# **BIBLE ATLAS**

#### **ACCESS FOUNDATION**

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### Part One

# THE BIBLICAL SETTING

# The Face of the Ancient Near East

















#### The Middle East Physical Geography

The major countries of the Middle East border on deserts to the west and south, and mountains to the north and east. A mountain range also extends from north to south paralleling the Mediterranean coast.

The foothills along the Syrian and Arabian deserts are forested mainly with oaks and pines. The great rivers of the Nile and the Tigris and Euphrates flow through the desert lands, making them irrigable. The whole area serves as a land bridge between the two continents of Africa and Asia.

#### International Routes

The routes in the Middle East conform to the terrain and climate of the area. Two major routes demand special mention. The coastal route (Via Maris or Way of the Sea, cf. Isaiah 9.1) connects Egypt with Assyria and Babylon. Beginning in Tanis it skirts the coast to Gaza, crosses the Carmel range at Megiddo and goes through the Plain of Jezreel to Hazor. Here it divides in two branches, one going north through the Beqaa valley between the Lebanon and the Antilebanon ranges along the Orontes valley to Hamath, and then to Aleppo. From Aleppo it divides again, turning south to Tiphsah on the Euphrates and continuing beyond to Mari, Babylon and Ur, or going north to Carchemish and then eastward to Haran, Gozan (Guzanu) and Nineveh. From Hazor the alternative route goes to Mari by way of Damascus and Tadmor (Palmyra).

The second major route is the King's Highway (cf. Numbers 20.17; 21.22 and map 2), which goes south from Damascus to Elath and on to the oasis of Tema and to Southern Arabia.

# Natural Regions of Palestine



#### Palestine Physical geography

Palestine may be divided into four zones from west to east.

*The Coastal Zone* is narrow in the north, widening into the Plain of Acco, and south of the Carmel Range it broadens into the Coastal Plain.

The Central Mountain Range continues the Lebanon and Galilean mountains into the central mountains south of the Valley of Jezreel (the Plain of Esdraelon) which are broken by broad open valleys, and further south in the more forbidding mountains of Judea by narrower valleys, finally melding into the steppes of the Negeb.

The Jordan Valley, a part of the Great Rift Valley which extends from Turkey to Central Africa, is dominated by the Upper Jordan River which rises in the foothills of Mount Hermon to flow through Lake Huleh to the Sea of Galilee, and continues as the Lower Jordan River to the Dead Sea. South of the Dead Sea it becomes the Arabah Valley, which extends to the Gulf of Aqaba.

*The Transjordan Plateau* is called Hauran in the north, the Central Highlands south of the Yarmuk River, and Southern Highlands south of the Dead Sea. To the east of the mountains lies the Syrian desert.

Finally, a striking characteristic of the land is the series of transverse valleys from the Central Mountain Range to the Mediterranean and to the Jordan River from both the Central Mountain Range and the Transjordan Plateau.















The Old City of Jerusalem Today



### Life in Ancient Palestine



#### Part Two

# THE HEBREW BIBLE PERIOD

### Before Abraham



#### THE TABLE OF NATIONS

enesis 10 presents a list of nations descended from the three sons of Noah: Japheth, Ham, and Shem. This "Table of Nations" is unique in the ancient world and contains seventy names of ancestral heads of nations and peoples known to Israel. The list proceeds from the less important, for the purposes of the writer, to the most important. The fourteen descendants of Japheth are named first. Japheth's descendants generally are associated with areas north and northwest of Canaan, including mainland Greece, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), certain Mediterranean islands (Crete, Cyprus, and Rhodes), and the mountainous areas from Armenia to the Caspian Sea.

The list next names thirty descendants of Ham. The Hamites generally are located in North Africa (Egypt and the Sudan), along the coast of Somaliland and the west Arabian coasts, and in certain sections of Mesopotamia. Canaan along with many of the people-groups Israel encountered as she entered the promised land (Amorites, Jebusites, Perizzites, Hivites, Girgashites, and others) are listed as Hamites.

The last and most extensive part of the list contains twenty-six descendants of Shem, the ancestor of Israel. Genesis 11:10–26 connects Shem with Abram (Abraham), who received God's gracious covenant of blessing and hope for the human race (Gen. 12:1–3).

Identification of many of Shem's descendants remains uncertain. Some of the names seem to refer to areas of northwest Mesopotamia (Eber, Peleg, Aram). Elam was at the bend of the Persian Gulf, while Asshur and Arpachshad are in the upper Tigris region. Several names can be located plausibly in Somaliland (Havilah, Ophir). The thirteen sons of Joktan are related to the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula.







