

GEOBASICS STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTORY MAP STUDIES

IN THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

Steven P. Lancaster and James M. Monson

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GEOBASICS GUIDE

—BASIC MARKINGS—

(Version 2.0, For Introduction and three arenas, pp 1-7 in the *Geobasics* book.)

A. INTRODUCING THE BOOK

1. A Land of Variety—Front Cover

Begin by looking at the map on the front cover. This three-dimensional view communicates quickly that the land of the Bible is a land of variety: mountains fill the center of the land, the chasm of the Dead Sea drops to the lowest point on the surface of the earth, high mountains dominate the north in Lebanon and broad plains flank the land along the western sea and the eastern desert. It is a fascinating land with great variety, a land on which the events of the Bible leap to life.

When one knows what underlies this variety—that is, the rocks and the soils of the land, which are the basis for life there—then the story and the message of the Bible take on monumental significance. The purpose of this book is simply to add the geographical approach to the land in order to illuminate biblical history and underscore the message of the Bible. To begin, look more closely at the map on the front cover and locate the **boldface** names in the following paragraphs.

a. Israel and Judah

The Central Hill Country is the heartland of the story of **Israel** and **Judah**. It carries carefully defined paths along which the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob journeyed. Later this same Hill Country and its paths became the setting for many events that took place at famous sites whose names you have often heard: Shechem, Shiloh, Bethel, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and others which dot this landscape.

b. Galilee

Note the fragmented, agitated area of **Galilee**. Numerous faults run northwest from the great Rift to fracture the land and produce the deep depression which encircles the lake situated between Galilee, **Golan** and **Gilead**. This is the area of the Galilean depression, which includes some of the broad valleys of Galilee. This same depression offers a trade corridor from **Ammon** and Gilead through Galilee to ports on the **Mediterranean Sea**.

c. The Rift

The geological weakness of the depression and the deeply faulted Rift allows the Jordan river to run south to the great chasm of the **Dead Sea**, whose impact reaches through the entire area. To the north, the Rift takes on the form of the Beqaa valley, which lies between towering mountain ranges, the western **Lebanon** range and the eastern Anti-Lebanon range above **Aram-Damascus**.

d. Flanking Plains

Two large and strategic plains lie on either side of the central hills and Rift. In the west the coastal plain of **Philistia** and **Sharon** serves as Egypt's gateway from the Nile to the north. East of the Rift (east of **Edom**, **Moab**, Ammon and Gilead) the Arabian plateau slowly descends into arid deserts. The important Transjordanian highway gathers trade routes from greater Arabia, the Persian gulf and the Red sea and runs along the edge of this plain to feed routes crossing Galilee to coastal ports in Lebanon. These two plains, one in the west and one in the east, greatly impacted life in the land.

e. Southern Highlands

To the south a series of large uplifts constitutes the Southern Highlands. These are natural obstacles between **Edom** (near the Arabian Transjordanian highway) and **Philistia** with its Coastal highway. The **Negev** depression between the Southern Highlands and the Central Hill Country hosted the southern trade corridor. This depression (like the Galilean depression and its northern trade corridor) aided Arabian caravans in their quest to reach Mediterranean ports.

The land, its cultures, economies, politics and strategic goals gain focus as one learns its rocks, geological structures and soils. Again, the purpose of this book is to bring focus to the story and message of the Scriptures by using some of the vast resources available in the disciplines of geology and geography.

2. ‘The Eyes of the LORD’—Inside Front Cover

Read ‘Not a Random Land’ inside the front cover. Geobasics becomes preeminently relevant as we begin to see that, indeed, God’s eye is on this land. He shaped it—a proposition offered by biblical writers after they had felt the trembling of earthquakes and had observed violently uplifted hills and sunken valleys. The LORD prepared it with purposeful intent. He chose it as the place to begin His self-revelation in the redemption of mankind. It served as a ‘testing ground of faith’ and taught the lesson that life in this land depends on the generous and loving hand of God.

3. A Quick Glance at the book—From Front Cover to Back Cover

The following is a quick survey of the main features of the book, later discussed in more detail.

- The front cover was discussed above.
- The outside of the back cover serves as a quick way to find various maps.
- The reference chart inside the back cover provides basic information on ‘geobasics.’
- The center fold presents a full map with a legend and short descriptions of rocks and soils.
- Full-color, full-page **rocks and soils** maps appear as three opening ‘arena’ maps (pp. 2-7).
- The remaining maps (pp. 8-23) provide ‘closer views’ of the land but show only soils and not rocks. Some marking is given below, but teachers and students may add their individual markings.

B. INTRODUCING THE MAP

1. Colors on the Map—Page 1

After reading the text on p. 1, note the map at the bottom right. Run your eyes over the map and notice the different colors for **rock types** shown on this map. The chart inside the back cover or the legend on the center fold map gives more information about these rock types.

- **Red** represents volcanic basalt of Golan and Bashan.
- **Green** represents thick beds of uplifted limestones forming hills in the center of the land or in Galilee.
- **Purple** represents deeper, yet forcefully uplifted beds of hard limestones in the two Lebanon ranges between the Mediterranean sea and the site of Damascus far to the east.
- **Brown** represents tracts of chalks such as those east of Bethlehem or south of Medeba.

- Pale **yellow** represents softer limestones and chinks, such as those west of Judah, west of the Southern Highlands or north of Damascus.
- **Gray** (with a pattern) represents lissan in the Rift, sediments from an ancient, larger lake.

A variety of soils also spread across the map from the **tan**, desert soils of **Arabia**, to the **sand**-colored dunes on the coast and the **green** alluvia of the broader valleys. The biblical writers and their audience knew well this great variety of rocks and soils. They lived on and from the land and were totally dependent on the rocks, soils and rain for their sustenance and livelihood. It was not an academic matter but a matter of life and death.

2. Rocks and Soils Maps versus Relief and Soils Maps—Back Cover

Look at the back cover of the book. The two maps on the back cover serve as an index for the other maps in the book. One map is the same as the one you examined on the bottom of p.

1. It shows relief, rocks and soils. The other map shows relief but only the soils of plains and valleys.

The main division of maps in the book is between two types of Maps. The **first set** show both rocks and soils. These three introductory maps (pp. 2-7) introduce the land's three major arenas: the Northern, Central and Southern Arenas. The center fold in the book (pp. 12-13) provides a view of the entire Land Between with both its rocks and soils overlaying relief. The user can always return to the greater context seen clearly on this map.

The **second set of maps** uses uncovered rock relief but keeps the heavier soil deposits.

This allows for easier viewing of the land's topography, waterways, sites and routes and the opportunity to identify the soil resources of the various regions. By comparing these two types of maps (rocks and soils versus soils only) you are able to see various facets of the maps more easily, and you will quickly begin to feel at home in the land.

3. Landforms and Colors—Compare Front Cover and Page 1

Turn to the front cover of the book and compare the cover map with the map at the bottom of p. 1:

- Compare the mountains on the cover with the green and purple colors on p. 1; these are the uplifted, bedded limestones of the land. How would one travel here or build houses or use the land?
- Compare the flat area of Bashan and Golan with the red color; this is a relatively undisturbed area (i.e., it has experienced little structural uplifting) which has been covered by a basaltic outflow. How might travel across Bashan compare to travel across the Lebanon ranges or even the Hill Country of Israel and Judah?
- Compare the flat coastal region with the variety of soil colors on p. 1. How did these soils arrive on the coast? Are they significant in the topic of land use? What are the pale green soils in Philistia?

Make your own additional observations between the two maps. It is obvious that we can learn much more about the land than simply feature and site identifications. The living land determined site locations and became the 'playing board' of biblical history.

C. INTRODUCING THE ARENAS AND SOME REFERENCE HELPS

The Geobasics book, along with accompanying study guides and digital documents, addresses the task of learning regional characteristics in the land. It sounds like a daunting task, but the book—by assigning dominant rock and soil designations to the entire land—reduces the task to learning some general issues associated with the various minerals. These issues are often the concrete facts of living on the land: Where does settlement take place? What are the available building materials? Where do crops, trees or vines grow best? What are the sources of water? What determines the course of roads?

1. Rocks, Force, Water, Soils and Man—Inside Back Cover

Open the back cover and you will find a chart with the title '**Rocks, Force, Water, Soils and Man.**' The left-hand column of this chart offers a key to your study as it lists the basic physical issues of the land. '**Geological Foundations**' summarizes rocks and geological processes. '**Climate and Hydrology**' introduces the important factors of rainfall, erosion and water storage. '**Soils, Land Use and Settlement**' names soils in the land and factors of settlement [erratum: change 'page 3' under this discussion to pages 12-13], and '**Communication**' begins the discussion of travel in the land.

The right side of the chart lists the major rocks in the land with their characteristics and locations throughout the land. Flipping back and forth between the four 'location' maps inside the back cover and the map on p. 1 will acquaint you with the land's rocks and where they appear across the country.

This study of rocks and soils is not theoretical; minerals provided the physical setting for the peoples of the Bible, and biblical writers assumed that their auditors knew the characteristics of the rocks and soils. Read the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7. Isaiah was speaking to Judeans who understood Hill Country agriculture. You are embarking upon a serious task.

Isa 5:1-7

2. Rocks and Soils—Pages 12-13

Turn to pp. 12-13, which presents a '**Rocks and Soils**' map of the entire land from **Baalbek** in the north to **Petra** in the south. This page also contains a legend of rocks and soils. Use it to identify the various colors on the maps.

a. Glossary of Rock and Soil Terms

A short glossary of rock and soil terms appears alongside and below the legend. This identifies the major rock types in each era and briefly introduces soil formation. Examine, for example, the purple on the map. What is it? Is all purple the same?

Look at the **Precambrian** sample. Can you find any Precambrian on the map? A small amount appears in the southern Rift. The glossary provides a hint as to its limited exposure: rocks from the Precambrian era are '**much deeper rocks**'; severe faulting and slipping along the Rift have exposed these rocks.

The latest rock deposit is **Lissan**. Where is it located? You will find it in the Jordan valley north of the Dead Sea and around the sea. Look at the glossary. What does it represent?

b. Rainfall Line

A green rainfall line also appears on pp. 12-13. Areas with rainfall sufficient for farming occur within the line (generally north and west, plus a finger of rainfall south along heights east of the central Rift). Areas outside the line receive insufficient rainfall for agriculture, and since rainfall is also the most significant factor in soil production, these areas do not have the necessary soils for farming either. Remember that rock may yield a variety of soils, dependent upon the type of rock and the amount of rainfall.

Highlighting instructions: ‘HL’ means highlight with a yellow pen or high lighter, according to the thickness you desire; you can always add more HL but not take it away. Do not to use a pen that bleeds through the paper, and do not rest on a line and allow the paper to absorb the ink.

✎ HL the rainfall line on pp. 12-13. Begin on the coast near Ashkelon, follow the line up into the heights around Hebron and then north along the eastern edge of the Central Hill Country to Lake Galilee. The line then runs south along the top of the eastern scarp above the Rift valley. The heights of the scarp in Moab and Edom allow the line to move south to just beyond the edge of the map. On the way back north, notice the narrow strip along these eastern heights that falls within the line. As you approach Bashan, the line veers east to take in the heights of Jebel Druze and then swings back west before following the eastern face of the Anti-Lebanon range off the map.

Consider the effect of rainfall. In addition to sufficient soils and water for agriculture, what else falls within the line? The horde of dots represent towns and cities and the letters represent the first initials of their names. How does settlement outside the line compare with settlement inside the line?

3. The Arena Studies—Pages 2-7

Our study of Geobasics begins with three arena maps on the first three spreads: Northern Arena (pp. 2-3); Central Arena (pp. 4-5); and Southern Arena (pp. 6-7). The three maps cover the country from north to south and present rocks, soils, major regions and subregions. Open to pp. 2-3 and identify the following items:

a. Finder Map

Each spread has a Finder Map which marks out the portion of the land covered by the spread. The Finder Map is the same map that you looked at on p. 1 and on the back cover. Throughout your study you will want to compare the arena maps with the closer views offered by the relief and soils maps. Use the Finder Map together with the map index on the back cover to locate related maps.

b. Map Lines

Four types of lines appear on all the maps in Geobasics. We introduce them by means of the arena maps, but they remain useful in all the studies.

Uplift Lines. Uplift lines are yellow, dotted lines which mark out the top of an upfold along the crest of mountain ranges. Just as we might push two edges of a piece of paper together and watch the center rise and fold, so great pressures in the earth’s crust, caused by the shifting of tectonic plates, produces folded mountains. As you could draw a line lengthwise along the top of the fold in your paper, we have attempted to identify the top of the major upfolds in the land. Flip through the three maps on pp 2-7 and note the uplift lines. Most of the mountains in Cisjordan (west of the Rift) are folded mountains, and some of these folds are large enough to deserve regional status by themselves (e.g., the Lebanon ranges on pp 2-3).

Regional Lines. We have divided the land into major regions and subregions. Thicker, solid gray lines mark out greater regional divisions. On pp 2-3 find this solid line separating the Damascus plateau, Golan and Bashan from the Anti-lebanon and Lebanon ranges. The same type of line separates Galilee from the Lebanon ranges. On pp 4-5 the thicker, solid line sets the Central Hill Country—Samaria, Ephraim and Judah—apart from the Coastal plain to the west and the Negev to the south.

Subregional Lines. On p 2-3 find Upper and Lower Galilee and find a thicker, solid regional line which runs from Sidon to Lake Galilee. It continues south off the map. Find the thin,

dotted, black line which runs west from above Lake Galilee and passes between Upper and Lower Galilee to reach the Acco plain. This is our subregional line. It separates the higher area of Upper Galilee, which extends north through the Litani depression, from the lower elevations and open valleys of Lower Galilee. Another subregional line separates Lower Galilee from Mt. Gilboa and the Carmel range. Both regional and subregional lines should give cause for you to reflect on what distinguishes one region from another or one subregion from another.

