that the outward strife between Israel and Judah had ceased, the last thing David should do was to move into Saul's homeland, dishonor Saul's memory and trigger a strong reaction in the north.

David was faced with a dilemma. He needed the strategic Central Benjamin Plateau but dared not take it. There was, however, a city which the tribe of Benjamin had not taken. It had been attacked earlier by the tribe of Judah but they too had not occupied it (Judg 1:8). Jebusites lived there in David's day which meant that David could claim the city without undue criticism. Indeed, it would be difficult for anyone to criticize David for extending Israelite control in the Hill Country. By making the city Israel's political and spiritual capital David was in a sense giving the city to all of Israel. Once this was a reality the avenues of access to the city would naturally come under its jurisdiction, routes across the Central Benjamin Plateau to the Coastal and Transjordanian highways. David's masterful plan was designed with great care. He could not foresee, however, that his move would make Jerusalem a universal and eternal city whose name and message would reach far beyond the narrow confines of the Land Between.

#### MARKING ON JUD MAP

After you have completed this marking compare the position of Jerusalem with that of Hebron by noting these cities on the SCA, JUD and BEN maps.

6. HL on city name: Jerusalem
7. Green box around city dot of Jerusalem = David's second capital
8. Write in small, black caps
  - a. Beside Hebron: 2 SAM 2
  - b. Near Jerusalem: 2 SAM 5

#### READING

2 Samuel 5:1-10

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the JUD map.)

In addition to the sensitive relationship to Israelite tribal politics, David's move to Jerusalem had facets relating to the Philistines. David no doubt had calculated the risk of Philistine retaliation when he moved to Jerusalem. However, he had lived with the Philistines, observed their tactics and could put his experience to good use. He had proved himself among the Philistines, and for their part the Philistines knew that they were no longer dealing with Saul but with David. This was more the reason for them to act quickly before David established himself in Jerusalem near the Central Benjamin Plateau.

The Philistines, however, had to decide if a campaign directly on the Central Benjamin Plateau was the best action. They probably thought that David did not command sufficient support in Israel and therefore their best tactic was to cut David off from his power base in Judah. For this reason the Philistines twice sent their forces to the region immediately south of Jerusalem ('the stronghold'). In effect, this cut David off from Bethlehem and the rest of Judah, a tactic which the Philistines no doubt thought would ultimately result in David's demise. However, they had not counted on David's designs.

In their two operations the Philistines encamped above the **Rephaim Valley**, a broad valley southwest of Jerusalem. It can be seen on the JUD map draining westward into the **Rephaim Canyon** and then into the **Sorek Canyon**. The Sorek with all of its tributaries creates a broken, rugged region between Jerusalem and Beth-shemesh in the Shephelah. To reach the Rephaim Valley and avoid an Israelite ambush, the Philistines no doubt ascended along one of the ridge routes entering the Hill Country from the **Elah Valley**. The location of their camp is not known but a small fortress has tentatively been identified as 'Baal-perazim' in the modern Jerusalem suburb of Giloh. A better position, however, would be atop a hill just west of the north-south highway (west of the 819m/2686f elevation).

In his first encounter with the Philistines David repulsed them in a frontal attack. When the Philistines tried the same tactic again, David made his way through the canyons east of the main north-south ridge route (an area he knew well as a Bethlehemite) and circled around to attack the Philistine camp from behind (from the south). Given the obstacles in the Hill Country west of Jerusalem (the Sorek system has cut off any ridges leading directly to the Shephelah), the Philistines had no convenient escape route to the west. With David south of them the only way out of the hills was north to the Central Benjamin Plateau and then west via **Gibeon** to the Aijalon Valley and to **Gezer**.

By comparing this area with the BEN map you have marked you can see that this Philistine flight followed the same route along which Joshua had pursued the Canaanites in the first and most famous battle recorded in the region (Event 21, BEN map). Subsequently Samuel's revival meeting at Mizpah ended with a Philistine retreat along this route (1 Sam 7:5-11). Jonathan and Saul chased the Philistines along the same route from Michmash to Aijalon following the Philistine's major offensive from their garrison at Michmash (Event 22, BEN map).

The Philistine attack on David therefore allowed him to demonstrate to the people of Benjamin (Saul's homeland under the watchful eye of Ephraim to the north) that David was blessed with the same type of victory as that of Joshua, Samuel, Saul and Jonathan. Not only were the Philistines repulsed, David was confirmed in the very homeland of Saul and in the eyes of northern Israel. The Central Benjamin Plateau was now under his control, and his new capital at Jerusalem was there to stay. Any hope for reviving a Benjamin-based monarchy was gone for good.

#### MARKING ON JUD MAP

9. HL REPHAIM VALLEY, Baal-perazim, Gibeon, Gezer
10. Sweeping blue arrow: From the area of Bethlethepha above the Elah valley to the Valley of Rephaim via Bether and Baal-perazim (north of road and above the earlier arrows you drew)
11. Write in small, black caps along this blue arrow: PHILISTINE ADVANCES (2 SAM 5:17-25)
12. Green circular sweeping arrow: From En-rogel by Jerusalem SE around the name Kidron Canyon, then W above Bethlehem, then N toward the name Rephaim Valley, stopping 3cm/1in below the name
13. Write in small, black caps along this green arrow: DAVID'S MANEUVER (2 SAM 5:23)
14. Red confrontation mark: On the central ridge route just below the name Rephaim Valley.
15. A series of blue flight, green chase arrows: From Rephaim Valley N by Jerusalem, Gibeah, Gibeon, Beth-horon (x2), Shaalbim to Gezer = Philistine retreat and David's pursuit in the second encounter
16. Write in small, black caps along these flight arrows: DAVID PURSUES PHILISTINES  
Compare these flight and chase arrows with those on the BEN map to see how David's pursuit of the Philistines was along the same route as earlier Israelite victories in the area.

#### READING

2 Samuel 5:17-25 (1 Chronicles 14:8-16)

The close relationship of the names Geba and Gibeon (both meaning 'hill') is again seen in this passage. The Hebrew term 'Geba' in 2 Samuel 5:25 is often translated 'Gibeon' to fit the 1 Chronicles 14:16 account of this event, which fits the geographical realities of the Philistine flight.