#### The Biblical Table of Nations

#### Genesis 10

The genealogical table in Genesis 10 reflects Israel's views of world geography in the post-Exilic period. It was probably compiled in the 5th or 4th century B.C., incorporating earlier materials and primitive traditions. The peoples of the world are divided into three groups descended from the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Despite the many doublets in the list, it is evident that Shem lives to the east. Ham to the south, and Japheth to the north, corresponding to the three regions of the earth then recognized. The names are represented here on a modern map of the Middle East.

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#### The Biblical Table of Nations in the Hellenistic Period

#### Jubilees 8–9

The book of Jubilees from the 2nd century B.C. presents a revised form of the table of nations in Genesis 10, interpreting it in the light of the new geographical knowledge of the Hellenistic period. It tells how the world was allotted to the three sons of Noah. Shem received the best part, the central part of the earth bounded by a line extending northward to the Tina (Don) River through Karaso (Hellespont) and the Caspian and Me'at (Azov) seas, and southward from Karaso through Lud to the waters of Dedan (Red Sea). All the lands north and west of this line belonged to Japheth, and the lands south and west were the heritage of Ham.



### The World of the Patriarchs











#### Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 11.27-25.18 Abraham was from Ur Kasdim, or Ur of the Chaldees, going first to Haran in Upper Mesopotamia and then on to Canaan, where he settled in Hebron. Through Isaac, his son by Sarah, he became the ancestor of all the Israelite tribes. Through Ishmael, his son by Hagar, and other sons by other wives, he became the ancestor of other nations.





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#### Jacob

Genesis 27–35 The traditions about Jacob, who is also identified as Israel in Genesis 32.28 and 35.10, reflect traditions of the northern kingdom, suggesting a possible association with the Arameans or with the deportees in Mesopotamia.








# Chapter 6

# The Egyptian Experience





#### Sites in the Amarna Archives

During the reign of Amenophis IV (1352-1336 B.C.), also known as Akhenaton, the royal residence was moved from Thebes to Akhetaton, today known as Tell el-Amarna, where an archive comprising some 400 letters written in cuneiform on clay tablets has been discovered. Some were addressed to the Egyptian pharaoh by rulers of the other great powers of Babylon, Mitanni and Hittites, but they were mainly from vassal kings in Palestine and Syria. These letters reveal insights into the political relationships of the Late Bronze Age, especially during the twenty years covered by the archive - the Amarna period.

The map gives the names of places in their later biblical forms where possible. Not all the names in the correspondence are shown, however, as many have not yet been identified.









### The Egyptian Empire in the Near East

In a Second Intermediate Period a part of Egypt was ruled by foreigners, the Asiatic Hyksos (15th dynasty), who made Avaris in the eastern delta their capital. But about 1550 B.C. the first kings of 18th dynasty were able to expel the foreigners and reunify Egypt. The succeeding kings, especially Tutmose III (1457-1425 B.C.), conquered Palestine and Syria to make Egypt a great power, dominating the lands of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East.

Archaeologically this marked the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.

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## The International Balance of Power, ca. 1400 B.C.

About 1400 B.C. the Middle East was divided into a number of regions, each with an established monarchy. Relations between the regions were governed by treaties, inter-dynastic marriages, and exchanges of technicians (e.g. physicians and architects) and of material gifts. Interregional commerce flourished, and within each region commerce was generally a royal monopoly. Palestine was a province of the Egyptian empire, which was at the peak of its power under Amenophis III (1390-1352 B.C.).







# Chapter 7

## The Exodus







# Chapter 8

## **Conquest and Settlement**





### The Conquest of Canaan

### Numbers 13–14; 21–32; Deuteronomy 2–3; Joshua 12

The map is based on three distinct traditions which were eventually combined in a single narrative. The mission of the spies in Numbers 13–14 reflects an immigration into Canaan from the south. The conquest of Transjordan is recounted in Numbers 21–32 and Deuteronomy 2–3. The conquest of Canaan is finally summarized in Joshua 12 by a list of conquered lands and cities. These three traditions account for all the territory of Palestine and the southern Transjordan later claimed by Israel.







### The Conquest by Joshua

#### Joshua 2.1-11.15

The account of Joshua's conquest deals with only two areas in the promised land. The first campaign was in the south, concentrating primarily in the area later occupied by the tribe of Benjamin, and with the Israelites' base camp at Gilgal near the Jordan (Joshua 2–10). The second campaign was the conquest of Galilee at the battle of Merom Waters and the capture of Hazor, the chief city of the region (Joshua 11.1-15). No mention is made of the central hill country (cf. the lists in Joshua 13–19.