Soil Division Lines. If you look carefully you will see a third division that occurs between soils and rocks. This is thin, broken line which divides soils on the Acco plain and rocks in Upper and Lower Galilee. Look at the valleys of rich fertile soil in Lower Galilee and you will see this same thin, broken line (if you cannot see it, look at these features on pp 10-11 or 14-15). This line serves to set the soils apart from the surrounding rocks and demarcates valleys and plains where greater amounts of soil have collected. These four types of lines occur throughout the book: uplift lines; regional lines, subregional lines and soil division lines.

D. NORTHERN ARENA—Pages 2-3

A review of basic before beginning

- It is useful to recall the distinction (on the back cover) between those maps which show both rocks and soils and those which show only soils.
- As you proceed in this current study of the Northern Arena (pp 2-3), be aware that this same area appears on later maps, some of which are more detailed (pp 8-9, 10-11 and 14-15). By comparing these two types of map (rocks and soils or soils only) you are able to see various facets of the maps more easily. Your personal comparison makes regions, rivers, sites and other features much more familiar. You will be surprised how quickly you begin to feel at home in this area of the land.
- The rainfall line on the center fold two-page map (pp 12-13) distinguishes areas of sufficient rainfall to the north and west, plus a finger of rainfall south along heights east of the central Rift. You should have already highlighted this line. Since soils develop sufficiently in most watered areas you may find it useful to compare the areas you study with this rainfall map and the reference chart inside the back cover. The legend on the full page map (pp 12-13) is also helpful. This is not required but it can be a useful exercise. Remember that rock may have a variety of soils, dependent upon the type of rock and the local rainfall.
- Three different types of divisions appear on our maps. a) The solid, thicker dark line denotes a large region. b) Within each large region smaller broken lines show subregions. c) Even thinner broken lines provide a division between soils across every map, clearly seen on such maps as those on pages 14-15 and 16-17.
- The terms which appear in your reading (regional name, feature name, site name, etc.) usually appear on the map. It is very useful to locate such terms on the map (and on other maps if you feel so inclined), since in this way you quickly make the map your own.
- It is helpful to follow this sequence in the study of each arena. a) Note the location of the arena within the land by using the Finder Map on the same page. b) Read the text on the page, especially noting the divisions at the end of the text. For example, we have divided the Northern Arena (pp 2-3) into three regions by solid, thicker dark lines and various subregions within these three larger regions by smaller broken lines. These appear on most maps in the book. c) Only after this should you proceed with the actual marking and discussions below.

We now turn to the marking of our first arena map, the Northern Arena (pp 2-3). Our object is to make the subregions stand out and to introduce them by brief discussions and selected historical events which reflect the geographical character of these areas.

1. The stable east

Note the list of names under this title on p 2 and find them on this arena map. We are about to add some color to the separation lines provided in this region. Note that in addition to these division lines (dark, broken lines) there is a much smaller broken line separating rocks from soils, like those around the basaltic rocks (red) south of the term Damascus Plateau. You will never be asked to highlight (HL) a soil/rock dividing lines but only the larger subregional lines.

- ✍ HL the subregional line (broken lines) between Golan and Bashan down to the Yarmuk Plain
- ✍ HL the subregional line between Gilead (Lower) and Bashan

a. Bashan

Note the difference between most of Lower Gilead (eroded weaker rocks) and most of **Bashan** (a harder basaltic crust and less erosion). Even though we have chosen to show the basaltic rock covering of Bashan you should know that much of Bashan is covered with very fertile soils similar to rich terra rosa soils of harder limestone. Bashan is indeed a 'grain basket,' as the Bible and other historical sources clearly state. The area was coveted by the early Israelites in the battle of Edrei, in Israelite settlement statements, in Jewish settlement during the period of the Maccabees and especially in Roman and Byzantine times when many fine cities emerged across this plateau. Indeed, Philippopolis on the SE corner of the rough basaltic outflow of Leja was the birthplace of a Roman emperor who established the city in +272. About -1000 young king David defeated a northern coalition near Helam and thereby secured the entire northern arena, isolating Canaanite cities by his control of lucrative trade routes crossing from Arabia in the SE to ports at Tyre and Sidon in the NW. Many more events occurred across this fertile Bashan, but the cities of Bashan fell to the sword of Islam on Jan 23, +635 after the battle of Pehel (Fahil), when Moslem armies overcame those of the Byzantine empire.

b. Lower Gilead

'Lower' Gilead is a term we use to speak about the portion of Gilead which has lower elevations than the heights of 'Upper' Gilead to the south. The region is lower because it participates in the geologic depression which encircles Lake Galilee: Lower Gilead, Lower Golan, Lower Galilee and the Jezreel valley. The basaltic outflow of Bashan did not reach the plateau of Lower Gilead, so the softer surface rocks show considerable erosion. It is an area of extensive settlement and agriculture. Today large grain fields cover much of the lesser eroded east. Because of its lower elevation, it served as the turn-off point for routes which would make their way through the Galilean depression to the Mediterranean sea. This explains Israel's two battles around Ramoth-gilead by Ahab and later by Jehoram, contests between Israel and Damascus for control of these intersections within the larger northern trade corridor. Beth-arbel represents another point of control along these routes, as evidenced by Shalmaneser III's apparent attack on the site. Gadara served a similar control function for the Decapolis, while Pehel/Pella took charge of a route emerging from Upper Gilead.

1 Kgs 22; 2 Kg 8-9

Hosea 10:14

- ✍ HL Ramoth-gilead, Beth-arbel, Gadara, Pella

c. Golan

The other line you have highlighted, between Bashan and Golan, divides the fertile region discussed above from the more rocky, difficult agricultural areas of Golan (thus the rocky pattern in Golan). Interestingly, this is approximately the cease fire line today between modern Syria based in Damascus and modern Israel, which controls the Golan Heights. The border between Syria and modern Jordan runs near your HL line between Lower Gilead and Bashan/Golan. These lines can tell you much about modern events and military history as well as events and campaigns from the ancient world. You will definitely be referring to them if you visit this area.


d. Damascus

The big picture of this 'stable east' is that although it is stable geologically, it is anything but stable militarily and politically (as the Islamic invasion after +630 demonstrates). You should never forget that the famous oasis-city of Damascus overshadows the entire region and that when Damascus unifies politically, the rest of this northern arena is threatened. This political reality is reflected throughout the pages of the Bible and other historical sources.

Your final task is to take a good look at this 'stable east' on the map and reflect on how it fits into the entire country. As you do this you may find it helpful to compare the map to the Finder Map on this page and to the large map on pp 12-13.

2. The soaring north

Note the list of names under this title on p 2 and find them on this arena map. Compare this 'soaring north' with the 'stable east' you have just studied to see the vast difference between these two major regions of the northern arena. We again add some color to the separation lines provided in this region.

 HL the subregional lines (broken lines) which outline the great Rift depression between the Lebanon range and the Anti-Lebanon range. These extend down to the larger solid, dark lines in the Dan Region.

a. Lebanon Range

Note the long, uplifted arch of the Lebanon Range which begins by Ijon in the Dan region and extends NE off the map. This huge upfold of deep, hard limestone runs north off this map and reaches elevations of over 10,000f/3,000m. The snow-covered peaks of this range, with rivers running westward to the Mediterranean and gorgeous sites nestled in mountain canyons and along beautiful ridges, are the envy of all in the Land Between. The Bible abounds with images of Lebanon, and small forest stands of the 'cedars of Lebanon' (which Solomon imported to build the Temple) still exist at a few locations on the western slopes of the Lebanon range. Egypt lacked any significant lumber resources of its own for the building of ships and other projects, and thus it also coveted Lebanon's wooded heights and port cities.

Ezek 27

The port cities of Tyre and Sidon utilized their lumber resources for the construction of commercial fleets, which toured the Mediterranean in search of trading partners bringing wealth that the prophet Ezekiel extols and condemns Tyre in the most beautiful but stern terms. These port cities needed inland trading partners who could supply them with goods to ship throughout their Mediterranean maritime network, partners who could ensure safe passage (at a price) for an endless line of Arabian caravans entering the Land Between from the SE. Many of these caravans passed through Bashan, giving rise to the impressive cities mentioned earlier, cities such as those of the New Testament 'Decapolis' in which Greek culture and Roman might ruled. This passage, which we call 'the northern trade corridor' from Arabia to Tyre and Sidon, was greatly disputed by Damascus and the Israelite kingdoms.

Bitter trade wars are recorded across the pages of the books of Kings and Chronicles as Israelite faith was forfeited for financial and political gain. This was the setting of Ahab, king of Israel, his wife Jezebel from Sidon and Elijah the prophet from Tishbe in Gilead.

By contrast the eastern scarp of the Lebanon range falls precipitously into the Rift, that great crack in the earth's crust running up the center of this map (outlined in black) and then shifting NE in the Dan region. As it runs NE we have outlined this trough with a broken line as a distinct subregion of the soaring north, lying between the parallel ranges of Lebanon which you have traced in yellow.

b. Region of Dan

Jer 2:13

Just north of the Region of Dan, the Rift is crowded with smaller but challenging ridges, including the Bir ed-Dahr blockage. Here just north of the city of Hasbani, a strong spring emerges from the depths of Mt. Hermon, creating the Hasbani River (the Biblical 'Senir') which runs southward and flows into the Huleh basin south of the Dan region. This beautiful little river of fresh, 'living water' (a Hebraic expression for any moving water (especially spring water) in contrast to cistern or stored water) joins two strong streams, one from beneath the site of Dan and the other running through the midst of Panias (the Caesarea-philippi of the Gospels). These, together with other smaller streams, form the headwaters of the Jordan. The area is inviting, even alluring, as members of the tribe of Dan discovered when they left their allotted but threatened territory in the south near Judah and forcibly overtook the inhabitants of Laish, renaming the site 'Dan.'

📍 HL Hasbani, Dan, Panias, Caesarea-philippi, Ijon, Abel (beth-maachah), Dan, Hazor and Chinnereth

c. Beqaa Valley

Note the broad Beqaa Valley which emerges north of the Bir ed-Dahr blockage (*beqaa* simply means 'valley' in Arabic). This fertile valley is doubly blessed by rich alluvial soil washed into it from the surrounding slopes and by the Litani river springing from its source near Baalbek (in the Rift at the top of the map). The Litani flows south from here but is diverted farther on, turning abruptly west to run through the Litani depression on its course to meet the sea at a point just north of Tyre. The Beqaa is indeed a bread basket, but the high Lebanon ridge dramatically separates it from the coast and the port cities there.

This valley served as one of the great northern approaches to the Land Between along a major route beginning far to the north in Aram, descending through a drier, less productive part of the Rift until it reaches the area of Baalbek where it enters this map. From here the route either veers off to Damascus in the east through a series of passes or continues SW through the blockage to reach the all-important Dan region, the famous gateway to the highway via Hazor, the Galilee depression by Lake Galilee and on to the Jezreel valley in the heart of the northern arena. The agricultural and strategic importance of the Beqaa valley therefore cannot be over-emphasized. Such sites as Ain el-Jar served as important administrative centers for both local and international powers.

1 Kgs 15:20;
2 Kgs 15:29

The Bible stresses the importance of sites along this Beqaa route as it reached the Dan Region: Ijon, Abel (beth-maachah), Dan, Hazor and Chinnereth (note seen on this map), on the shores of Lake Galilee precisely where the left, solid black line touches the lake. We shall return to this area in our later study.

📍 HL Baalbek, Chalcis, Ain el Jar

d. Anti-Lebanon Range

The **Anti-Lebanon Range**, east of the Beqaa, consists of a series of uplifts only one of which is shown here in order to reduce complexity (yellow broken line). This range, like the Lebanon range, mostly consists of deep, hard limestones, now raised far above the surrounding landscape. This range is crowned by the famous Mt. Hermon, which plunges suddenly from a great height (see map) almost to sea level around the site of Dan. Biblical writers knew Mt. Hermon well, and the imagery of its soaring height is a strong teaching element. It was here, 'in the district of Caesarea Philippi,' that Jesus took some of His disciples up on a 'high mountain' and was transfigured before them in the presence of Moses of the Exodus and Elijah, the great prophet to a northern apostate Israel. From Hermon's peaks one has an astounding view of the Land Between, the Mediterranean, Damascus and surrounding routes, which carried goods to Tyre and allowed local and international armies to engage in human confrontations. What Jesus told His disciples there about the way of the cross takes on great significance in light of this panorama of human agendas competing for worldly power and vain glory.

The eastern slopes of Anti-Lebanon's ridges become more arid but are areas of good agricultural potential, particularly nearer the Rift. This was a locale where peoples and nations thrived, such as Zobah (preserved in a number of place-names) and later Iturea. The crisp waters of the Abana river (today the Barada) and the Pharpar flowing from Hermon's eastern slopes (both seen on this map) were so acclaimed that Naaman, the commander of the armies of Damascus, scorned the river Jordan until his servant convinced him to follow Elisha's instructions. The area's beauty and potential, together with the products of the Damascus oasis, were renowned. The prophet Ezekiel notes this in the midst of his reproach of Tyre: Damascus traded with you (Tyre), for quantities of your manufactured goods by reason of all kinds of riches, providing you with wine from Helbon (NW of Damascus) and the whitest wool.