#### CONCLUSIONS

As is the case of many biblical events, there are both geopolitical and spiritual implications to this story. The Philistine response to David's move was a case of being 'too little and too late.' Their self-confidence and David's maneuver led to a hasty retreat which put David's victory on full display in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. The timing of the Philistine attacks could not have been better since it happened at a critical moment in David's early rule—just as he was establishing his new capital in Jerusalem.

JUD, v.3

W at 609m/1998f to Bethlehem, then N to dot of Ramat Rahel

On route N of same dot

David's move to Jerusalem completed the process in the book of Samuel which led from leadership by prophet to leadership by king. Samuel and Saul both were dead, and it was now possible to establish a new Israelite religious center which would be one and the same as the political capital. David took advantage of this opportunity by bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem from Kiriath-jearim (Baalath) where it had been kept since the Philistines returned it to the Israelites (1 Sam 6). The most convenient route from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem was via Gibeon on the Central Benjamin Plateau. This would have taken David and the Ark directly through the homeland of Saul and would have been yet another reminder that the God of Israel now abided with David. In part it could explain David's enthusiastic dancing as he accompanied the Ark on its way to Jerusalem. At least one person from Benjamin took exception to this action, David's wife Michal, the daughter of Saul. Was she embarrassed at David's dancing or because she saw his rejoicing in the territory of Benjamin as politically motivated rather than a spiritual act? The detailed description of this procession is found in 2 Samuel 6.

An oft repeated theme characterizes these two battles with the Philistines and the rise of David throughout the book of Samuel: David depended on the LORD and the LORD blessed him. Each time the Philistines advanced we specifically are told that David inquired of the LORD as to what action to take. In both cases the LORD responded and David was victorious. Thus 'David kept growing stronger, for the LORD, the God of Hosts, was *with him*' (2 Sam 5:10). Divine words delivered to David by the prophet Nathan clearly state this and also echo the promise earlier given to Joshua (Josh 1:9). The response of David to this divine blessing reveals a humble heart (2 Sam 7:8, 18).

This is what the LORD of Hosts says [to David]: I took you from grazing lands, from tending sheep, to be ruler over my people, even over Israel. Wherever you have ventured, I have been *with you*....

And king David came in and sat before the LORD and said, 'Who am I, O LORD Almighty, and what is my house [of Jesse from Judah] that you have brought me thus far?'

Finally, David's move to Jerusalem gave him access to the highways of the nations. Anyone who knows the geographical realities of Jerusalem realizes that the book of Samuel argues that David's faith and God's faithfulness built a city and expanded a kingdom which no one had expected. George Adam Smith drew the same conclusion as we pick up where his last quote ended (1966 reprint: 215):

... The whole [Judean] plateau stands aloof, waterless, on the road to nowhere. There are none of the natural conditions of a great city.

And yet it was here that She arose who, more than Athens and more than Rome, taught the nations civic justice, and gave her name to the ideal city men are ever striving to build on earth, to the City of God that shall one day descend from heaven—the New Jerusalem. For her builder was not Nature nor the wisdom of men, but on that secluded and barren site the Word of God, by her prophets, laid her eternal foundations in righteousness, and reared her walls in her people's faith in God.

#### EVENT 24: JERUSALEM'S ACCESS—'BAASHA KING OF ISRAEL ... FORTIFIED RAMAH TO PREVENT ANYONE FROM LEAVING OR ENTERING THE TERRITORY OF ASA KING OF JUDAH'

**CHART—THE ISRAELITE MONARCHIES: 500 YEAR OVERVIEW** (Find bold names on the chart.)

The period of **David and Solomon** saw unprecedented expansion of Israelite control in the Land Between. David's geopolitical wisdom and Solomon's tight administrative policy had kept Israelite unity outwardly intact, but tribal tension between northern Israel and southern Judah was increasing. Judah's tacit takeover of routes in Benjamin and its economic exploitation of the north were deeply resented by the House of Joseph and other northern tribes. The 'United' Monarchy's future was shaky (1 Kgs 11).

When Solomon died his son Rehoboam took over the reigns of government and listened to the advice of younger members of his court rather than to older and more experienced advisors. To control growing unrest in the north his younger advisors proposed harsher policies and higher quotas. When Rehoboam announced these get-tough measures, the northern tribes led by Jeroboam of Ephraim revolted. Within five years pharaoh Shishak and his Egyptian army invaded the country and systematically destroyed the economic infrastructure of both Judah and Israel. These events signalled a rapid Israelite decline and a period of internal struggle called the **Battle of Benjamin** on the chart (1 Kgs 12:1-20).

For fifty years, between -930 and -880, the small territory of Benjamin saw conflict as Judah (green on the chart) attempted to push its border north and Israel (orange on the chart) attempted to push south. The Bible states that this war continued for three generations of Judah's rulers in Jerusalem, in the days of Rehoboam, Abijah and Asa. Judah's and Israel's constant concern for their shared border in Benjamin

and their costly alliances with Damascus (Event 10, NCA map) weakened both nations, seen on this chart by the lower Battle of Benjamin box. The **red line** between the green of Judah and the orange of Israel in this box represents the continuous state of war which existed between south and north.

**EXPLORE RR AND BEN MAP** (Find bold names on the RR and BEN maps.)

Map A, RR 26, shows the larger context of the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Note the **blue arrows** ascending from **Jericho** and from the **Aijalon Valley** to central Benjamin around **Gibeon** and **Ramah**. These arrows show the importance of the territory of Benjamin for invaders from the outside. The Philistine policy of 'divide and control' on the BEN map is a good example of this. On Map A, RR 28, **green arrows** point outward from central Benjamin to **Jericho** and to the **Aijalon Valley**. These arrows show the importance of Benjamin for any Hill Country kingdom which wanted to expand beyond the hills. David's expansion on the LB map is a good example of this.

Both of these maps (RR 26 and 28, Maps A) show a green arrow from Judah pointing north and an orange arrow pointing south from Ephraim (Israel). All of these arrows point toward central Benjamin. Both Judah and Israel recognized the strategic and commercial importance of this region. Both of these maps show the borders of the tribal territory of Benjamin (**yellow broken line**). Benjamin had a common border with Ephraim (**orange broken line**) and a common border with Judah (**green broken line**). This was the context for the fifty-year Battle of Benjamin between Judah and Israel.