#### The Division of the Land

Joshua 13–19. Joshua 15.20-62; 18.21-28; 19.40-46

After Joshua's conquest, the land was divided among the tribes of Israel. The lists in Joshua 13–19 contain diverse elements. Some describe boundaries while others are lists of cities. Dating the lists is difficult because they reflect different periods in the history of Israel. One of the lists (Joshua 15.20-62, the cities of Judah) is generally assigned to the reign of King Josiah. The final composition of Joshua 13-19 was evidently during the Hasmonean period, reflecting their territorial claims.





#### **The Levitical Cities**

Joshua 21; 1 Chronicles 6.39-66 (Vulgate 6.54-81) When the land of Palestine was

divided among the tribes of Israel the clans of the priestly tribe of Levi were not allotted a single area for their settlement. Instead they were given certain cities within the areas allotted to the other tribes. A number of these cities were also designated places of refuge, where a person accused of accidental killing could find sanctuary from avengers.

The origins of this list are unknown.







#### The Period of the Judges

Judges 1–21; 1 Samuel 1–7 The time between the conquest of Palestine and the reign of King Saul is called the period of the judges. Judges 1–21 and 1 Samuel 1–7 preserve the traditions of various tribes and clans from this period as they were later edited to form a continuous narrative. It is almost impossible to determine the chronological and historical relationships of these traditions to each other and assign them precise dates.

In the archaeology of Palestine this is the early Iron Age, approximately between 1200 and 1000 B.C. The map shows the extent to which the Israelites were able to occupy the land of Canaan, and the areas and cities they were unable to conquer (Judges 1.27-36).
















#### Saul

1 Samuel 9-31; 2 Samuel 2.8f; 1 Chronicles 9.35-10.14 In response to external pressures, especially from the Philistines, the leader Saul from the tribe of Benjamin succeeded about 1000 B.C. in uniting the tribes and clans of Israel as a kingdom, or rather a chiefdom, although he was unable to establish their territorial integrity. His reign was characterized externally by wars and internally by his rivalry with David. Saul was killed together with his sons in battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, probably in an attempt to join together the territories of the central and northern Israelite tribes.





# Chapter 9

# The Kingdom of David and Solomon





#### David

## 2 Samuel 2–1 Kings 2; 1 Chronicles 11–29

David was first anointed king of Judah in Hebron, and then also king of Israel after the death of Ishbosheth. He conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and made it his capital. He then proceeded to capture several Canaanite cities in the north (Megiddo, Taanach, Beth-shan), and in the following years subjugated the kingdoms of Edom, Moab and Ammon. Apparently the Philistines in Damascus and Aram were vassals.

In 2 Samuel 24 there is the account of a census commissioned by David and undertaken by Joab. The itinerary followed by Joab in 2 Samuel 24.5-8 presents an ideal outline of the extent of David's kingdom.







#### Solomon

1 Kings 1–12; 2 Chronicles 1-9 Solomon's empire extended far beyond the borders of Israel. His vassal states included Aram, Ammon, Moab and Edom, and his commercial ventures expanded throughout the known world. He organized his administration effectively, dividing Israel into twelve provinces based on the traditional tribal boundaries, with a governor for each province.

The map shows the twelve provinces as described in 1 Kings 4, and the cities he fortified as an inner line of defense (1 Kings 9). Finally, it was Solomon who built the Jerusalem temple.









### **Solomon's Temple**

### 1 Kings 6-7; 2 Kings 11; 2 Chronicles 3-4

In 965 B.C. King Solomon began to build the temple north of Jerusalem on the threshing floor of Araunah, also known as Mount Moriah (2 Chronicles 3.1). Although it was seven years in building, it was only a part of a larger palace project which took thirteen years to complete. Little is known about the palace, and this map is a reconstruction based largely on excavations of contemporary palaces and temples in the Middle East.



# Chapter 10

The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel







#### The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

## 1 Kings 12–15; 2 Chronicles 10–15

After Solomon's death, Israel divided into two kingdoms: Judah in the south with Jerusalem as its capital; and Israel in the north with its capital at first at Shechem, then Tirzah, and finally at Samaria. King Jeroboam built his own temples at Bethel and at Dan. Only after prolonged combat was the border established with Benjamin as part of Judah.

Shortly after the division Pharaoh Shishak launched an invasion of Israel and Judah. King Rehoboam responded by fortifying a number of cities in Judah.

The map shows the border between the kingdoms, the route of Shishak's invasion (according to the list of conquered cities recorded in the temple at Karnak), and the cities fortified by Rehoboam.