2 Kgs 5

Ezek 27:18


 HL Abana River, Pharpar River, Helbon

The fascinating region of the soaring north was both removed from and yet strategically linked to the northern arena of the Land Between. In our day its western regions are in modern Lebanon while Israel reaches to the Dan Region and the southern slopes of lofty Mt. Hermon – the summit of which, together with most of Anti-Lebanon and other regions far to the north of Damascus, lies in modern Syria.

At this point take a good look at the 'soaring north' on this map and reflect on how it fits into the entire country. As you do this you may find it helpful to compare the map to the Finder Map on this page and to the large map on pp 12-13.

3. The complex west

We now turn to the most geographically complex and also the most Biblically active part of this northern arena: the western areas of Galilee, the Jezreel valley and the Carmel range. Note the list of names under this title on p 2 and find them on this map. Compare this 'complex west' with the 'soaring north' and 'stable east' you have studied to see the differences between these three major regions of the northern arena. Flip over to the full map on pp 12-13 and find all three regions in this northern arena, and then HL this subregion division.

 HL the subregional line (broken line) which shows the division between the Carmel Range and the Jezreel valley, a line which extends around Mt. Gilboa to the area of Rehob.

Upper/Lower Galilee, the Carmel range and the Jezreel valley are more complex areas to describe in this general discussion. To begin, observe the following: a) uplifted regions of harder limestone (green), b) subsequent limestones and chalks (yellow) and the volcanic basalt covering just north and west of Lake Galilee. Deep geological faults off the Rift define the Carmel range but also run NW throughout Lower Galilee into Upper Galilee, where they meet deep faults descending from Lebanon in the NE. Obviously this complex western region is anything but unified, and geologists still debate its structural makeup. Thus all we can say is that we are left with the block of Upper Galilee extending north beyond the Litani depression into Lebanon (note our major division west of Sidon, which follows a great fault from the Dan region into the Mediterranean sea). Having made an attempt to simply the complexities of this 'complex west' we now turn to the implications of these realities, which are many.

a. Jezreel Valley

The task of unifying this region is all but impossible as history has shown. On the west the Carmel range provides a challenge for any one passing from the Sharon plain to the Jezreel Valley, as the pharaohs of ancient Egypt knew all too well. Narrow chalk corridors (brown) between various rock types (green and yellow) aided passage through the Carmel range, but these passes could be defended. Indeed, some of the land's most famous sites lie along the mouths of these passes. Megiddo is one of these, and its mound gave its name to the entire Jezreel valley ('hill/har of Megiddo' in the valley of Armageddon). What can compare to this valley as a classic battleground of opposing mighty armies? This broad, fertile basin with its various 'bays' of alluvial soil (outlined by the smallest broken, black line) is simply part of the larger geological uplifts, folds and faults, a reality which demonstrates the fact that this is not a random land but an intentional land prepared to test the faith of God's chosen people, the Israelites. The combination of rocks, geological forces, soils and greater political spheres such as Egypt in the south and powers to the north, together with the maritime influence from the west and Arabia to the SE, give this and other areas throughout the land an intentionality which is difficult to deny. Biblical events clearly reflect this setting as regional geobasics enlivened their message, from the days of Gideon, who overcame the Midianites who had overrun this plain, down to Josiah, who lost his life attempting to stop the Egyptian advance near Megiddo.

Rev 16:12-16

 HL Megiddo

b. Lower Galilee

Parts of Lower Galilee share the dynamic of the Jezreel valley, especially adjacent areas. Some northern parts of Lower Galilee, however, are somewhat secluded and offered the Israelites the opportunity of early settlement. Note the small alluvial valleys and plains in the areas where soil/rock divides distinguish areas of rich alluvial soil, gathered from surrounding hard limestone hills and ridges. Much more could be said of this region and its routes, but for now simply note the difference between the weaker chalky hills (yellow) and east-west limestone ridges (green) in the west, and the large, faulted and tilted slopes to the east, where basalt (red) covers much weaker chalk below (yellow). We cannot proceed, however, before mentioning the position of Nazareth ('N' on this map), nestled in a basin of poor chalks (brown) with a very limited source of water. In spite of these limitations, one can learn a spiritual lesson from Nazareth and its poor setting. From atop the southern scarp of the Nazareth ridge, one has splendid views out over the fertile, broad and open Jezreel valley. The view calls to mind many biblical stories and conflicts in the valley: Deborah and Barak, Gideon versus the Midianites, Saul versus the Philistines, and many more besides. In Jesus' day, the world was passing by on the valley floor below: international caravans on their timeless trek between desert and coast, imperial armies exercising maneuvers and marching

between garrisons, and the vast royal Herodium agricultural estates stretching out across the plain. Nazareth was indeed ‘in the world but not of the world’ which surrounded it. This forms the stunning background of a threatened Jewish population of Jesus’ day, anxious to throw off the yoke of Rome. Jesus’ words in the synagogue one Sabbath went to the heart of the matter. Indeed, Jesus’ words here, at the very outset of His ministry, totally contradict the thesis of today’s ‘liberation theology.’

Lk 4:14-31

📍 HL N (= Nazareth, near the center fold, just east of Shimron)

c. Upper Galilee

The uplifted limestone hills of Upper Galilee may appear to be a stable zone, but it suffers from severe faulting from the SE and NE. Possible explanations for this are beyond our present study, but generally it results from the sudden plunge of the Lebanon range and the ‘hinge’ in the direction of the Rift in and around the Dan region. The Litani depression and other factors allow the Litani river to turn abruptly westward to the Mediterranean and not join the Jordan to flow south to Lake Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Jordan river, on the other hand, gathers the streams in the Huleh basin and cuts through an area of tough basalt to enter Lake Galilee near Julias/ Bethsaida. The lake (commonly known as the ‘Sea of Galilee’) lies at the heart of the deep Galilee depression, not named on our maps but easily distinguishable by Lake Galilee and stream beds which descend from parts of Upper and Lower Galilee and Golan.

📍 HL Tyre; Sidon

d. Lake Galilee

Lake Galilee is unique since it lies beneath sea level and its environs make it prone to storms during certain seasons. All of this and more provide the setting for Jesus’ ministry: here, in Lower Galilee, through Upper Galilee to the region of Zarephath, in the Dan region and in some parts of Golan. Each of these areas had agricultural and ethnic distinctions making His ministry a fascinating study of the life and times of people living throughout this northern arena. The Josephus Flavius accounts of the First Revolt against Rome a few decades after Jesus’ ministry add enlightening context to these areas. Recalling earlier Biblical events of Assyria’s campaigns along these northern gateways also shows why what lies before you has been called ‘Galilee of the Nations,’ a region often overrun by imperial armies on their way north or south and contested by local nations vying for control of trade routes between Arabia and the ports of Tyre and Sidon. It was in this context of controlling the rampant spread of the ‘Good News’ of Jesus’ death and resurrection that Saul the pharisee approached Damascus and was transformed into Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. It is difficult to find a more dramatic event and conversion—and it transpired here in the threatened northern arena, beneath lofty Mt. Hermon where Moses and Elijah stood with Jesus in His transfiguration. This is the type of commonality of event and geographical setting that Geobasics wishes you to discover.

Acts 9

📍 HL: Berytus; Caesarea

In closing we look briefly at the coastal soils of the northern arena. Note the small broken line running just inland from the Mediterranean above Berytus (modern Beirut in the north) to ‘Selaim, Ladder of Tyre.’ The coastal cities and ports of this part of Phoenicia (a coastal region stretching far beyond the northern border of this map) had very limited coastal agricultural resources, although there were productive areas in parts of the nearby hills. Compare this with the much broader Acco Plain to the south, the narrow coastal plain by Dor and the larger Sharon Plain south of the Carmel range. When we add the alluvial valleys

Acts 12:20-23

in Galilee and the great Jezreel valley it is clear that the agricultural potential of the Land Between far surpasses that of Phoenicia. Thus Phoenicia always looked southward with a covetous gaze since it needed food for its population and for those who ran their fleets. This becomes an issue in the days of the kings of Israel but is explicitly stated in the book of Acts when Gentiles of Tyre and Sidon came to Caesarea, to king Agrippa of Jewish Jerusalem to ‘ask for peace—because their country (Phoenicia) depended upon the king’s country for food.’ King Agrippa, however, paid the price for pride of power. The lesson remains. If the Israelites or a Jewish leader of later times controlled the fertile plains and soils of this northern arena, as well as trade routes across most of the northern arena, Tyre and Sidon had to bow to economic, and to some degree, political pressure. This clearly explains the marriage alliance between the apostate Ahab of Israel and princess Jezebel of Sidon, as well as the preaching of the prophet Elijah and the subsequent rebellion of Jehu which devastated the economic infrastructure of the northern kingdom of Israel. These are some of the lessons of northern geobasics embedded within the pages of the Bible.

As we close our study of the northern arena, take a good look at the ‘soaring north’ on this map and again see how it fits into the entire country by comparing it to the Finder Map on this page and to the large map on pp 12-13. It may be useful to identify the entire arena presented on this page (2-3) and review its various regions and subregions on the large map on pp 12-13, without the aid of the division lines. This exercise can also be done with the appropriate Biblical Backgrounds’ *Regional Study Map* and with maps in *Regions on the Run*.

E. CENTRAL ARENA

We reviewed a number of useful techniques at the beginning of the marking section for the Northern Arena (bulleted points referring to the back cover chart, the rainfall line on the middle spread map (pp 12-13, etc.) It may be helpful to review that list before beginning this and later studies. This forces you to compare each region with the whole land and to interrelate the map you are studying to the other maps in this book. As in the case of your study of the Northern Arena, the helpful detailed maps later in the book better reveal many of the features noted below. For the Central Arena it is important to consult the maps on pp 16-17, 18-19 and 20-21 as you study the map before you.

We now turn to the marking of the Central Arena map (pp 4-5). Again, our goal is to make the subregions stand out and to introduce them by brief discussions and selected historical allusions and events. The arena map before you is the land’s most active biblical arena and therefore has the potential to yield more insights than any other. This notwithstanding, we must out of necessity be brief in our discussions. As before, use the Finder Map to place this arena within the broader context of the land. Read the text on these pages, note the three major regions as defined by the black, solid lines on the map and locate the subregions listed below these regions. We will begin in the east along the edge of Arabia and work our way westward toward the Mediterranean.

1. Eastern Heights

Four subregions are listed under ‘Eastern Heights.’ While these regions of Transjordan are similar in some ways, they do have considerable differences — factors which help us to understand the events that happen here. By noting the Finder Map and comparing the top of this page with the bottom of pp 2-3, you see that there is a slight overlap to help you: part of Lower Gilead on the bottom of p 3 can be seen at the top of page 5.

- ☞ HL the subregional line (broken line) between Ammon and the Medeba Plateau
- ☞ HL the subregional line (broken line) between the Medeba Plateau and Moab

a. Upper Gilead

A glance at these eastern heights shows that hard, uplifted limestones (green and purple) make up much of Upper Gilead and adjacent parts of Ammon. The southern divide of this region (the line you have just highlighted) is actually an impressive side fault running off the great Rift fault. It begins at the NE corner of the Dead Sea (near the site of Beth-jeshimoth along the solid regional division line) and continues NE off the visible part of this map. Ammon's territory does extend south of this fault, but this feature serves as a convenient geological divide.

The most obvious single feature in Upper Gilead is the Jabbok canyon, with the Jabbok river flowing deep within (noted by Mahanaim and Penuel). This river begins by Rabbah/Philadelphia, runs NE and then makes a large loop via the Zarqa Shabib Fort, bending westward and exploiting the Jabbok canyon, where much deeper rocks are exposed. On its way it gathers other waters, especially those around Gerasa, a flourishing city of the Decapolis in the days of Jesus, and a site worth a serious visit today. Rainfall, fertile soils, streams and trade routes make this part of Gilead an extremely attractive area of settlement. This explains the request of the tribes of Gad and Reuben to settle east of the Rift in Gilead and elsewhere and not join the other Israelites west of the Rift. This separation of the tribes emerges as a problem in the period of the Judges and later kings. Meanwhile the deep Jabbok canyon provided Biblical writers with a clear division between the parts of Upper Gilead, one north of the Jabbok and one to the south. For further study you may want to compare the rocks in Upper Gilead with the rainfall line on pp 12-13 and the chart inside the back cover. This reveals why the area is so alluring, except when security wanes and raiders invade from nearby Arabia.

Upper Gilead is a beautiful, uplifted region bordering southern parts of Bashan and the Arabian desert to the SE. As caravans made their way from Arabia in the SE toward Tyre and Sidon to the NW (see map on p 1), they had a number of options for dealing with this uplifted obstacle.

The **first possible solution** is a journey circumventing the hill country of Upper Gilead by keeping to the eastern (but less secure) plains and arriving in the area of Ramoth-gilead in Lower Gilead (see the adjacent area on p 3 or consult one of the maps of the entire country). From here there are a number of ways to continue NW.

A **second way**, a shorter route cuts through the middle of Upper Gilead, from Rabbah/Philadelphia through Gerasa and Jabesh-gilead to yet another city of the Decapolis, Pella (earlier 'Pehel' mentioned in Egyptian documents). From there it goes beyond the Jordan to Beth-shan/Scythopolis (the only city of the Decapolis west of the Jordan river). In this context Saul's early battle with the Ammonites at Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam 11 with additional comments in the Dead Sea scrolls) reveals the importance of this route. The Israelites and Ammonites competed for this trade route as both peoples emerged in what we call the 'Age of Nations.' Victory by Saul here brought confirmation that he was a 'leader' (later called 'king') who could bring success in this new challenging age. As his success grew, however, Saul's attention shifted from his faith to himself, and the prophet Samuel had to reprimand and then finally reject him. This is the story of the prophet Samuel's preaching, a frustrated king Saul and the rise of David, 'a man after the Lord's own heart.' The position of Gerasa of the Decapolis, which flourished here in Jesus' day, and the impressive Late Roman city, which later emerged here, further enlighten our understanding of this route's importance, but our first evidence comes from Saul's battle with the Ammonites.