Look at Map B, RR 26, the detailed map of this area, and find the cities of **Jerusalem** and **Bethel**. Note Jerusalem's advantages if it controlled the entire network of routes on this map, as far north as **Jeshanah**. Israel, however, would never tolerate this. It wanted to control as far south as **Ramah** and thereby extend its control over all east-west traffic between the region of **Michmash** and **Lower Beth-horon**. This would cut off Jerusalem's access to the Coastal Highway which Judah would never tolerate. Clearly neither side could have everything it desired, but it took fifty-years of fighting for them to realize this.

It may be helpful to compare these maps (RR 26, 28) with the BEN map and find the names printed in bold above. With the background gained from our map study we are now ready to trace a series of events which happened in this area during the Battle of Benjamin, events carefully recorded in the Bible.

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

-931/-930 to -913: When Jeroboam of Israel revolted against Judah's rule, he realized that his subjects near Bethel would be attracted to Jerusalem and its temple. To counter this tendency he built his own religious center at the important center of Bethel, a site which conveniently had a patriarchal history (1 Kgs 12:26-33). Meanwhile, Rehoboam of Judah was busy fortifying cities in the Hill Country and in the Shephelah (Event 19, JUD map). A list of these cities (2 Chron 11:5-12) does not name any site in Benjamin but only states that Rehoboam strengthened cities in Benjamin and thus maintained control of both Judah and Benjamin. While Israel was building at Bethel and Judah was strengthening positions such as Ramah, 'a continual state of war existed between Rehoboam and Jeroboam' (1 Kgs 14:30).

-913 to -910: The 'state of war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam' had existed for almost two decades. Abijah/Abijam, Rehoboam's son, followed in his father's footsteps, and the state of war with Israel continued throughout his three-year reign (1 Kgs 15:6, 7). It was Abijah who made the first recorded advance in the Battle of Benjamin, a move which combined religious, diplomatic and military facets of the conflict. Abijah of Jerusalem negotiated an alliance with the king of Damascus (the two fathers later mentioned in 1 Kgs 15:19). Abijah may have encouraged Damascus to put pressure on Israel's northern border and thereby divert Jeroboam's attention. Abijah probably also mustered support in Jerusalem for his plan to overrun Jeroboam's apostate shrine at Bethel.

Within this context Abijah felt prepared to mount a military attack along the main Hill Country highway north of the Central Benjamin Plateau. His well-trained forces met the army of Jeroboam in the region of **Mt. Zemaraim** southwest of **Bethel**. Deeply eroded canyons to the east and to the west of this narrow plateau constrict the north-south route as it makes its way between higher hills (see the BEN map and elevations in this area). This terrain provided cover for Jeroboam's ambush which circled around Abijah's forces. (Today the twin Arab cities of Ramallah/el-Bira cover this strategic ridge.)

When Abijah finally gained the upper hand he wisely extended his campaign to **Jeshanah** and **Ophrah**, called Ephron or Ephraim in 2 Chr 13:19. Abijah thus secured the northern and eastern approaches to the Bethel region and totally usurped Ephraim's southern flank. Judah's successful offensive must have shocked the northern kingdom of Israel and Jeroboam's court at his capital in Tirzah (LB/NCA maps).

**MARKING ON BEN MAP**

1. HL on name: MT. ZEMARAIM
2. Red dot on city dot: Bethel, Jeshanah and Ophrah (i.e., Ephron) = cities taken by Abijah
3. Sweeping green arrows:
  - a. One from Bethel to Jeshanah (draw the arrow just E of the route)
  - b. A second branching off from the Bethel-Jeshanah arrow toward Ophrah (follow the route)
4. Write in black, small caps along the second arrow, with small circle around '1': 1 ABIJAH (2 CHR 13)

**READING**

## 2 Chronicles 13

As you read this passage note how Abijah carefully chose his words in his dramatic speech prior to the battle. His reference to recent events and to David's accomplishments have strong religious overtones. The geographical setting makes the speech even more relevant, as Abijah was facing toward the famous (now infamous) shrine of Bethel built by Jeroboam, one of Abijah's prime objectives in this campaign. His religious emphasis, however, may have provided a convenient pretext for his other objectives—the political and economic control of the Bethel region and its approaches.

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

-910 to -909: With the death of Abijah, his son Asa became king of Judah. Meanwhile, as Israel was reeling from the loss of the Bethel region, Jeroboam's son was assassinated bringing a new dynasty to Israel. The coup happened at **Gibbethon** on the Coastal Highway where Israel was campaigning against the Philistines (1 Kgs 15:25-30). It appears to be part of a larger strategy in the Battle of Benjamin: to outflank Judah on the west, hold Asa, king of Judah, hostage in the Hill Country and profit from coastal commerce. This strategy was about to change as Baasha eliminated all the members of the house of Jeroboam and began putting his own diplomatic and military strategy into place.

**MARKING ON BEN MAP**

5. HL on name: Aphek, Gibbethon (on the Coastal Highway)
6. Red circle around name: Gibbethon
7. Write in black, small caps by Gibbethon: BAASHA'S COUP (1 KGS 15:27-28)
8. Sweeping orange arrow from Aphek along the Coastal Highway to Gibbethon = Israel's campaign in northern Philistia (Gibbethon)
9. Write in black, small caps along orange arrow: ISRAEL'S ATTEMPT TO OUTFLANK JUDAH (1 KGS 15:25-32)

**DISCUSSION** (Find bold names on the BEN map.)

-909 to -885: With new kings in Judah and in Israel another phase of the Battle of Benjamin began. Baasha, king of Israel, set about negotiating a treaty with the king of Damascus (the 'treaty with Baasha, king of Israel' in 1 Kgs 15:19) which left Israel free to concentrate on war with Judah. In a stunning campaign Baasha's army pushed south but did not stop at **Bethel**. It continued south on to the Central Benjamin Plateau and began creating facts on the ground by fortifying the important intersection of **Ramah**, thus severing **Jerusalem** from the Coastal Highway. Asa of Judah could not tolerate this.