#### The Golden Age of the 9th Century B.C.

#### 1 Kings 16.23-2 Kings 13; 2 Chronicles 17-24

In the mid 9th century B.C., King Omri of Israel and his successor Ahab, with the aid of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, created an empire comparable to that of David and Solomon. Meanwhile King Mesha of Moab was seeking to expand his power westward across the Jordan. Political and religious tensions in Israel led to Jehu's rebellion in 841 B.C., with the destruction of the royal houses of both Israel and Judah and the decline of both kingdoms. This was the period of the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the northern kingdom.



#### The Golden Age of the 8th Century B.C.

### 2 Kings 13.10–15.7; 2 Chronicles 25–26; Amos

During the period of 790–750 B.C. the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam II and the kingdom of Judah under Azariah/Uzziah enjoyed a renaissance of power. Both kings were successful in their wars against Syria in the north, and against Ammon, Moab, Edom and the Philistines in the south. They broadly expanded the areas under their authority and gained control over the major caravan routes — a success made possible by the weakened state of the Assyrian empire. This was the period of the prophets Amos of Tekoa and Hosea in the north.







#### PALESTINE Travel Routes

The highways in Palestine are dictated by the terrain and the climate. Besides the two major international routes - the coastal route (Via Maris, the Way of the Sea of Isaiah 9.1 KJV), and the King's Highway of Numbers 20.17; 21.22 (cf. map 6) - two further north-south routes should be mentioned: one along the crest of the Central Range, and one through the Jordan Valley. There were also several important cross routes, such as the road from the coast north of the Carmel Range, going through Megiddo and Beth-shan to Pella, or from Caesarea through Samaria and Shechem to the Jordan and on to Mahanaim, or from the coastal route through Bethel and Jericho to the Ammonite cities of Rabbah or Heshbon. This system of highways can be traced back to the beginning of the Bronze Age at the beginning of the third millennium B.C.



















#### The Fall of the Kingdom of Israel

2 Kings 15–17; 2 Chronicles 28.16-21; Isaiah 7–9; 10.28-32; 20 The Assyrian conquests after 750 B.C. led to the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel. In 732 Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 B.C.) established Dor (Duru), Megiddo (Magiddu) and Gilead (Galaza) as Assyrian provinces, and made Israel and Judah vassal states. Israel rebelled and was defeated by Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.), and had its capital Samaria destroyed (722 B.C.). Sargon II (722-705) deported part of the population to Assyria, and made the northern kingdom the province of Samarina (Samaria). In 713 B.C. Sargon conquered the Philistine cities in the south and organized them as the Assyrian province of Asdudu (Ashdod), leaving the kingdom of Judah surrounded by Assyrian provinces.




## Judah Alone amid International Powers



#### Judah under King Hezekiah

2 Kings 18–20; 1 Chronicles 4.35-43; 2 Chronicles 29–32; Isaiah 10.28-32; 20; 36–39; Micah 1.8-16

Under Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.) Judah was a vassal of Assyria. Hezekiah attempted to strengthen his national defenses by designating four cities as military depots. On the death of Sargon II (705 B.C.) Hezekiah rebelled against his successor Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.) who responded in 701 by invading Judah and besieging Jerusalem. Sennacherib defeated an Egyptian force at Eltekeh and made his headquarters in Lachish, the capture of which is depicted on the gates of his new palace in Nineveh.















Lebaoth Shilhim

#### The Districts of Judah under King Josiah

### Joshua 15.20-62; 18.21-28; 19.40-46

These lists enumerate the towns in the twelve districts of Judah. According to recent scholarship they reflect conditions during the reign of Josiah about 620 B.C., although they are cited in the book of Joshua to illustrate a much earlier period.

#### The map

shows the districts of Judah and the relative density of their population in the time of Josiah. Only the towns whose locations have been identified are shown on the map. The remainder are listed below it. When the topographical evidence has been convincing, some places have been transposed from the districts indicated in the book of Joshua.



### The Golden Age of King Josiah

#### 2 Kings 21-23; 2 Chronicles 33-35

As the Assyrian empire weakened (cf. map 17), Josiah was able to recapture parts of Israel that had been lost in 732 and 722 B.C. However, the extent to which he established his control over the former northern kingdom is questionable. Josiah was killed at Megiddo in an attempt to halt an Egyptian army from joining forces to support the Assyrian army in its frontier wars (cf. map 18). Josiah's reign saw the beginning of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry.