1 Sam 1-31

There is yet a **third way** through uplifted Upper Galilee from the area of Rabbah/Philadelphia to the key destination of Beth-shan/Scythopolis. This route passes near Gedor and descends

from the area of Zia to the twin sites of Penuel/Mahanaim. It emerges from the Jabbok canyon into the Rift and treks northward to Beth-shan/Scythopolis, passing Succoth, Zaphon and Abel-meholah on its way. A little note found in the writings of Josephus Flavius about Jewish-Gentile tensions in Jesus' day illuminates the real significance of this route. He reports that the Jews of Perea (a Jewish territory in that day, located along the east side of the Rift valley) had a serious border dispute with Gentiles in Philadelphia, no doubt over control of trade along this route. Millennia earlier, while traveling on this same route, Jacob sent a forward company with gifts to head off his irritated brother Esau in hopes for the reconciliation of past differences. Before doing so, Jacob had arranged his affairs with Laban in Gilead and then experienced a strange night near Penuel/Mahannaim along the Jabbok river. During this night Jacob's name became 'Israel,' the one who wrestles with God.

Ant 20:2/1.1)

Gen 32-33

b. Ammon

With this geobasics background in mind, it becomes clear that Ammon and its capital at Rabbah is particularly important commercially since any leader who establishes a political entity here can become the middleman between Arabia and the northern arena with its routes to Tyre, Sidon, and the other Canaanite/Phoenician city-states. Such a leader can syphon off tolls and trade benefits from passing caravans either going around or through Upper Gilead. Thus when Ammon stirs, other players on this economic playing board take notice. We have already noted Saul's fierce battle with the Ammonites at Jabesh-gilead. For his part, David (who followed Saul) had good relations with Ammon, even during the difficult revolt of his son Absalom. These relations ended, however, later in David's reign when Ammon's new leader took over and was no doubt eager to expand his influence over traffic along these routes. As relations began to sour and then went from bad to worse, armed conflict erupted at Rabbah of Ammon, concurrent with the episode of David and Bathsheba. All of this forms one of the Bible's most intriguing discussions of the court of Jerusalem, the court in Rabbah, economic realities along trade routes described above and through it all, David's sin and repentance, the Bible's classic example. The commercial importance of Rabbah is highlighted by the later emergence of Philadelphia at this site, the southernmost city of the Decapolis and whose impressive citadel and Roman theater can be seen today in the midst of Amman, capital of modern Jordan. Rabbah, Philadelphia and modern Amman all testify to the prominence of this area east of the Jordan.

1 Sam 11-12

2 Sam 10-19;
Ps 51

By glancing at the Finder Map on this page, the map on p 1 or the map on pp 12-13 you can review the importance of this entire area, both as an area of settlement and as a magnet for Arabian trade coming off the desert in the direction of Tyre and Sidon. Again, a brief study of geobasics shows how the events of the Bible fit perfectly within the regions of the Land Between.

c. Moab

When one compares the broad, uplifted limestone area of Upper Gilead with the narrower limestone regions in Moab, the difference becomes clear. The large geological fault off the Rift at the NE end of the Dead Sea helps explain this difference. What is important for us to note is that the 'eastern heights' now continue southward off this map and into the Southern Arena (pp 6-7), becoming an extremely important part of our later discussion.

To the east, fertile parts of Moab's tableland gently descend to the arid and chalky plains of Arabia, creating a perfect area for herds to graze as the Bible clearly relates. A large area of volcanic basalt (red) covers much of Moab, but western eroded areas of limestone (green) provide inhabitants with beautiful areas of productive soils and rainfall, such as slopes due west of Kir (or 'Kir-hareseth' as the Bible sometimes calls it) and farther south (p 7). Most likely Elimelech and Naomi migrated to one of these small fertile areas of Moab when

2 Kgs 3:4-5

Ruth 1 drought and famine came upon the area of Bethlehem, west of the Dead Sea. These high slopes of Moab gather rain from passing storms coming from the west and offer a limited opportunity for subsistence, a fact which changed the course of history as we learn from the book of Ruth and the story of her progeny, David.

The Arnon canyon ('Mujib' in Arabic) and its small stream (a dangerous torrent during downpours) is the natural northern boundary of Moab. Leaders in Moab, however, always regarded the Dibon plain as theirs, as the Bible and the famous Mesha Stone (named for the 'king' of Moab) tell us.

d. Medeba Plateau

We now arrive at the discussion of the most strategic area along these 'eastern heights,' the Medeba Plateau. This area has been explored since the late 19th century, but modern surveys and excavations (known as the 'Medeba Plains Project') by Jordanian experts and Andrews University in Berrien, Michigan provide much new information on this strategic area. Our task here is to see how this plateau fits into the surrounding region of eastern heights.

A number of important geobasics combine to allow the area of Medeba (and nearby Heshbon and T. Jalul) to play a key role in the history of the Land Between. Note them on this and related maps.

2 Chr 20

- The **great chasm of the Dead Sea**, whose floor plunges to its deepest depths along the sea's eastern shore north of Eglaim (Mazra), creates one of the country's greatest barriers. True, in a daring move 'all the people of the East' once reached En-gedi on the western shore, but this was an exception. Practically, the easiest way to cross from east to west was across what the Bible calls 'the plains of Moab,' just north of the Dead Sea, and from there across the Jordan river to the oases around Jericho. Thus, what is impractical to the south becomes possible just north of the Dead Sea.
- The eroded heights of Moab, the adjacent the area of Dibon and the uplifted hill country of Upper Gilead all deny or discourage descent unless the goal is necessary (as trade flowing between Rabbah and Beth-shan via Gerasa or Zia). The Medeba plateau, however, is lower than surrounding eastern heights, and thus descents from the area of Heshbon (near Medeba) are not nearly as difficult as those to the south along Moab's scarps descending into the Dead Sea chasm.
- A semi-fertile, less difficult **Medeba plateau** (or plain) just south of the strategic center of Rabbah and easier descents to the lower Jordan Valley in the Rift just north of the Dead Sea, in addition to the oases around Jericho, lower hill country west of the Jordan and a natural outlet to the coastal plain south of Joppa on the Mediterranean all combine to enhance the importance of the Medeba plateau. Biblical history and beyond echo this reality as we hear of battle after battle. Here we review but a few of these events.

The **approach of the Israelites** along the arid plains of Arabia at the edge of Moab and Edom (p 7) prompted action from the defenders of the Medeba plateau. Because of their special relationship and tensions with their 'cousins' in Edom and Moab the Israelites had avoided overrunning their areas, a narrow strip of fertile land stretching south of the Medeba plateau. One Biblical tradition, however, does speak of an internal, circuitous route (the 'King's Highway'), which linked these narrow agricultural areas across deep canyons (the Zered/Hasa and the Arnon/Mujib).

As the Israelites moved northward along the Arabian desert they had to pass through that land's 'back door' in order to reach the Central Hill Country west of the Rift and the Jordan river. This 'back door' was the Medeba plateau, the descent to the passage across the Rift (north of the Dead Sea) and the inviting oasis city of Jericho. The territory of Heshbon

and its king Sihon lay directly in the path of the Israelites. Thus once around the eastern difficulty of the Arnon canyon the area's natural routes make their way NW from the 'desert highway' on the edge of Arabia directly to the Medeba plateau via such sites as Jahaz and Almon-diblathaim. It is no surprise that the Bible records conflict on this route. Moses sent messengers to negotiate safe passage through the area to the Rift and beyond into 'Canaan,' but his attempts were spurned. Sihon the Amorite, 'the king of Heshbon' and his city fell to the Israelites who found themselves in control of the Medeba plateau and all of Heshbon's territory. This lay between two of the main canyons in the eastern heights, 'from Arnon to Jabbok' as the Bible tells us. A major shift in the geopolitical/geoethnic status quo of Transjordan took place.

The 'elders of Moab and the elders of Midian' found themselves in dire straights, so much so that Balak, 'king' of Moab, brokered a deal in normal Middle Eastern fashion with the distant but famous pagan prophet **Balaam**. This desperate attempt to bring down wrath upon the Israelites ultimately failed but not before we read the interesting and amusing episodes and the oracles of Balaam. These include a phrase often heard at Christmas, put to music by none other than Felix Mendelssohn in the 19th century. The Bible recounts this and more.

Num 24:14-17ff;
Num 21:21-25:17;
Deut 2-3

The sojourn of the Israelites on the Medeba plateau and across the 'plains of Moab' below the plain in the Rift valley must have lasted for some time. Some Israelites explored Gilead and found it so pleasing that they petitioned Moses to let them remain here, though the rest of the Israelites were to move west across the Jordan into Canaan. Among the events of this period we hear echoes of how the tribes of Reuben and Gad partition this area as well as of conflict somewhere in the territory of another major Amorite city, Edrei in the Bashan beyond Lower Gilead (p 3).

Various episodes of this busy period in the regions from Moab through Gilead to the Bashan appear in the Bible. At times these address the problem of Israelite control being centered west of the Rift while some tribes live east of the Rift. The intense concern for Israelite unity in the midst of this land divided by geobasic realities continues to be an issue through Israel's history as a people and as a nation. The story of Gideon and the Midianites underscores this divide. There are accounts in ancient Israel's history, during the period of the Maccabees and Hasmoneans and in later history which illustrate the strategic importance of the Medeba plateau and surrounding territories. These are too many to discuss here, but two Biblical accounts cannot be overlooked.

Num 21: 31-35;
32; Deut 3:1-17;
Josh 13:8-33; 22

Judg 6-8

The conflict of **Jephthah** (from the 'land of Tob' in Bashan), who with his militia band successfully faced the mounting Ammonite pressure upon Israelite settlements in and around the Medeba plateau, settlements established centuries prior to Ammon's awakening. The other episode in 2 Kings is complemented by a marvelous discovery of the late 19th century, the **Mesha Stone**, on which this king of Moab recorded his exploits and victories over the Israelites in and around this same Medeba plateau.

Judg 11-12
2 Kgs 1:1; 3

Both of these accounts tell the same story. This important area was coveted by all surrounding entities, by Israelites who overtook it in the days of Moses, later by Ammonites in the nearby area of Rabbah in the days of the judges and by Moabites from the south in the days after the death of Ahab of Israel. This tells us of the same underlying reality, a reality which was reflected in many other stories through the times of the Maccabees, king Herod of Judea, the Nabateans, the Romans and through the period of Islam's invasion and overwhelming conquest by the sword. Today the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan maintains a firm grip on this and other Transjordanian territories, and peace with Israel has allowed this same area to be a marvelous region to explore as a welcoming and hospitable populace invites the tourist to see all types of sites and regions.

Before moving on it may be helpful to cast your eyes over various maps to review concepts and regions which you have met in previous discussions.

3. The Central Abyss of the Rift

We have already visited parts of this region of our map study above, but a few additional comments are in order. First, however, HL two small subregions along this Rift:

- ☞ HL the short division (broken line) crossing the Rift just south of Abel-meholah in the N
- ☞ HL the division crossing the Rift in the middle of the map, south of Adam

a. The convenient Beth-shan crossover

This area (seen best on pp 10-11) provides a natural and convenient link for traffic and armies passing between Gilead and the Jezreel valley. It witnessed some of the greatest battles in later history. We mention it here in order to contrast it with other parts of the Rift below which are less open and enclosed between much higher uplifts on both sides of the Rift.

b. Fertile Perea, Adam ford and Farah valley

As we descend south of Abel-meholah on our central arena map we easily see the limestones and chalks which encompass this slowly descending region, already far below the level of the Mediterranean as the elevation numbers indicate. Sterile and loose lissan deposits, the floor of an ancient inland sea much larger than the present Dead Sea, appear. These deposits, as well as the soils of the Rift, appear much larger and clearer on a later map (pp 16-17), which you should consult often as our discussion proceeds. Note that to the west of the Jordan river valley (a valley inside the greater Rift valley) an area of weaker limestones and chalks has restricted the Rift and kept the Jordan slightly to the east. These recede slightly following the general diagonal orientation of the uplifts (broken yellow lines). Finally, side faults from the Rift open a beautiful, but in places seriously restricted valley, the Farah, which reaches NW to the site of Tirzah. The Farah is a type of counterpart to the deep Jabbok canyon, which splits Upper Gilead in two, except the Farah consists of two basic parallel faults leaving a sunken basin (officially called a 'graben'). There are fords all along the Jordan, the most renowned of which is the crossing at Adam. The story of Gideon mentions such fords as he called upon Israelites west of the Jordan to seize them in order to impede the fleeing Midianites.

Judg 7:24

The Rift east of the Jordan is quite different. Alluvial soil deposited by streams descending from harder limestone hills in Upper Gilead has transformed the sterile lissan into a productive agricultural area, provided water from those same streams reaches it. Modern Jordan has brought water to this area from the Yarmuk river to the north, and farmers have transformed the area into fruitful fields and hot houses filled with produce.