At this point Asa 'lifted a page from history' and reminded Damascus of its earlier treaty with his father Abijah. He sweetened his overtures with some of the remaining treasures of Jerusalem. Damascus broke its treaty with Israel, and with Israel's troops elsewhere Damascus took the Hazor Highway and marched deep inside the Northern Arena (Event 10/NCA map). Israel retreated from Ramah, and the men of Judah were all called out to establish border posts at **Geba** above the Suweinit Canyon and at **Mizpah** on a ridge above the main north-south Hill Country Highway. By this move Asa sealed off the two northern approaches to the **Central Benjamin Plateau**. This remained the border between Judah and Israel for the next century and a half. The irony (and perhaps the lesson) of the Battle of Benjamin was that Judah and Israel wasted their resources on a struggle which ultimately only benefited Damascus.

**MARKING ON BEN MAP**

BEN, v.3

Passing E of the name 'Bethel, Luz' and continuing E of the route to Ramah

10. Sweeping orange arrow from the area of Jeshanah toward Ramah (W of the route but passing through the name 'Bethel, Luz' to the E of the route through 'Beeroth' to Ramah) = Baasha's advance
11. Orange triangle around city dot: Ramah = Baasha's fortification

12. Write in black, small caps on the arrow with small circle around '2': 2 BAASHA (1 KGS 15:16, 17)
13. Small green triangle on city dot (fill the triangle with green): Mizpah and Geba = Asa's fortifications on the border with Israel
14. Write in black, small caps below Mizpah with small circle around '3' = 3 ASA (1 KGS 15:22)

**READING**

1 Kings 15:16-22

This is one of the most densely packed geopolitical passages in the Bible. Many of the events discussed above are derived from these six verses which summarize decades of relations between Judah and Damascus and between Israel and Damascus. Read the passage carefully with the BEN map in hand. Its parallel is in 2 Chron 16:1-6. The NCA map shows the invasion route of Damascus into Galilee.

**DISCUSSION**

-885 to -880: The final episode recorded in this fifty-year Battle of Benjamin relates to the fall of the house of Baasha. Baasha's son was assassinated in Tirzah by Zimri while Omri, the commander of Israel's army, was leading yet another campaign at Gibbethon (1 Kgs 16:8-20). Apparently Israel had a long term policy of weakening Judah by controlling the Coastal Highway south of Aphek. Omri took over the throne of Israel from Zimri and realized that the long state of war with Judah had been disastrous for both nations. We no longer hear of continual war but rather of a policy of internal reconstruction. Omri's son, Ahab, continued his father's policy and cooperated with Jehoshaphat, Asa's son, the new king in Judah. As separate nations Israel and Judah thrived as shown by the elevated Ahab/Jehoshaphat box on the Israelite Monarchies: 500 Year Overview chart. The line which separates Judah and Israel in this box shows that they were now separate entities

**CONCLUSION**

This complex geopolitical period clearly illustrates the importance which Israel and Judah placed upon the Central Benjamin Plateau and its approaches. Potential tension between the House of Joseph and the House of Judah was inherent in their original tribal allotments (Josh 15-17). Benjamin's fate was sealed when it was allotted the strategic region between these two prominent tribes (Josh 18). The tribe was almost exterminated in bloody civil war (Judg 19-21) which only weakened Benjamin's ability to withstand surrounding pressures. The Benjamin-based monarchy led by Saul did not reflect the tribe's political strength but only underscored its inferior rank. Since the tribe of Benjamin did not threaten Joseph nor Judah it served their purposes well.

David's move to Jerusalem further unsettled the tribe of Benjamin. Later rulers of Judah assumed that Jerusalem's authority extended over the territory of Benjamin. This assumption was severely tested in the Battle of Benjamin. By the end of the struggle the sacrifice of Benjamin was complete—and Judah came out ahead. A glance at maps on RR 26 shows how much Benjaminite territory Judah held after the Battle of Benjamin. The entire Central Benjamin Plateau, including Mizpah, was under the control of Judah, which also held the western approaches to the plateau but lost Jericho to the east. With the apparent loss of Jericho, Judah lost its connection to the Transjordanian Highway, a fact which became evident by Ahab's action in the period which followed (Event 11, NCA map). Since Israel held the Bethel region, the region of Michmash/Ai and the oases of Jericho it was able to exploit trade passing from Transjordan to the Coastal Highway via these sites.

The process which had begun with David's capture of the Jebusite stronghold at Jerusalem was now complete. Jerusalem and its access to the Coastal Highway were firmly in Judah's control and would remain there. However, enmity between the tribes of Judah and Ephraim, which our study above has so clearly illustrated, was not soon forgotten. In his attempt to emphasize the blessing of the messianic age, the prophet Isaiah recalled these events and the weaknesses inherent in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. This prophetic promise, like others in the same chapter of Isaiah, stands out as abnormal and was rarely, if ever, seen. The enmity between Israel and Judah and the struggle for dominance in the area of Benjamin served the prophet well in his attempt to underscore messianic blessings (Isa 11:13-14).

Then Ephraim's jealousy will be put aside, and the enmity of Judah will cease to be.  
Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not be hostile toward Ephraim.  
But [together] they shall swoop down over Philistia on their western flank,  
And as one they shall plunder the people [nations] on the east ...

What is even more surprising is that these promises would be fulfilled by ‘a rod out of the stem of Jesse, a shoot sprouting from his roots.’ One from the House of Jesse of the tribe of Judah would once again rule Ephraim and the House of Joseph, but this time, like David, with ‘a spirit of wisdom and understanding,’ with equity, with righteousness and ‘in the fear of the LORD’ (Isa 11:1-5).

#### AN OVERVIEW FROM NEBI SAMWIL—VIEWS AND SELECTED EVENTS IN AND AROUND CENTRAL BENJAMIN

A hill rising to 885m/2904f on the southern edge of the Central Benjamin Plateau affords an overview of the most concentrated biblical region in the Land Between. On its summit stands a landmark which can be seen throughout this part of the Hill Country. This is the traditional tomb of the prophet Samuel, or ‘**Nebi Samwil**’ in Arabic (find all bold names on the BEN map), located south of Gibeon. Samuel was buried in **Ramah** where he lived most of his life (1 Sam 25:1), but at some point his burial place became identified with this prominent hill and the tradition has remained.