## The Babylonian Exile







#### Exile in Assyria, Babylon and Egypt

2 Kings 17.6; 18.11; 24.11-16; 25; Ezra 2.59; 8.17; Nehemiah 7.61; Jeremiah 29; 42–46; 52; Ezekiel 1.1-3; 3.15 The exile, marking the beginning of the Jewish diaspora, resulted from the deportations of the northern kingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722 B.C., the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon in 597, 587 and 582 B.C., and the flight of many of the remaining population of Judah to Egypt after an unsuccessful uprising against the Babylonian governor in Mizpah in 582 B.C.

#### **Palestine in the Post-Exilic Period**

*Ezra 2.21-35; Nehemiah 3.1-32; 7.26-38* When the Persian king Cyrus II (550-529 B.C.) conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. with hardly a battle, Judah became the Persian province Yahud.

The whole of Palestine was part of the 5th Persian satrapy of Abar-Nahara ("[the land] beyond the [Euphrates] River"); cf. map 19. The satrapy was divided into provinces, two of which were Samaria and Yahud. The capital of Samaria was Shechem, with the holy mountain of Gerizim. In Nehemiah's time the governor of Samaria was Sanballat, and the governor of Ammon was Tobiah. Both governors together with the provinces of Ashdod and Edom were opposed to Nehemiah and his plans to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

There is a list of Jewish cities in Nehemiah 11.25-35, but it probably reflects a different period, possibly including places where the inhabitants escaped deportation in 587 B.C. The places Lod, Hadid and Ono which are mentioned in Ezra 2.33 and Nehemiah 7.37 must have been outside the province of Yahud.







### The Persian Period













## The Hellenistic Period













#### **The Maccabees**

#### 1-2 Maccabees

In 168 B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) set up an altar to Zeus in the temple at Jerusalem. This led to a Jewish uprising under the leadership of the priest Mattathias of Modein and his five sons, the most prominent of whom was Judas Maccabaeus from whom the movement took its name. After more than two decades of fighting Judea achieved independence as a kingdom under Syrian rule. Its royal dynasty was known as Hasmonean after Hasmon, the grandfather of Mattathias.






### Part Three

## The New Testament Era

## Rome's Emergence as a World Power









## The Romans, Palestine, and Herod the Great







## The World of Jesus









#### Palestine in the Time of Jesus

Idumea, Judea and Samaria were administered by a Roman prefect resident in Caesarea who bore the title procurator after A.D. 41. Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and Philip was tetrarch of Gaulanitis and Batanea, lands to the northeast and east of Lake Galilee. The cities of the Decapolis were under the direct control of the governor of Syria.



## The Life and Ministry of Jesus





#### The Birth, Childhood and Baptism of Jesus

*Matthew 1.1–4.11; Mark 1.1-13; Luke 1.1–4.13* Accounts of the birth, childhood and baptism of Jesus are found in the first chapters of Matthew, Mark and Luke.







#### Jesus' Ministry in Galilee and Journey to Jerusalem

Matthew 4.12–21.1; Mark 1.14–11.1; Luke 4.14–19.27 Jesus spent most of his ministry in Galilee, where he had grown up. He traveled mainly around Lake Galilee, with his home in Capernaum. He may have gone to Jerusalem by way of Perea to avoid going through Samaria.







#### Jesus' Ministry according to John

#### John

The account in the fourth Gospel differs in many ways from that of the first three Gospels. For example, Jesus visited Jerusalem more than once, and different places are named. This evidently represents an independent historical tradition which emphasizes events other than those in the synoptic Gospels.









# Early Expansion of the Church













#### **Paul's Journeys**

Acts 9.1-30; 11.25-30; 12.25; 13–14; 15.36–18.22; 18.23–21.17; 27.1–28.16; Galatians 1–2 While traveling to Damascus to persecute Christians there, Paul was himself converted, and in Damascus he was baptized. Then after some time in Arabia he returned to Damascus, visited Jerusalem briefly, and continued actively in evangelism in Cilicia and Syria with Antioch as his base. The church in Antioch sent him together with Barnabas on his first missionary journey. After visiting Jerusalem again he undertook his second and third missionary journeys which took him to Macedonia and Greece with extended periods of activity in Corinth and Ephesus.

During his third and last visit to Jerusalem Paul was arrested and taken first to Caesarea, and then to Rome.

Maps below illustrate the sequence of events narrated in Acts. Paul's own letters would suggest a different reconstruction of the events.





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## Chapter 20

## The First Jewish Revolt









#### **Herod's Temple**

Herod the Great began work on the temple in 20/19 B.C., refurbishing Zerubbabel's temple of 520–515 B.C. without interrupting its use, and expanding it on a grand and glorious scale. The building was completed in A.D. 63, and destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70.

The temple was built on a platform raised to a height of 170 feet above the rock base and measuring approximately 920 by 1590 feet.

## Chapter 21

# The Early Christian Church