It was precisely this sort of dedication to agriculture and innovation that allowed this region to become the flourishing Jewish territory of **Perea** ('Across-the-Jordan' in Hebrew) in and before the days of Jesus. Indeed, Perea hosted one of the main routes between Jewish Jerusalem/Judea and Jewish Galilee, a longer but safer route than through the Central Hill Country and the area of the hostile Samaritans. Perea would have seen pilgrims walking to Jerusalem for the major Jewish feasts, buying supplies and resting along their way. Jesus knew this route well, and it was the one He followed on 'the way to the cross' before that last Passover, no doubt passing the 'capital' of the region at the site of Amathus. The Gospel accounts record many events on this trip but include few names which would allow us to pinpoint the various stories. His 'Perean ministry' appears with references on page 36 of *Regions on the Run*, interspersed with sections of the Gospel of John and visits to Jerusalem, probably during this Perean ministry. While not specifically mentioned, the Jews of Jesus' day no doubt engaged in servicing trade caravans passing from the Decapolis center of

Philadelphia to Galilee and Phoenician ports beyond. The temptation to ‘leave the farm’ and move to the big city would have been a common experience, but in this case it meant leaving Jewish religious life and living with the Gentiles, either at Pehel/Pella to the north, at Gerasa in the heart of Upper Galilee or at Philadelphia in former Ammonite territory. As no doubt you have already surmised, this is the context of Jesus’ story about the prodigal son, one which certainly would have touched the hearts of many a Jewish father and mother—and also provided a sterling example of divine love. Jesus told this story in Perea.

Lk 15:11-32

All of the above helps us understand the importance of regions such as Succoth and its surrounding fertile plain, as well as Zaphon, most probably located at Tel es-Saidiya, beautifully situated along one of Upper Gilead’s major river canyons and above the lissan of the Jordan river valley and rich alluvial plain. All of these factors, plus the trade routes mentioned above, make this part of the Rift valley very special, combining soil, water, sun and commerce. Do not neglect to consider the detailed view on the later map and surrounding routes (pp 16-17).

Pss 60, 108

c. Lower Rift valley north of Dead Sea

Surface, sterile lissan deposits in the Rift valley south of Adam increase in size and divide east from west. By Phasaelis (‘P’ on the central arena map) there are areas of rich terra rosa soils from adjacent high limestone hills. In Jesus’ days this was a lovely area, which king Herod gave to his brother for growing date palms, a crop for which this area was known. Today Israeli technology has restored the area’s productivity and date palms again line the highway. Meanwhile, the oasis of Archaelais (named for king Herod’s son) remains a productive area of Arab farmers, who carefully manage waters descending from limestone hills above.

We could easily write scores of pages about the southernmost part of the Rift valley, due north of the potent waters of the Dead Sea (unusable for irrigation). We already have spoken of its routes, which provide the first real crossover south of the area of Beth-shan (the Adam crossing does not compare to it). On the east the so-called ‘plains of Moab’ capture the soil and water descending from limestone hills above. Millennia past it hosted cities (such as T. el-Ghassul), and settlement continued down through Jewish Perea to Greek and Roman cities established by special imperial grants in this very desirable setting.

Meanwhile, strong springs at Jericho and Naaran in the west transform their surroundings into lush oases, so coveted that they have a special place throughout the Bible. These oases saw the construction of impressive cities and city facilities with water works which used every available drop of water from the hills for farming as well as for pools of pleasure. They flourished in the days of the Hasmoneans, King Herod and Jesus. In fact, a second Jericho south of the ancient tell emerged in Greek times and was fully refurbished prior to the birth of Jesus. Yet another Jericho arose SE of the ancient tell during Byzantine times and remains the center of modern Jericho. Sites, tastes, water channels and flowering sub-tropical plants abound in this most interesting of the land’s oases, an area through which Jesus and His family often passed. To be a tax collector here was to be a rich man, and Zacchaeus was the chief collector. *Regions on the Run* lists other very interesting passages from this moment as Jesus passed through Jericho on the ‘way to the cross’ (pp 36-37).

Lk 19:1-10

3. Western Uplifts

The ‘western uplifts’ carry by far the majority of Biblical history, and thus we offer only passing discussions of major illustrative events. Later editions of this guide, or supplementary work in other Biblical Backgrounds productions, will augment what follows. It is our hope that our discussion here will aid your work in *Regions on the Run*, on our Regional Study Maps and on the *Regional Study Guide* (downloadable from our web site).

Below we will mark all subregional divisions (medium broken lines) to the west of the Rift valley and south of the Carmel range, of which only the Iskandar Uplift shows. Note how rocks, soils and upfolds (broken yellow lines) differ from subregion to subregion. Some features, such as harder limestone (green areas) and upfolds, almost run the full length of the Central Hill Country of Samaria, Ephraim and Judah. Your own observations before, during and after marking are far more effective than telling you what to note. Be sure to compare your work with later, more detailed maps of this area (pp 16-21).

- ✎ HL the line separating the subregion of **Samaria** from that of Ephraim. Continue to HL this line as it extends westward to the Mediterranean, noting that this separates the **Sharon Plain** from the Coastal Plain farther south. HL the three subsequent capitals of the northern kingdom of Israel in the area of Samaria: Shechem, Tirzah and Samaria. Penuel deep within the Jabbok, also served as a Transjordanian capital for a time, linked with Shechem via the fords at Adam.
- ✎ HL the line separating **Ephraim** from the subregions of Judah farther south. HL three site names in Ephraim: Bethel to the south, Timnath-serah/heres (Joshua's inheritance) and Shiloh (the early Israelite religious center where the boy Samuel grew up)
- ✎ HL the various subregions of **Judah** in the southern Central Hill Country, locating various horizontal and vertical divisions. For example, the divide between Judah's hill country (green) and Judah's **Wilderness** (brown) is clear. Consulting the chart inside the back cover and the rainfall line on the middle full map (pp 12-13) can tell you much about these subregions. HL the sites of Jerusalem in the center and Hebron in the southern hill country. Note the distinct upfold through Judah, parallel with that of the north but not continuous. This structurally changes everything in the middle of the Central Hill Country, producing the land of Benjamin to be discussed later.
- ✎ HL all divisions (remember, only the medium broken lines) in the SW part of the map, noting how the wind-blown loess soils of the **Negev** fall into distinct basins (Western and Eastern Negev). HL three sites: Arad at T. Arad in the east, Beer-sheba in the center and Gerar to the west. Note the clear difference between the Negev soils and the alluvia of the Philistine Alluvial Plain, bounded by brown-red and dune sands. The **Shephelah** (of Judah) is especially important to note, and here our division lines are broken so that the gateways to and from the alluvial valleys of the Shephelah remain 'open.'
- ✎ Finally, you will see that some route information along the SW corner of the map is missing. You can fill this in by comparing this map with the Southern Arena map (pp 6-7). Also add the 'Sinai Sands' in the appropriate place.

We begin by briefly discussing the list under 'Western uplifts' heading (p 5) and then proceed beyond these uplifts to the long and interesting coastal plains.

a. Samaria

The geographical variety of **Samaria** opens it to outside influences making it difficult to defend. One can easily see the paths of various side faults breaking off the great Rift fault and continuing northwest through the upfold (broken yellow line in the east). These ultimately define the Carmel range seen on the Finder map on this page. This open character meant that northern Israel could expand out to surrounding trade routes, but by the same token imperial or surrounding local armies could easily invade. But the mixing and mingling of the northern Israelites with the culture of the Canaanites was far more dangerous, as seen in the days of Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah.

This area of ‘Samaria’ (as it was later called) provided the Israelites with a true ‘testing ground of faith,’ and the administration of northern Israel failed miserably in this test — centuries after Joshua, the spiritual disciple of Moses, warned the Israelites of such dangers. This is one of the most impressive settings to illustrate the value of geobasics in understanding what lay behind Israelite historical and spiritual failures, which led to disastrous consequences. Since its emergence after the days of the apostle Paul until today, the Gentile church often has ‘mixed and mingled’ in the same way as the northern Israelites blatantly did in the days of Ahab and Jezebel. Thus this church faces the same judgment—as Paul himself sternly warns the Gentile believers in Rome and John tells us in vivid terms. In short, to be accepted and liked by the world and those around us is not to be more important than remembering our calling and being faithful. This is the lesson of the region of Samaria and the history of the northern kingdom of Israel which inhabited it. It is also a lesson for our day.

Rom 11:13-36;
Rev. 3:14-22;
Rev 17:12-14;
cf. Josh 24

b. Ephraim

The geobasics totally change in **Ephraim** to the south of Samaria. Unity replaces diversity in a broad area of uplifted harder limestones. Other side upfolds exist, branching out to the SW, a fact which accounts for this large area of uplifted limestone (these are not shown on this map). Unlike Samaria, Ephraim thus offered a safe refuge and retreat. Indeed, the Bible calls the heart of this uplifted and deeply eroded hill country ‘the remote interior of Ephraim’ (see this area on the map on p 18).

Judg 19:1

This ‘hill country of Ephraim’ was the first ‘home’ of the Israelites who crossed from Transjordan into this Central Hill Country. It was from here that Joshua conducted his campaigns, administered tribal affairs, and no doubt often preached (e.g., his final ‘sermon’ in Joshua 24, given to all Israelite tribal leaders at Shiloh). The story of the prominent tribe Ephraim, the son of Joseph, who received the patriarchal blessing of Jacob before his death in Egypt, runs through the Bible for blessing and for ultimate judgement. Ephraim, like the proud church in Laodicea, is a reminder of the final, serious warning of the apostle Peter.

Ps 78;
Rev 3:14-22;
2 Peter 3:17

The secluded hill country of Ephraim (what we call elsewhere the ‘Shiloh System’) served the Israelites well, but it was invaded and overcome by at least two persistent outside forces. After the disastrous defeat at the battle of Aphek and the loss of the Ark, the Philistines fulfilled their policy by invading the rough territory of Ephraim as far as Shiloh and destroying Israel’s religious/administrative center. Archaeological excavations at the site reveal this, and phrases from Psalm 78 echo these terrible times. A millennium later, shortly after the end of the book of Acts, the army of Rome marched into this same hill country via Joshua’s ancient inheritance at Timnath-serah/heres (in Roman times known as Thamna) to subdue the Central Hill Country and ultimately destroy Jerusalem.

1 Sam 4;
Ps 78:59-64

c. Judah

A glance at the area of **Judah** on our map of the Central Arena (pp 4-5) shows you how much different Judah is from the areas of Ephraim and Samaria. Two parallel upfolds (broken yellow lines) add to the area’s diversity, creating a hill country which is only unified by harder limestones appearing in various sub-types. Arab stone masons know these sub-types well and have special names for each one as they use them as building blocks in erecting stone structures (walls, arches, windows, etc.).

For our present purposes we will simply note a few of the parts of this southern hill country.

- The two upfolds of the **Hill Country** create various surface watersheds from north to south. The area between the two upfolds (W and SW of Jerusalem) is faulted as the upfolds descend in opposite directions. This creates a deeply eroded area, leaving Jerusalem more or less isolated from the west. A glance at the road system shows just how

complex it is. The main N-S route is usually very restricted to the path of least resistance along or near various watersheds. This restriction lessens in certain areas (outlined on this map by a thin, solid line). One is what we call 'the crown of Hebron' and another is outlined by Gibeon, Gibeah, Ramah and Mizpah, which we call the 'Central Benjamin Plateau' (neither named on this map). Sites and routes in this area and approaches from Jericho and the broad Aijalon valley (adjacent to the site of Aijalon) witnessed more Biblical events than any other region of the land. North of Bethel our roads enter the difficult hill country of Ephraim. Thus the Central Benjamin Plateau and the crown of Hebron have a very special place in the story of the Bible. The road between them was well-travelled from the days of the patriarchs to those of king David and beyond.

- The chalk **Wilderness** east of the hill country descends eastward and finally falls abruptly into the Rift and Dead Sea. This is a place of final refuge for Judah, but a refuge which the Romans also destroyed in their persistent policy of seek-and-destroy after the fall of Jerusalem in +70. The story of Massada (bottom center of map) dramatically demonstrates Rome's policy and the equally persistent resistance of the Jewish rebels. More often, however, the parts of the wilderness adjacent to the hill country served shepherds as grazing areas, as we hear in the Nativity accounts which state that 'in that region (in the wilderness adjacent to Bethlehem) there were shepherds in open areas, keeping watch over their flocks by night.' This was the territory David knew well, and David's tender care as a shepherd is again recalled in the same psalm as was the destruction of Shiloh. Much more could be said of this amazing, arid wilderness, within the rain shadow of Judah's higher hill country, the place in which John the Baptist roamed and where Jesus experienced temptations which reoccurred throughout His ministry. This fascinating area offers many views and experiences, but it is also extremely dangerous to visit if one does not know it as well as David knew it. Tourists have wandered here, lacked water and lost their lives. Thus the potent image of the good shepherd is used in the Bible and in such psalms as Ps 23.

Lk 2:8

Ps 78:65-72

Lk 4:13

Ps 23

- Although not a part of the Central Hill Country geologically, the **Shephelah** (Lowland) is regarded as an integral part of Judah. Much could be written on this busy buffer zone between hill country and coastal plain. Glance down the Shephelah from the broad Aijalon valley in the north to the narrow valleys in the south. Note site names, roads and features, especially the area of chalk (brown) in the north and the narrow chalk moat which lies between the hill country and weaker, chalky limestones of the Shephelah. The entire area was a great battlefield with gateways in and out of various valleys and a list of events far too long to list here.
- Like the Shephelah, the **Negev** is not actually part of the Central Hill Country, but it is so closely related to Judah that we discuss it here. It lies between upfolds in the hill country and other upfolds discussed later (pp 6-7). Lacking upfolds proper these Negev basins are natural gathering areas for fine, wind-blown soil called 'loess,' almost like flour. This soil can be productive for growing grains but downpours can create sudden streams which cut deeply into top soil. By comparing this map with the two-page map (pp12-13) you can see that the Negev basins lie outside of the normal, sufficient rainfall line. Thus, only in 'good' years, years of abundant, consistent and well-timed rainfall in this southern region, can its inhabitants enjoy broad green fields of grain which come to full maturity. This dramatic background provides the setting for Ps 126, a song which attempts to capture the joy of the return to Zion from captivity in Babylon. Prior to this, in the centuries when kings ruled Judah, sites such as Beer-sheba and Arad were major fortresses guarding the southern trade corridor through the Negev and the approaches to Judah proper. They also administered Judah's control over the greater south. When they were built or rebuilt Judah was strong, and when they lay in ruin Judah's strength waned.