Upon reaching the summit of this hill one is immediately struck with its commanding view. It quickly fades when one enters the high vaulted main hall of the mosque which covers the traditional tomb. At one side a long, narrow stone staircase steeply ascends to the roof and the base of the minaret. From here one gains a magnificent view of the surrounding territory, an area charged with biblical events from almost every period. In order to appreciate the importance of what you would see from this point, we pause to trace the landscape in every direction. You may want to make this overview site stand out on the BEN by drawing short black lines radiating out from the 885m/2904f elevation mark.

#### SOUTH OVERLOOKING THE SOREK CANYON AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

We begin our tour of the terrain by looking south over a region of uplifted limestone which has been dissected by the **Sorek Canyon** and its tributaries. The canyon makes its way from the **Central Benjamin Plateau** through an area of steep slopes before flowing out to the **Sorek Valley** by **Bethshemesh**. On its way it is joined by the **Rephaim Canyon** and the **Chesalon Canyon**. Together these canyons present a series of obstacles for travel directly from Jerusalem to the Shephelah. These obstacles make routes through adjacent areas much more attractive.

As we look due south from Nebi Samwil we see the higher hills of the Judean Ridge. Hill **923m/3028f** near the modern Arab city of **Beit Jala**, affectionately nicknamed ‘Mt. Everest’ by the locals, clearly stands out on the horizon. Nearby, the main Hill Country route from Hebron passes **Bethlehem** before continuing north, skirting **Jerusalem** and reaching **Gibeah** and **Ramah**. Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, David, Absalom, Mary and Joseph and many others knew this route well. It is difficult to cross over this route, even today with its heavy traffic, without thinking of one of these biblical characters passing along a dusty track between Ramah and Bethlehem.

The low ridge on which the original site of Jerusalem is located cannot be seen from Nebi Samwil since, as Psalm 125 states, it is situated in the midst of higher hills. However, the nearby **Mt. of Olives** with its modern towers is clearly seen and indicates the original city’s general location. The modern Arab and Israeli suburbs of Jerusalem, however, are all too visible and cover much of the landscape before us. Through a dip in the hills one can also make out the artificial mound built by king Herod on which he built a monument to himself, the Herodium rising to 758m/2486f (just off the BEN map but seen on the JUD map). Much farther to the southeast on a clear day one can spot the high Crusader walls of Karak across the Dead Sea in the Kingdom of Jordan (LB map, east of the Dead Sea).

#### EAST OVERLOOKING THE CENTRAL RIDGE ROUTE

Our view to the east of Nebi Samwil overlooks the upper part of the Sorek Canyon. Just beyond we can trace the main south-north ridge route through the central Hill Country. Our eyes take us north from the Jerusalem area along a narrower part of the watershed ridge to a prominent hill, appropriately called ‘**Gibeah**’ (‘Hill’), the capital of Saul. Gibeah affords a magnificent view of the area we cannot see, east of the ridge route, from the **Mt. of Olives** through **Anathoth** (the prophet Jeremiah’s village) to the region of **Michmash/Ai**. On a crisp, clear winter’s day the hills of Upper Gilead can be seen beyond the Wilderness and Jordan Valley, which are hidden from our view. The central ridge route from Gibeah to **Ramah**, crossroads of central Benjamin, is easily traced. Many of the events of the book of 1 Samuel fall within the scope of our view. The most memorable was a command which changed Israelite history, a command given to the prophet Samuel at Ramah when Saul ruled Israel from Gibeah.

‘Fill your horn with oil and ‘*lekh*’ (be on your way); I’m sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite [in Judah!], for I have seen among his sons a king who has my approval.’

1 Sam 16:1-5 As Samuel left Ramah on that momentous journey he slipped by Gibeah on his way to Bethlehem, hoping that Saul's guards would not recognize him and report his whereabouts to king Saul.

#### WEST OVERLOOKING RIDGE ROUTES TO THE SHEPHELAH

Our view from Nebi Samwil to the west is partially hidden by nearby trees. A discerning eye, however, can see the higher western edge of the Central Benjamin Plateau, the top of a geological arch running northeast from **Kiriath-jearim**. This has kept deep V-shaped canyons to the west where they drain into the **Aijalon Valley**. Routes along high ridges in this area offer some of the shortest and most convenient connections to the **Shephelah** anywhere along Judah's western slopes (cf. the JUD map). From Nebi Samwil we can pick out the top of three ridge routes shown on the BEN map. The most obvious is the **Beth-horon** ridge route which can be seen in its entirety to the northwest. The Arab city of **Biddu** to the southwest controls two ridge routes, one which descends to the Aijalon Valley via **el-Qubeiba** and another which follows a level path to **Kiriath-jearim** before descending to the Shephelah.

Again, biblical events flood the mind. One of these best summarizes this western view from Nebi Samwil: Solomon's worship at the 'high place of Gibeon,' perhaps at the very site at which we stand. His view from here would have helped him understand the importance of fortifying **Upper and Lower Beth-horon, Baalath** (Kiriath-jearim) and **Gezer** (1 Kgs 3:3-9; 9:17-18; 2 Chron 8:5-6). He easily could have turned to the southeast toward Jerusalem and seen that the security of his capital was closely linked to the Central Benjamin Plateau and sites guarding these ridge routes to the Aijalon Valley.

#### NORTH OVERLOOKING THE CENTRAL BENJAMIN PLATEAU AND THE REGION OF MT. ZEMARAIM

We now turn our attention to the most stunning view one can see from the roof of Nebi Samwil, the view north over the entire Central Benjamin Plateau, with the site of Gibeon and its fertile fields spreading out beneath us. Beyond the rolling hills of the plateau is the low hill of **Mizpah. Bethel**, however, is hidden by higher intervening summits around **Mt. Zemaraim**. The site of **Ai** is also hidden but parts of the region of **Michmash/Ai** are visible. Higher summits can also be seen in the Hill Country of Ephraim, an area of deep V-shaped canyons where Philistine and Greek armies seldom dared to penetrate. On a clear day, with the aid of binoculars, one can see the headland of Mt. Carmel far to the north-northwest, beyond the limits of the BEN map (see LB map).

In addition to tracing the main north-south ridge route from Mizpah to the area of Bethlehem, one can also track the east-west route from the region of **Michmash/Ai** as it appears at **Ramah** and then makes its way westward across the plateau to **Gibeon** before dividing into two routes, one leading to the **Beth-horon** ridge and the other to **Biddu** and **Kiriath-jearim**. Those events marked on the JUD and BEN maps (and many more) transpired along the routes beneath us. The accumulation of modern Arab and Israeli structures (built in a rush to produce facts on the ground) and a major highway cutting through the very hill on which we stand testify to the on-going strategic importance of this area.

#### CENTRAL BENJAMIN THROUGHOUT BIBLICAL HISTORY

One of the best ways of reviewing biblical events on the BEN map is to reread 'A Field Trip Through History' on both RR 27 and RR 29. The discussion below summarizes principal biblical events which were played out on the terrain which lies before us as we look out from Nebi Samwil. The headings are taken from the 4000 Year Overview chart which provides the context for these events.

#### NEW BEGINNINGS

Gen 12:8-9 The main north-south ridge route through this part of the Hill Country could be called 'the patriarchal highway.' As Abraham moved south from Shechem he encamped between **Bethel** and **Ai**, choosing a well-sheltered location (like all tent dwellers), which may well have been in a beautiful enclosed valley just below the **914m/2999f** elevation mark east of Bethel. From there he followed the ridge route south to the Negev. Later, Abraham and his men rushed north along this same route to head off the invasion force which had captured Lot. Upon his return Abraham returned along this route and met Melchizedek, king of Salem, which many feel to be Jerusalem.

Gen 14

Gen 28:10-22; 35:1-21 Abraham's grandson Jacob returned to the Bethel/Ai area when he left Canaan in search of a wife and also when he returned with his large family. Somewhere along the road south of Bethel Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin. Centuries later the prophet Jeremiah recalls this sad event along this road and speaks of 'a voice which is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter crying.' In this case, however, it is Rachel weeping for the calamity coming upon her heritage and upon Jerusalem.

Jer 31:15

When Jacob sent his beloved son Joseph north to seek news of his other sons, Joseph's route would have taken him along this same ridge route. Little did he know that he would never see this Hill Country road again but would descend into Egypt along the Coastal Highway to the west.

Gen 37

#### EGYPTIAN DOMINANCE

Gibeon, situated below us, was the main city of the Gibeonites when Joshua made his calculated attack in the Region of Ai to the northeast. The battle was too far away to be seen from Nebi Samwil, but word of the invading Israelites no doubt reached the Gibeonites by the time of Joshua's second campaign. As Israelites were settling the Hill Country north of Bethel there must have been intense discussions among the Gibeonites as to how to deal with this threat. They knew that their cities on and around the Central Benjamin Plateau were high on Joshua's list of regional priorities in central Canaan. They devised a plan which would save them from destruction, and it worked. As we have seen, however, Jerusalem would never tolerate an enemy on the Central Benjamin Plateau. What happened next could have all been seen from Nebi Samwil (Event 21, BEN map).

Josh 8

Josh 9

Josh 10:1-14

Israelite settlement continued in the Hill Country, and Judah migrated into the southern Hill Country around Bethlehem and Hebron. In this context we find a lone Levite from the **Remote Interior of Ephraim** traveling through central Benjamin to **Bethlehem** of Judah. His concubine had earlier taken her leave of the Levite and had made this same trip back to her father's home in Bethlehem. The climax of the story comes as the concubine and the Levite are returning to Ephraim. Middle Eastern hospitality had forced them to leave Bethlehem late in the day, and from Nebi Samwil we see that they could not have gone very far before seeking refuge for the night. Instead of turning off the road to stay with non-Israelites in **Jerusalem** they pressed north and reached **Gibeah** of Benjamin as the sun was disappearing behind the hill on which we stand. What happened next showed a total lack of Middle Eastern hospitality, a symptom of a much deeper disregard for others which emerges throughout the story. The next day the Levite continued north along the ridge route into the Hill Country of Ephraim with the body of his concubine strapped upon his donkey. The affair ended with an Israelite civil war against Benjamin, which almost exterminated the Benjaminites. The potential for territorial wars between Judah and Ephraim was too high, however, and a method was devised to restore the tribe of Benjamin.

Judg 19

Judg 20-21

#### AGE OF NATIONS

Much of our study in this chapter and on the SCA map focused on the period of the Benjamin-based monarchy led by Saul. The Philistines thought that they could defuse Israelite nationalism and topple this monarchy by controlling the region we see before us. This policy led the Philistines to commit their military resources to holding the Central Benjamin Plateau and the region of Michmash/Ai and thereby drive a wedge between the two prominent Israelite tribes, Ephraim and Judah. The markings on the BEN map show the disastrous retreat of the Philistines after Jonathan's courageous action.

1 Sam 13:1-14:31

When David moved his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem the Philistines tried a different tactic. They attempted to cut David off from Judah by twice cutting the main ridge route between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. They again failed, and the JUD map shows their disastrous retreat, which can be followed from the vantage point of Nebi Samwil.

2 Sam 5:17-25

Various episodes in the Battle of Benjamin again bring our attention to the north-south ridge route through the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Clearly Jerusalem needed this area and covetously campaigned into the Hill Country of Ephraim in order to complete its control of the entire network of routes from Jericho to the Aijalon Valley. One can easily feel the frustration felt in Jerusalem when Baasha of Israel began building at Ramah, which cut off Jerusalem's access to the Coastal Highway. The final arrangement left the entire plateau in Judah's hands, but Bethel, the region of Michmash/Ai and Jericho were in the hands of Israel. The territory of Benjamin had been torn asunder.

1 Kgs 15:16-22

**EMPIRES CONTROL** (RR 30-31 provides the background for the following discussion.)

As the Assyrian war machine toppled kingdoms to the north of the Land Between, local nations scrambled to meet the threat. Some realized that their own resources could not meet the challenge and thus made alliances with others. It was in this context that the land before us again became a potential battlefield as Israel, together with its northern ally Damascus, pressed Judah to join an alliance against Assyria. Two prophetic proclamations speak of possible campaigns along routes which pass by Ramah. The first takes us north from Gibeah. The second approaches Jerusalem from the region of Michmash/Ai. Both statements issue urgent warnings of impending crises in this strategic area before us.

2 Kgs 16:1-9

Hos 5:8 Sound a shofar in Gibeah, a trumpet in Ramah, a shout of war in Beth-aven, we're behind you, Benjamin!