Ps 126

4. The Coastal Plains

The great variety of soils (sands alluvia and loess) along the coastal plains reveals that these areas are anything but dormant. They have been impacted by the invasion of the sea in the far past and what was deposited as it retreated. You can read summaries of these different types of coastal soils on the two-page map (pp12-13).

Josh 13:3;
1 Sam 6:17

On this map note how coastal ridges (called 'kurkar'), some buried beneath coastal dunes, block the direct flow of streams to the Mediterranean and impede the flow of runoff descending from the steep slopes of the hill country. This forces soil-rich streams to deposit their burdens as fertile alluvia across broad basins between the coast and the low hills of the Shephelah. It was here, around what we call the 'Philistine Alluvial Plain,' that three of the five Philistine cities were located (Josh 13:3; 1 Sam 6:17). Some earlier have questioned the proximity of Gath to Ekron, but the identify of both sites is now established and each occupied its own 'bay' of the greater Philistine Alluvial Plain. Note the unique situation of the Philistine city of Ashkelon, located directly along the shore (unlike inland Ashdod with a port at some distance). Ashkelon is unique among the Philistine cities, a fact to which history alludes and which archaeological excavations at the site demonstrate. Indeed Ashkelon is in many ways more important than Gaza as the roads on this map illustrate. The southern trade corridor coming from Arabia via Edom and the Negev basin leads through T. Halif to the important areas of Mareshah, Lachish and T. el-Areini, as well as to T. el-Hesi. Ashkelon absorbed these routes while servicing maritime shipping to and from Egypt. The special arrangement which king Herod's father had with both the Nabateans of Petra and Ashkelon provided the family with the wealth which catapulted Herod to become 'king of the Jews,' even though he was of Idumean (Greek for 'Edomite') descent and despised by the Jews. This was happening on the eve of the birth of Jesus.

Acts 8:40

Other areas of alluvia exist around higher regions of brown-red sand by Joppa and in the Sharon Plain. In this context the roads of the entire coastal plain are very interesting to explore, both in the south and in the north where Herod's great building project of Caesarea (on-the-sea) took place at the former site of Strato's Tower. A sole verse from the book of Acts ties this entire coastal area together as Philip, after his encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch descending from Jerusalem along a lonely road to Gaza, finds himself in Ashdod (Azotus of Greco-Roman times) and conducts evangelistic meetings from Azotus to Caesarea. Philip's trip through Jewish coastal territory (which began at Jewish Ashdod/Azotus and ended in mixed Jewish/Gentile Caesarea) occurred before Paul's road to Damascus experience and his travels throughout the Mediterranean world. The Good News was on its way.

For a moment sit back and glance over the entire map you have just marked and briefly explored. Compare Samaria (northern Israel's home, the heartland of the house of Joseph) with Judah (the refuge-home of the nation and house of Judah). Consider the areas between these nations, an area which after Solomon's death suffered a bitter Judah-Israel civil war of fifty years. The territory of the tribe of Benjamin (related to Joseph) was south of Bethel and north of Jerusalem, the heart of this highly contested area. Make special note of how the broad Aijalon valley in the north is linked to the Central Benjamin plateau (outlined on this map). This plateau in turn is linked to Jericho, the lower Rift Valley and to the Medeba plateau beyond. The limited challenge of east-west travel through this central corridor is not possible farther south, between the tableland of Moab and the central Shephelah. There the chasm of the Dead Sea, the wilderness and the higher hill country of Judah separates east from west.

Clearly this is not a random land but a carefully designed playing board with proper entrances and exits. It was within this 'divinely designed' context that the Israelites settled, both in the northern, central and southern parts of the hill country. What occurred in each of these

areas (from the apostasy and exile of Israel in the north to the survival of Judah in the south) ultimately led to our redemption but also provides graphic illustrations and imperatives for us today as we find ourselves in our own 'land between.' The challenges have not changed within these modern 'testing grounds of faith' for we still must live 'in the world but not of the world.'

F. SOUTHERN ARENA

We reviewed a number of useful techniques at the beginning of the marking section for the northern and central arenas (bulleted points such as referring to the back cover chart, the rainfall line on the middle spread map (pp 12-130, etc.) If needed these can be reviewed now. For the Southern Arena it is important to consult maps which you now know well. The more detailed map on pp 22-23 is useful for this study.

We now turn to the marking of the Southern Arena map (pp 2-3). Our goal again is to make the subregions stand out and to introduce them by brief discussions and selected historical allusions and events, far less numerous here in the arid south. As before, use the Finder Map to place this arena within the land, read the text on these pages, note the three major regions as defined by the black, solid lines on the map and locate the subregions listed below these regions. We have already discussed the northern parts of this map in regard to the Central Arena (pp 4-5) and thus much of our work is done. We begin in the east along the edge of Arabia and work our way westward toward the Mediterranean.

1. Eastern Heights

This map presents the entire tableland of Moab and its relationship to narrower eastern heights south of Moab, the area of Edom and the renowned city of Petra, buried deep within early sandstones (bottom of this map). Note that the arid desert of Arabia moves westward, even more so than in Moab, and that the confines of hills and ridges of Edom narrow as we move south. Comparing this map with the rainfall line on the full two-page map (pp 12-13) shows just how narrow Edom's habitable land becomes in the south. Small springs (such as those at Wadi Musa near Petra or at Tamar S of the Dead Sea) and man-made cisterns take on tremendous importance. Both the Edomites and the later Nabateans knew well how to manage and protect such deposits of water. Greek and Roman armies withered in these surroundings, lacking the knowledge of water sources, often hidden by their clever desert foes. Once they entered this dry south land they sought in vain for water and ultimately perished. We now enter an entirely different landscape than we have seen thus far.

- ✎ HL all the subregional lines (broken line) on this map which appeared on the southern portion of the Center Arena map (pp 4-5)
- ✎ HL the subregional line (broken line) Moab and the Medeba plateau (to the north of this map). HL the site names of Dibon and Kir [-hareth] just north and within the tableland of Moab.
- ✎ HL the subregional line (broken line) between the northern mountains of Edom around Bozrah and the southern limestone ridges (green) above deeper sands in which Petra is located (purple). HL each of these site names: Bozrah and Petra.
- ✎ Find and HL the term 'Feinan Canyon' in the Rift west of the large name 'EDOM' and add 'PUNON REGION' next to it (see *Regions on the Run*, Map B, p 20 for comparison). This was inadvertently omitted on this map and on the detailed map of the area (pp 22-23) to which you should also add it. It is best to HL the space first and then add the name to avoid running color. Another mistake to correct at this point is the location

of the important oasis of Tamar in the Rift valley. It is correct at the crossroads on the Southern Arena map (pp 6-7) but is wrongly positioned on the detailed map (pp 22-23). While doing this you can also HL the name on both maps.

a. Moab

With a full view of **Moab** you can easily review all you know of this area from previous studies. Find the Arnon/Mujib canyon to the north and the deep Zered ('Hasa' in Arabic) south of Moab, a faulted canyon SE of the Dead Sea and another impact off the great Rift faults. Note the different paths of two highways through Moab, the so-called 'desert highway' running S-N between Moab and the Arabian desert and the 'King's Highway' (the 'royal road'), which makes its way north across both the Zered and Arnon canyons as it heads from Edom through Moab and on to the Medeba plateau (north off this map). The Romans built and improved this amazing route in the century after the days of Jesus (after +106 when Rome took over Nabatea) in order to bring this part of Arabia into their imperial orbit. Remains of this 'Via Nova Traiana' ('Trajan's New Road') are still visible, and until recently it was lined in places with milestones. This road is one of the most exciting remains to see in modern Jordan (especially exposed parts in less-inhabited Edom) as one stands upon it and imagines the caravans of luxury goods and spices which made their way to Mediterranean ports and from there to the tables of Rome and its provinces. This, indeed, was the end ('limus') of the Roman empire, which stretched from here to England.

b. Edom

When one enters **Edom** one enters a different world, the world of Lawrence of Arabia and the world of the astounding Nabateans, who pushed the clans of Edom to the NW into the Negev basin and beyond to the region of Mareshah. Here we meet the 'Idumeans' (the Greek form of 'Edomites') in the days of the Maccabees, king Herod and his father Antipater and through the days of Jesus and the apostles. Meanwhile, the Nabateans had moved north from southern regions of Arabia off this map and exploited the unique position of the ancient land of Edom (on this map), exploiting its position along caravan routes coming off Arabia and seeking routes around the Dead Sea chasm, routes which led across the Rift to Mediterranean ports. What we learn from the days of Rome and the Nabateans helps us understand the policies of earlier Edomites from the days of David through the Israelite monarchies. Not everything about the Nabateans applies to the earlier Edomites, but it is clear that the economic value of taxing the passing caravans of luxury goods and spices (coveted by Mediterranean peoples) lay behind the violent trade wars described in the Bible as well as the scathing curses of the prophets on Edom. Indeed, this is the point of the visit of the Queen of Sheba (from the area of Yemen in southern Arabia) to Solomon's court in Jerusalem. Although we hear nothing of them, there certainly were negotiations at the highest level concerning trade along the routes before you.

Edom's control of trade grew during the later days of the Israelite monarchies, especially when Judah was humbled by the Assyrians in the days of the prophet Isaiah and destroyed by Babylon in the days of Jeremiah. These and other prophets scorn Edomite exploitation and their joy as Judah's control diminished with the onslaughts of Assyrians and the Babylonians, both of whom invaded along the coastal highways and through the Shephelah. Lachish in the NW corner of this map was one of the main Shephelah sites brutally attacked and taken. Edom's rejoicing was especially troublesome because of its traditional relationship with ancient Israel through Jacob's brother Esau. As is common in the Middle East, kinship means everything, and family ties are to override every other consideration. Thus we hear mournful and scornful words in Ps 137, as well as the curses of the prophets Obadiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. All of this comes to mind as one wanders the ways and byways of lofty Edom.

- ☞ HL the name of the site of Bozrah in the northern hills of the area of Edom
- ☞ HL the name of the site of Petra and modern Wadi Musa in Edom's ridge in the south

Discussions in *Regions on the Run* (pp 20-21) speak of the Edomite center of Bozrah, securely isolated on a promontory in the midst of a large, impressive canyon, and of Petra, the Nabatean stronghold in southern Edom. These offer insights not repeated here. The famous site of Petra lies farther south, buried deep in a natural sandstone fortress.

What is important to recognize as you look at this map is the reality of a short attached phrase made toward the end of tumultuous chapter eleven of the book of Daniel. We hear in Daniel of 'last days' past and still to come, days when conflict and convulsions fall upon the Land Between, Judah and Jerusalem. In the midst of these troubled days we are told that a frightening conqueror 'shall come into the glorious land and tens of thousands shall fall, but these specific areas shall be delivered out of his hand: 'Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.' The rest of the land and even Egypt shall fall, but these regions east of the Rift (clearly seen on this map) are safe havens. This is because they lie far off the international coastal highway along the NW corner of this map. This phrase from the prophet Daniel reveals the great difference between the flourishing, well-watered Northern Arena and these more secluded but comfortable parts of Southern Arenas, between the busy, threatened routes of the NW and these separated safe havens of the SE, beyond the Dead Sea and the arid Aravah. As stated at the outset of *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible* (p2), 'The land of the Bible is not a random land ... it is a Land Between, a land that lies between sea and desert ... partakes of both the wetter north and the drier south ... and Biblical writers recognized the dramatic difference between the two....'

Dan 11:41

c. South of Edom and off this map

While our study generally has refrained from discussing areas which lie beyond the borders of our map, in this case it is important to make some general comments about what lies south of Edom. This is because some who use *Geobasics* visit the stunning scenic setting of Wadi Ram, south of the Petra region and off this map. For those who have yet to see this area and have internet access to 'Google Earth,' it is possible to 'visit' the Wadi Ram region (and other parts of the land) by navigating to the area of southern Jordan and using various tools on this site to change angles, elevations and positions. By 'descending' to closer views links to photos taken by locals and visitors emerge. Clicking on these links on the Google Earth screen can bring up amazingly good views of this area.


A route from modern Wadi Musa runs SW on the *Geobasics* map and joins the so-called desert highway at the site of Maan, just off this map. Farther south this arid Maan plateau abruptly ends along a series of geological faults which expose a line marine rocks (chalks and limestones). A vast area of continental sandstones and wandering dunes extends south before the traveller, as far as the eye can see. Here one finds the 'Ras en-Naqb' (the 'head of the ascent/pass') down which the modern road descends into the sands. The Roman road ('Trajan's New Road') makes its descent farther west, toward the area's important spring.