Isa 10:28-32 He has come upon Aiath (Ai) ... stored weapons at Michmash, crossed over the pass. 'Let's stay the night at Geba!' Ramah shakes, Gibeah of Saul flees. Cry out, O daughter of Gallim..., answer, poor Anathoth ... Before the day is done he reaches Nob and shakes his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

Little is known about Babylon's final assault on the city of **Jerusalem**, but when its army overcame revolutionary elements in the Jewish state and destroyed the city, a prisoner of war camp was set up at **Ramah**. Babylon appointed a provisional administration, based at **Mizpah**, to oversee the lower classes which had not been deported to Babylon. It attracted a growing number of Jews, including those from Transjordan. The Ammonite king east of the Jordan saw this remnant as a threat to his designs and hired terrorists to murder and demoralize the Jews who remained in the land. A group of Jews cornered the terrorists at **Gibeon**, but they escaped and took refuge with the Ammonite king. Fearful of Babylon's retaliation for this disorder, the Jewish resistance group fled to the area of **Bethlehem** hoping to escape to Egypt. It is clear that the Ammonite leader wanted to deal a final death blow to the Jewish entity being reestablished along Benjamin's network of routes. Ultimately it could only threaten his influence in the Central Arena.

Jer 40-41

When Persia allowed the Jews to return, central Benjamin became one of the main areas of settlement. From here Jewish settlement spread to the Hill Country of Ephraim and toward the Shephelah. By the time the Seleucid Greeks controlled the Land Between, routes across the Central Benjamin Plateau linked outlying Jewish settlements with Jerusalem. The area bristled with action during the Maccabean revolt, which broke out at **Modiin** along a main route between the Coastal Highway and Jerusalem. Jewish rebels forayed from their refuge in the Hill Country of Ephraim northwest of Bethel (later called 'the hills of **Gophna**') to wreak havoc on Greek forces. The ascent of **Beth-horon**, **Emmaus** (by Aijalon), the Central Benjamin Plateau and the region of **Elasa** by Mt. Zemaraim all played significant roles in the decades after -168. One of the most crushing defeats for the Greeks came when the Maccabees ambushed their army by **Adasa** east of Gibeon. Busy elsewhere, the Greeks finally gave the region of **Michmash/Ai** to a Maccabean leader, Jonathan, in hopes that he would remain there. It was not long, however, before that region became a springboard for recapturing **Jerusalem** and the entire central Hill Country. Benjamin's network of routes then became avenues of expansion beyond the hills.

1 Macc 3, 4, 7

1 Macc 7:33-50

1 Macc 9:62-11:37

#### ROME SUPREME

The arrival of Rome in Jerusalem in -63 brought the end of the Jewish Hasmonean (Maccabean) state and engendered rebellion among some zealous Jews. As Roman governors systematically reorganized the land, most of the area seen on the BEN map became part of the southern region of 'Judea,' in contrast to Jewish territory in Galilee and Across-the-Jordan (Perea). Roman troops appeared along the routes beneath Nebi Samwil when disturbances broke out in Judea. Rome's grip loosened only when Parthia, its archenemy in the East, invaded the land in -40. Routes on the Central Benjamin Plateau became thoroughfares for troops led by Herod, who put down the revolt. He later became Rome's 'King of the Jews.' With Herod's death in -4, rebellion again broke out throughout the country. In one incident at **Emmaus** (by Aijalon) a Roman centurion and forty of his men were massacred while conveying wheat and arms. Varus, the Roman governor of Syria, joined by Arab troops, marched through the land killing and destroying. **Arus** (top center of BEN map), **Sappho** (by Lower Beth-horon) and Emmaus were ravaged before Varus marched into Jerusalem. During the previous year (-6/5) Mary and Joseph had made their way along the ridge route south of Jerusalem to Bethlehem of Judea where Jesus was born.

Luke 2:1-7

The Jewish Mishna tells us that one day's journey from Jerusalem would take a traveller to the **Jordan River** in the east, to **Lod/Lydda** in the west or to **Acrabeta** in the north. Josephus Flavius states that **Anuathu Borcaeus** was the northern border of the region of Judea; beyond lay Samaria. Around +7, when Jesus 'was twelve years old,' Mary and Joseph were one day's journey from Jerusalem on their return trip to Galilee when they realized that their son Jesus was not in the group of extended family and pilgrims with whom they traveled. The next day they returned alone to Jerusalem, and on 'the third day' they found their son in the Temple. We can trace their steps, to the Jordan or to **Lebonah** (near Anuathu Borcaeus), a convenient first night stop at the northern border of Judea. If this were their route they would have passed along an historic path dating back to the period of the patriarchs.

Luke 2:41-52

Over two decades later Jesus led his disciples along this patriarchal highway through the Hill Country since they 'had to pass through Samaria.' One wonders what conversations they had as they passed **Gibeah** (home of Saul), **Ramah** (home of Samuel), **Mizpah** (no doubt where Deborah was judging

‘between Ramah and Bethel’ in Judg 4:5), **Bethel** (near Abraham’s and Jacob’s encampment) and near **Shiloh** (where ‘I [the LORD] first made a dwelling for my name,’ Jer 7:12). The conversations along the way may have prepared the disciples for Jesus’ proclamation the next day after their overnight stay (at Lebonah?): ‘True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth,’ a statement which was certainly seen in the lives of Abraham and Samuel, and others who had walked by faith.

John 4:1-45

The last time Jesus led his disciples along the highway north of Jerusalem was immediately after the raising of Lazarus. Their destination was the site of **Ophrah**, known in Jesus day as **Apherema** or **Ephraim**, a site which can be discerned by the naked eye from the summit of Nebi Samwil. Jesus had already told his disciples that he would suffer, die, be raised again and usher in his kingdom. He not only faced unbelief by his disciples but also mounting resistance by religious authorities in Jerusalem who knew that any talk of a Jewish kingdom would bring the armies of Rome from the Coastal Highway through the Aijalon Valley and along the routes of Benjamin. As he walked with his disciples through the region of **Michmash/Ai**, Jesus (whose Hebrew name was Joshua) no doubt thought of what an earlier Joshua had been told, and of Jonathan’s simple faith in the midst of a totally impossible situation.

John 11

Be strong and be full of courage; don’t be terrified and don’t be fearful—because wherever you go the LORD your God is with you.

Josh 1:9

1 Sam 14:6

... for there is nothing that can prevent the LORD from bringing deliverance—be it by many or by few.

Acts 8:1-25

The routes of Benjamin take on a special significance from incidents recorded in the book of Acts. The first missionary journey in Acts occurred after ‘great persecution’ developed in Jerusalem as Philip made his way north along the patriarchal highway into Samaria. Shortly thereafter Peter made a journey via the Central Benjamin Plateau to **Lod/Lydda**. This fisherman from Galilee no doubt knew the stories of the Maccabees and how Jews had settled as far as Lod and ultimately were able to take the port of Joppa (NW of Lod). Even Roman occupation had not been able to wrest this region from the Jews who had settled it. Peter’s arrival at Joppa must have stirred his spirit, for he saw the waters of the Mediterranean which reached the pagan lands of the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans and realized that the Jews had tenaciously held this small but important region along the International Coastal Highway. It was in this context—and at Joppa where Jonah had tried to escape his mission to the Gentiles—that Peter received a vision which shook his very being. As it faded there came a knock at the door and he found himself on the way to Caesarea, hotbed of Jewish/Gentile relations. There the Spirit of the Jewish God fell upon non-Jews. What was said here and back in Jerusalem set the early church on a new course.

(1 Macc 11:34)

Acts 9:32-11:18

Tensions grew between Gentile and Jew in the Land Between, and when Paul, the Jewish apostle to the Gentiles, returned to Jerusalem from the Aegean and entered the Temple he was accused of bringing Greeks into the area where only Jews were allowed. The ensuing uproar, the revelation that Paul was a Roman citizen and the plot upon his life set a series of events in motion. By night Paul was escorted under heavy guard to **Aphek/Antipatris** on the Coastal Highway, from there to Caesarea and two years later to Rome. Paul’s night journey from Jerusalem to Antipatris with ‘two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen’ probably passed by **Gibeon** and along the **Beth-horon** ridge.

Acts 21:15-23:35

In +66, a few years after Paul left Caesarea for Rome, tensions in Caesarea sparked the First Revolt of the Jews against Rome. Cestius, the Roman governor of Syria, marched down the Coastal Highway to Antipatris and then on to **Lod/Lydda** which he torched. He then climbed the ascent of **Beth-horon** and encamped at **Gibeon**, his rear guard and part of his baggage train having been overcome by the Jewish rebels. At this point in the story, our view from Nebi Samwil above Gibeon offers us a special view of events, for at Gibeon the rebels engaged the Romans and almost overcame them. When part of the Roman cavalry and a group infantry counterattacked, the rebels retreated. For three days the rebels occupied the heights around Gibeon, kept watch on the road to Beth-horon and no doubt observed every Roman action from the very hill on which we stand. Two Jewish emissaries tried to reason with the rebels in Jerusalem, but one was killed and another barely escaped from his assailants with his life.

Cestius thought this an opportune moment to advance from Gibeon to a hill overlooking **Jerusalem** and began the siege of the city. However, instead of pursuing the siege he pulled back and began retreating across the Central Benjamin Plateau toward the **Beth-horon** ridge. The rebels were ready, and the slaughter which ensued once the Romans were on the narrow ridge was a disgrace to Rome. That night Cestius left ‘four hundred of his bravest troops’ as a decoy of sentinels and fled with his remaining force. The rebels pursued them as far as Antipatris, on the way passing **Modiin**, the village of the Maccabees. Joyfully they returned to Jerusalem with the military equipment the Romans had left along the way. The wise among them, however, knew that Rome would never tolerate such defeat.

What followed during the next three years is by far the most illustrative episode in the history of the Central Arena. The Roman legions were lead by Vespasian, whose troops would later declare him emperor of Rome at Caesarea, replacing the century old family of Augustus. We follow Vespasian's campaign from the summit of Nebi Samwil by finding the routes mentioned below (as well as names printed in bold) on the BEN map.

After subduing Galilee the Romans secured the Coastal Highway to the west and the region of Samaria to the north of Judea. They then conducted two preparatory campaigns before entering the Hill Country. One was in the **Shephelah** along the western approaches of the Hill country, initially taking **Lod/Lydda** and the **Aijalon Valley**. The second campaign secured the eastern approaches to the Hill Country, which included **Jericho** and other sites in the Lower Jordan Valley (east of Jericho but off the BEN map). The important route from Aphek/Antipatris to Bethel was partially taken when **Timnath-serah/Thamna** fell. Roman Legion V was posted at Emmaus (by Aijalon), and Legion X was at Jericho. Titus, Vespasian's son, proceeded south with Legions XII and XV from Samaria into Judah and through the Hill Country to **Gophna** where he met his father's forces from Thamna. Together with the auxiliaries the Romans numbered some 80,000 men; the Jewish rebels were no match for such a force.

The goal of these forces was the Central Benjamin Plateau, gateway to Jerusalem and key to the city's security. A camp was established at **Gibeah**, and the fate of **Jerusalem** was sealed. A systematic approach to the siege of the city left it in total ruins. Only parts of its mighty foundations were left to show how great a city it once had been. All previous struggles in the region below us pale as we contemplate Rome's calculated advance, and we now better understand why Joshua, the Philistines, the House of Joseph, David, the Greeks and others coveted the Central Benjamin Plateau and its approaches.

#### CONCLUSION

The same geographical realities we have studied above exist today in the central Hill Country. They lie at the root of many of today's problems in the country. The security of modern day Jerusalem remains closely linked to the Central Benjamin Plateau, an area which came under the control of Israel in 1967 when armored forces advanced from the Kiriath-jearim area, broke through a mined Jordanian fortification at the 880m/2887f elevation mark, passed Biddu and Gibeon and reached the main north-south highway. Since then the plateau, which had been dotted with small villages, has become crowded with Arab and Jewish building projects. The route from Lod to Gibeon has been greatly enlarged and now bypasses both Lower and Upper Beth-horon. A sprawling area of homes and apartments covers the area just south of Modiin. A Jordanian army post along the Beth-horon ridge and a nearby hill have become a Jewish settlement, while the Palestinian Arab regions of Ramallah and el-Bira (north of Mizpah) and Jericho to the east have greatly expanded. Jewish apartments and Arab homes cover the hills between Jerusalem and Ramah with no end in sight. This contemporary explosion in construction illustrates that the Battle of Benjamin is not yet over.

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