At this point the traveller leaves the eastern heights (although high 'block' mountains continue along the Rift) and descends into a different world, one totally controlled by those who knew the desert well. On a visit here, and especially farther into 'Wadi Ram,' one wanders between towering sandstone mounts rising perpendicularly from seemingly endless sands. This area, and beyond toward Mecca, Medina and Yemen, was the home of the Nabateans, who pushed north onto the plateau and into Edom, forcing the Edomites NW on our map into the Negev basin and beyond to the Shephelah of Judah. The major movements across the map before you strongly impacted the Biblical world, from the wandering of Moses and the Israelites

to the days of the Hebrew prophets and times of Jesus and the apostles down through the invasion of the sword of Islam and the conflict between Islam and the Crusaders. The flow of history between this arid south and the settled north is the overriding message of this map.

d. Rift valley south of the Dead Sea


As we return to the Southern Arena seen on this map we can see the Rift valley outlined by darker solid lines south of the Dead Sea chasm. This is sometimes called the “Aravah,” although technically the term simply means ‘a desert-plain’ and can be applied to the Rift just north of the Dead Sea.

 HL these site names in the Rift: Zoar and Tamar.

Note three things about the Aravah.

- South of the Dead Sea chasm (its elevation is on p 5) the Aravah rises and then drops to the Red Sea (to the south off this map).
- It is not static but a dynamic area of both rocks and soils, from more recent deposits in the area of Zoar to sterile ‘lissan’ deposits NE of Tamar and both rocks and soils farther south.
- To the east the lofty heights of Edom rise abruptly, exposing deeper sands and limestones, creating a type of natural bulwark, Edom’s prideful fortress mentioned in the prophet Obadiah.
- To the west a very different geological picture emerges, one of uplifts, geological ‘cirques’ and intervening troughs.

Although few historical sources refer to this part of the Rift valley, it was anything except dormant throughout the millennia. This was the setting of ancient cities, whose former and modern names line the eastern edge of the Rift from Bab edh-Dhra (Sodom?) through Numeira (Gomorrhah?) and Zoar to the sites of Feifeh and Khanazir. In the days of David and later kings of Judah the Aravah became a battlefield with Edom in the heights above. Judah’s expansion into this area from the Negev basin depended upon its fortress at the small oasis-site of Tamar, from which roads fanned out to Edom and south to the Red Sea. Archaeological excavations and a trove of religious artifacts tell us that the Edomites later took over Tamar as Judah withdrew to deal with problems nearer their heartland.

 HL the region name of Feinan Canyon in a faulted part of the Rift west of the name ‘Edom.’ Add the name (in caps) ‘PUNON REGION’ to the left, beside ‘Feinan Canyon.’

The Punon/Feinan region is one of the most intriguing areas in this part of the Land Between. It has long been thought to be the setting of Moses lifting the bronze serpent in view of the Israelites. Recent excavations in this area have uncovered later smelting sites which testify to the discovery of copper in this region in the days of David and Solomon. This no doubt spurred the conflict between Judah and Edom, adding competition for this natural resource to existing feuds over the control of trade passing between Arabia and Mediterranean ports. All of this and more points to a much earlier date of the rise of Edom and Moab than some scholars (skeptical of the written record in the Bible) were earlier willing to admit. The strategic location of the great Shaubak fortress, high above the Punon region and from a much later period, adds to the intrigue of this part of Edom. There remains much to learn and to integrate from this Punon/Shaubak corner of the Rift.

Num 21:8-9;
2Kgs 18:4

Ant 13:387-91/
15.1)

One of the most fascinating events in the Rift, however, occurred some eighty years before Jesus’ birth, later recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius. A contender for the throne of the Greek Seleucid kingdom in Syria (the region of ‘Aram’ on maps in *Regions on the Run*), through force and deceit, had taken control of Damascus, marched down the

coastal highway, across the Southern Arena and Aravah and into the land of the Nabateans (called 'Arabs' by some writers of this period). Although the Nabateans first retreated and allowed the Greeks to advance deeper into this arid area, they then came upon the Greeks in full force, probably here in the Aravah, killing the Greek Seleucid king and decimating his forces. A few survivors, deprived of food and water, struggled through the western uplifts to a small village of 'Kana,' a site name preserved in the name of a hill just south of T. Arad in the Negev basin. Once in the Negev basin these Greek survivors again were in a settled land. Meanwhile, their Nabatean foes marched north and took Damascus. The lessons learned from this obscure story reveal the important 'geobasics' of the map before you.

2. A series of uplifts west of the Rift

We have already seen that the area west of the Rift on this map is quite different than that of Edom and the Arabian desert to the east. Yellow, broken lines on this map indicate the crests of uplifted geological ridges (anticlines). These continue to the north in Judah but in a slightly more northerly direction. These uplifts lie directly across the path of routes which linked the region of Edom with the Mediterranean coast lands of Gaza and other ports to the north. These uplifts are like bulwarks dividing the Negev basin from the Rift and Edom's heights along the edge of the Arabian desert. This is indeed an interesting layout, from Arabia and Edom in the east and across the uplifts (yellow broken lines) to the various parts of the Negev basin and the international coastal highway. We call the intervening ridges and depressions by the general name of the 'Southern Highlands.'

One of the unique geological features of this area is the fact that three of the uplifted ridges have been folded so intensely (and sometimes at a specific curve as seen by the yellow lines) that they have broken open and exposed deeper rocks and sandstones to the forces of erosion. These natural 'cirques' ('bowls' or in Hebrew a 'makhtesh') are a geologists paradise for in them one can explore deeper layers and their interaction. For the tourist they offer areas of exposed colored sandstones, a small picture of what is found throughout Edom and in some regions farther north. Routes crossing from Edom and the Aravah to the Mediterranean coast must navigate all of these features, from various uplifted ridges to deep 'cirques.'

- ✎ HL the name 'Nahal Zin' toward the middle of this map.
- ✎ HL the subregional line (broken line) which separates Nahal Zin from the northern uplifts.
- ✎ HL the subregional line (broken line) which separates Nahal Zin from the southern uplifts.
- ✎ HL the name of the sites of Tamar in the Rift (if not already HL), Kadesh [-barnea] in the SW corner of the map and Gaza just inland from the Mediterranean coast.
- ✎ HL the name of the sites of Arad (T. Arad), Beer-sheba and Gerar in the Negev basin.

The divisions of the southern highlands you have just noted conveniently distinguish the main southern trade corridor to the north (Tamar to Negev basin) from much more challenging obstacles to the south. We will take a moment to explore these two regions.

- Note the routes from Tamar and from the area of Zoar in the Rift which find ascents and passes in their quest to reach the inhabited Negev basin (from Arad through to Beer-sheba). It is clear why the Negev basin with links to Edom via Tamar was by far the most important commercial region south of the hill country of Judah.
- Note the lack of routes (except for a later Roman way from Petra) in the southern part of this division. The great 'Super Bowl' as we call it was a major obstacle in an area which reaches heights comparable to those in the hill country of Judah to the north.
- If one were to add an east-west route through Nahal Zin (between Tamar and Nessana; part of this route is not shown on this map) the southern communication complex would

almost be complete. One has only to note routes which circumvent the uplifted 'Super Bowl' area, one through the Rift and the other to the west to the important spring and fortresses in the area of Kadesh [-barnea]. Other routes do exist, but these reveal the general challenge facing Judah as various governments attempted to extend control from the Negev basin over the entire southern network of routes.

Written sources often fail us in this Southern Arena because much of it lies outside the settled areas of the country. The advance westward of the Nabateans before, during and following the days of Jesus, however, is attested in the beautiful remains of Nabatean cities, which developed technics to overcome the limitations of this area. They largely depended upon the fact that uncertain rain, snow and dew here were mainly deposited on slopes facing NW, toward the Mediterranean sea. This meant that careful management of slopes, run-off, springs and man-made cisterns resulted in enough moisture and water to support sizable cities. Nothing comparable occurred either before or after the days of these Nabatean cities. Modern cities depend upon modern pumping and irrigation technics, something which the Nabateans did not have. Earlier cultures, especially the Israelites, did manage to exploit and develop limited areas around small sites and trade fortresses but nothing on the scale of the Nabateans. A low-level flight over this area reveals far more evidence of Nabatean settlement than the few major sites seen on this map.

✎ HL the names of main Nabatean cities in and around the Southern Highlands (starting in the north and moving to the south): Elusa, Rehoboth, Nessana, Soubaita. [erratum: One important name was omitted from this list. Add 'Mampsis' with its dot by placing a dot about 1in/2cm, NW of the Ascent of Aqrabbim, on the red road where it turns west to meet a road coming from Zoar. Place the dot just before the first road crosses the yellow broken line. Write 'Mampsis' by this dot.] A visit to Mampsis is particularly interesting since many of its buildings were standing during the days of Jesus and the apostles.

Sit back and look at the sites you have just highlighted, noting how they control the road system between the Rift and the Mediterranean coastal highway. The Nabateans carried their technology and abilities to overcome natural limitations with them, applying them in and around the Southern Highlands, as a visit to any of these sites reveals. Indeed, the advance of the Nabateans (like the earlier Edomites) to the NW from Arabia was one of the greatest threats to the kingdom of king Herod, who died shortly after the birth of Jesus. Herod had to contend with Nabatean expansion here in the south and along routes north from Edom and Moab to Damascus. This same Nabatean threat is the background to many earlier conflicts in the days of the Hasmoneans (Maccabees). In ten short years after +630, Moslem armies followed these same routes as they conquered the entire land. Christian Byzantine churches which had arisen in these cities and many others across the land fell quickly to the sword of Islam. These lessons of migratory and military conquests are best understood in these examples from historical and archaeological records.

A glance at the area west of the Southern Highlands shows why the area just studied is so important. Uplifts form mountains surrounding the Super Bowl and force most routes to pass through the Rift on the east or through the edge of Sinai on the west. These routes ascend from the Dead Sea (to the south off this map) and circumvent the Super Bowl uplifts as they move north. The western route via the springs at Kadesh is also restricted by wind-blown sands from the northern Sinai which cover the area NW of Nessana, Rehoboth and Elusa. Both obstacles highlight the significance of oases around Kadesh and the position of Nessana on a route heading west to Egypt along the edge of the sands of northern Sinai. This map thus shows two of the main routes to Egypt, one along the coast via Raphia and the other from Kadesh or Nessana, an extremely important route and the site of recent military campaigns.

3. The corridor of the Negev Basin

Within this general framework the importance of the Negev basin is clear. It begins in the east around Arad (T. Arad) in the Eastern Negev and makes its way westward through the Hormah and Beer-sheva constrictions to the broad Western Negev. The entire area of the basin, and somewhat beyond the division lines, is covered with fine, wind-blown soils ('loess'), deposits of the dust storms which frequent the south in certain seasons. A mixture of loess and sand extends to the SW into the Sinai sands. Deciding exactly where the Western Negev ends and the coastal regions begin is not possible, but a broken division line outlines the extent of the major loess deposits. One of this area's most important features is the 'Nahal Besor,' which drains many of the western slopes of the Southern Highlands and cuts an impressive path NW by T. el-Farah-south to T. el-Ajjul near the coast. Other drainage systems join it, one near the dramatic site of T. Gamma. This entire area saw battle after battle over the millennia as the Egyptian military might faced invasions from imperial armies descending toward Egypt, imperial armies from Persia to Greece and everything between. This was Egypt's front door, to be defended at all costs. It was also Egypt's springboard to the north and thus has always been and will always remain one of Egypt's highest priorities.

The various bays of the Negev basin extend inland from this highly strategic coastal area. This is a region of increased but uncertain rainfall, where in a good year sprawling fields of wheat appear and an area in which major fortresses and cities dot the landscape. The Negev basin stands in stark contrast to the rest of the Southern Arena, the beginning of the 'good land,' which we hear of in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. True, for those visiting from well-watered regions of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas the Negev basin is 'nothing to write home about.' To appreciate it one must join the Israelites in the wilderness or the Greek forces defeated by the Nabateans and wander in arid lands without water or sustenance. Only then can one appreciate what it means to enter the Negev basin from the south, to find sustenance and cisterns, as well as fields of grain and flocks grazing during certain seasons. Perspective is everything in enjoying this unique depression between the hill country of Judah and the uplifted Southern Highlands.

4. A Southern Overview of History from the Negev Basin

A selected list of events over the past 5000 years shows how the 'geobasics' of the Negev basin and its connections to southern trade routes have impacted imperial and local events. This again shows that this is not a random land but one in which lessons can be learned in a 'testing ground of faith.' (See the 'The Land Between: 4000 Year Overview' inside the back cover of *Regions on the Run*.) As you read the following paragraphs keep this Southern Arena map in view and integrate these events into its various regions and subregions.

- **Early Bronze** sites and way-stations scattered across the greater south reveal a large network of routes over long distances. Extensive remains of a large, well-organized city at T. Arad in the Negev basin and discoveries at sites along the edge of the Rift to the SE of the Dead Sea show that these settlements were an important part of this network. The discovery at T. Arad of the 'Narmer Tablet' (Narmer founded Egypt's 1st Dynasty some 5000 years ago) may indicate early trade between this settlement and Egypt. Artifacts found here show that commercial ties increased later in this period. Smaller sites surrounded the city, and this period was the heyday of the Negev basin.
- **Middle Bronze I** (a period with a variety of names) lacks sites in the Negev basin while such sites do appear in the Southern Highlands. This may explain why patriarchal stories record no encounters with a settled population except far to the west at 'Gerar,' located at T. Haror. Some, however, place the patriarchs in a later period. In any case, the patriarchal southern stories in the book of Genesis are so numerous that we leave them to you to read.

- **Middle Bronze II** saw large, fortified sites arise in the land. While there are a few such remains in the Negev basin, most activity occurred to the north and west. This fits well with the southward migration of the so-called 'Amorites' toward Egypt and their settlement along the coast land and in the fertile hill country rather than in the arid south, or even in the Negev basin.
- **Late Bronze Age** also saw intense activity along the coastal highway and in the Northern Arena, as Egypt's armies pushed north against local Canaanite cities to meet the threat of larger invaders farther north. In this period cities arose in or atop Middle Bronze sites, but the evidence of settlement in the arid south is scattered or missing altogether. In contrast Late Bronze sites abound farther west along the coastal highway as well as on routes which cross the Western Negev to reach settled areas farther north. The Bible records an interesting event during this period as the Israelites were camping at Kadesh (later Kadesh-barnea) and along the northern edge of the Southern Highlands. Twelve spies entered the land via the Negev basin and apparently were not a threat. Later, however, some Israelites took matters into their own hands and attempted to force their way into the fertile hill country via the Negev basin. They met the 'king' of Arad, no doubt a euphemism for a local bedouin sheik who resisted this larger militia who threatened to overrun his territory. These Biblical events fit well into what is known of the region in this period.
- **Iron Age** developments in the south are strikingly different in these centuries than in previous periods. The area takes its place with other busy regions as settlement and commercial activity increase. Smaller time periods are discussed here below.

Num 21:1; 33:40

Judg 1:16

Josh 19:1-9;
Judg 1:17

Josh 15:21-32

1 Sam 7:15-8:3

1 Sam 15

1 Sam 27-30

2 Sam 8:13-14;
1 Chr 18:12-13;
1 Kgs 11:14-18

As the Israelites settled farther north (east and west of the Rift) we hear of the **Kenites**, who had earlier joined the Israelites, moving into the area of Arad in the Eastern Negev, a natural grazing area for nomads down to our day. The tribe of **Simeon** receives the central region around Beer-sheba and with Judah overcomes those living there. The book of Joshua contains an extended list of settlements in the inheritance of the tribe of Judah. Southern sites in the Negev basin and farther south open the list.

While the ministry of the prophet Samuel took place farther north, **Samuel's sons** moved to this area where through deceit they could benefit—far from their father. At the center of Beer-sheba in the Negev 'they took bribes and perverted justice.' Increased trade through the southern trade corridor at this time no doubt established a lucrative setting for these dishonest judges. The marauding **Amalekites** from neighboring Sinai had raided these same caravans, which explains **Saul's campaign** against these Amalekites and his self-promoting monument erected at Carmel, a hill-country site near dramatic overviews of the Negev. This same commercial interest prompted the Philistines (new comers to the coastal plain) to place young **David at Ziklag** in the Western Negev, whose job it was to weaken Israelites living in and around the Negev basin to keep them from exploiting incomes from increasing caravan traffic through this trade corridor. David, however, protected these southern Israelites from the Amalekites, and when he left to ostensibly join the Philistines against Saul, the Amalekites struck. The abundance of goods they took (and which later David returned) demonstrates the commercial importance of the growing southern trade corridor via the Negev basin.

It is clear that with the rise of the kingdom of **David and Solomon** the southern trade corridor had to be protected and enlarged. This is the background to the building of a city at **Beer-sheba** and the first of a series of fortresses atop the remains of the much earlier Early Bronze city at **Arad**. It is also explains the fierce battles between Judah and the rising influence of the **Edomites** in the south, battles which were fought in the Aravah south of the Dead Sea and beyond. The overriding issue of these conflicts was control of trade routes from Edom and the Red Sea to Mediterranean ports in Philistia

2 Sam 9:17

2 Chr 12:1-12;
Shishak inscription

but more importantly connections to Tyre and Sidon via Gilead, Bashan and the rest of the Northern Arena. In light of this the government in Jerusalem in this period also built an entire network of forts and fortresses between **Tamar** and **Kadesh-barnea**. After Solomon's death **pharaoh Shishak** of Egypt destroyed this southern commercial infrastructure, which had even competed with Egypt for east-west trade. The Bible does not record Shishak's conquests, but they were so important to the the pharaoh that he listed them in full daylight on the southern wall of the Temple at Karnak above the eastern bank of the Nile. The rich assortment of events above and their setting on this map demonstrate how knowing the setting of the Bible makes a difference.

2 Kgs 14:7

The Bible is silent on many of the subsequent developments in the south, since it gives priority to developments in the north in order to illuminate the message its writers wanted to convey. Archaeological excavations, particularly at the Israelite fortress atop T. Arad, in the Iron Age city of Beer-sheba atop T. Sheva and at other sites, such as the fortress at Kadesh-barnea, confirm that when Judah had a strong central government in Jerusalem its control extended south from the Negev basin, but in intervening periods a weakened Judah retreated. The fierce struggle with Edomite expansion continued, underscored by one verse from the days of king **Amaziah** of Judah, two centuries after David and Solomon, which tells us of the conflict around Sela (the 'Rock'), a natural fortress within a deep canyon north of Bozrah. There were, however, periods when 'there was no king in Edom' (no effective central control), and kings such as **Jehoshaphat** and **Uzziah** (Amaziah's son, a century after Jehoshaphat) were able to occupy Ezion-geber on the Red Sea or 'build towers (small fortresses guarding trade routes) in the wilderness.' Judah thus continually strove to reap the benefits of controlling the lucrative southern trade corridor.

Isa 34, 63:1-6;
Jer 49:7-22;
Lam 4:11-22;
Ezek 25:12-14, 35;
Obadiah;
Ps 137

Conflicts among local nations in the Land Between paled two centuries after the days of Solomon, as the cruel and organized military might of imperial **Assyria** arrived in force in the Northern Arena and along the coastal highway leading to Egypt. Judah could no longer expend the energy needed to control the expanses of the south. As we have already seen, the Edomites were only too eager to take advantage of Judah's dilemma as they infiltrated the southern trade corridor and into the Negev basin. Evidence of this Edomite infiltration appears in remains at Tadmor, where impressive artifacts from an Edomite shrine (probably built in this period) were found destroyed and buried outside a later phase of the Judean fortress (no doubt as a result of king Josiah's reform movement). Meanwhile, Edomite remains have appeared at Qidmit, (shown on this map) in the Eastern Negev! In the next century the arrival of imperial **Babylonia** in the north and west and the exile of the upper classes of Judah gave the Edomites more freedom to expand. They ultimately take over the Negev basin, the southern hill country (including Hebron) and the southern Shephelah around Mareshah (at the crossroads NE of Lachish but not named on this map; see position on p 2). The south had changed, and the writers of the Bible reflect Edom's 'invasion' with a vengeance. Ancient family ties had been violated, and this ought not to have happened.

Ps 126

The **return to Zion** by some of the Jewish exiles in Babylon was a joyous event, one which the psalmist felt was best illustrated by the sudden rush of runoff rainfall through eroded water courses in the fine loess soil of the Negev basin. The situation in this area, however, was anything but favorable for the reestablished Jewish community, which settled regions around Jerusalem in the hill country (a region later known from its coins as '**Yehud**'). As we have already seen above, the entire southern trade corridor was at this time in the hands of the Edomites, later known in Greek as 'Idumeans.' While we hear of Israelite inhabitants who remained in the Negev as a 'remnant,' the overpowering commercial force in this all-important southern region remained Edomite.

Neh 11:20, 25-30

This situation continued through the Persian period after the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great and into the 'Hellenistic' period which followed. During these centuries the relatively small Jewish territory 'Yehud' survived in the heart of the hill country while Edomite/Idumean control remained in the southern Shephelah, southern hill country and Negev basin.

The **Maccabean revolt** (after -167) changed all of this. A Jewish militia arose and defended the threatened Jewish way of life against the threat of Hellenization by political leaders of the Greek Seleucids, who themselves were threatened by the coming of Rome into the Eastern Mediterranean. Region after region fell to these Maccabees, '**Hasmoneans**' as they also were known. The south, together with its southern trade corridor and the Idumean 'capital' at the strategic Shephelah crossroads of Marisa/Mareshah, came under Jewish control as the Idumeans (the former accused 'Edomites') became Jewish converts. A later Hasmonean king attempted to restrain Nabatean influence in the Negev as well as along the road through the region of Moab leading to Nabatean areas in what was formerly 'Edom.'

As this was happening the converted Idumeans in the southern Shephelah further exploited their unique position between east and west, between the routes through the Negev basin and the city port of Ashkelon, which remained a 'free city' as the Hasmoneans expanded. Idumean know-how and Jewish troops even saved Julius Caesar from his sure demise in Egypt, an act planned by none other than Antipater, the father of **Herod** who ultimately became 'king of the Jews.' In the midst of all of this the Hasmonean kingdom took on Hellenistic ways, but in -63 it fell to Roman armies led by Pompey. Various types of ruled ensued, but when Herod became 'king' he tried to stem Nabatean influence, both in the Negev basin as well as east of the Rift. At one point Roman authorities disciplined king Herod because of his over zealous actions against the southern Nabatean. The Southern Arena witnessed all of these events in one of the most intriguing and formative periods of the land's history.

The events above, during the century prior to the **birth of Jesus**, set the scene for the first century in the Land Between and the events of the four Gospels. Interestingly, nothing of Jesus' recorded ministry took place in the south except two journeys. The first was the flight to Egypt by Joseph, Mary and their young son Jesus in the final days of king Herod, who ruled the almost entire land. The second was the return of this family, ten years later, which took them to Nazareth in Galilee because of the severe policies of Archelaus, one of Herod's surviving sons, who governed the southern Jewish territory of Judah. Both of these trips must have taken place along the coastal highway via Raphia and Gaza. In their flight to Egypt Jesus' family may have followed the same 'road to Gaza' as the Ethiopian eunuch travelled when **Philip** encountered him, the only story during the period of the apostles which comes near to the Southern Arena. After the conversion of **Saul/Paul** on the road to Damascus we hear of his retreat to 'Arabia,' but this could have been anywhere in the Nabatean territory SE of Gilead. This story does demonstrate, however, that in 'Arabia' Paul was outside the reach of those who threatened him within the land itself. This again illustrates just how separate these SE regions are from the well-watered and settled areas farther north and west.

The Negev basin suffered the same fate as the adjacent hill country and Shephelah after the great **First Revolt** of the Jews against Rome, which occurred shortly after the end of the book of Acts. The land, together with the Negev basin but not the area south of the basin, now came under direct Roman rule and was given name 'Provincia Judaea.' In +106 the Roman emperor **Trajan** annexed semi-autonomous Nabatean areas of the Southern Highlands and the region which we call by its former name of 'Edom.'

Matt 2

Acts 8:26-40

Acts 9:1-31;
Gal 1:11-2:10

To integrate these territories beyond the Rift into the Roman empire **Trajan** built 'Via Nova Traiana' ('Trajan's New Road'), beginning from Bezer/Bostra in the north (see p 3) and running south through Rabbah/Philadelphia/Amman, the Medeba Plateau, Moab and Edom and across the western edge of Wadi Ram to Aila/Aqaba on the Red Sea. As noted above, remains of this road still can be seen today in southern Jordan. Other minor changes ensued, but major changes occurred at the end of the **Second Revolt** of the Jews against Rome (+135). The name of 'Provincia Judaea' became 'Syria Palaestina,' and Roman rule was now uncontested.

This new era would remain in one form or another for over five centuries. Trajan's New Road became the defendable 'limit,' the **SE *limes* of the Roman empire**. During the late Roman and Byzantine periods certain regional names were altered to distinguish between various parts of the land, but no major changes occurred until that fateful decade before +640 when the **sword of Islam** cut deep swaths through the land. Byzantine rulers neglected the vulnerable Southern Arena and did not assign adequate military strength nor financial support to protect the area's cities and many churches. At times the Byzantine defenders repulsed the attacks by Moslem troops moving north from Medina and Mecca, but a victory at Aila/Aqaba on the Dead Sea soon led to attacks farther north. What began in the arid SE continued north and west until August 20, 636, the day of a Moslem victory at the decisive battle of Yarmuk exposed the entire Northern Arena to the invading forces and sealed the country's future. In +640 the last two city-ports on the Mediterranean fell to the Moslems, Ashkelon/Ascalon in the south and Caesarea in the north. A millennia of Greek/Hellenistic and Roman rule came to an end.

In the midst of these centuries Jews and Christians lived in the land. One finds **Byzantine cities and churches** almost everywhere. Today one can study the architecture of these churches, from the Nabatean cities across the Southern Arena to those in the central and northern arenas and beyond. Meanwhile, there is textual and archaeological evidence of **Jewish settlement** in the hills south of Hebron. Until recently there were still niches in old door posts of Arab villages in this area. Each had once held a Jewish 'mezuzah' with Deut. 6:4 written on parchment. Older residents remembered lighting candles on Friday evenings (Sabbath) without knowing why. Khirbet Suseya/Susiya, just north of the Eastern Negev on p 22, is an impressive site in this area. Here an entire Jewish settlement, including a carved cave lintel, a wine cellar, olive presses and a synagogue graces an open, fertile area near routes ascending from Arad. Such remains are found throughout the Northern Arena since after the Jewish revolt +135 Jews could no longer live in much of Judah and many moved to Galilee or Golan.

As we approach the end of our study of the land's three arenas (pp 2-7) it may be useful to take a moment to review and compare them on your own terms. Glance through these three double pages and note major differences between each arena (large features, geological differences, etc.). Then go back through each arena and note the names and features you have highlighted. If you find others names and features you would like to highlight, this is a good time to do that. For a third time turn through these pages and attempt to recall general illustrative events discussed above, summarizing how they impressed you and noting general geographical or historical issues which you would like to remember. All of these three steps are best done with a group in which the impressions of others can be helpful as various issues emerge and are discussed. Armed with this understanding of how the land looks and how the land functions you are well-prepared to place any event from the Bible or any other source within a geographical context in order to understand where it happened and perhaps more clearly understand its overall significance, i.e., why it happened where it happened.