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### B. Central Arena

See Geobasics Study Guide: Part Two
(http://www.bibback.com/downloads.html)

### C. Southern Arena

See Geobasics Study Guide: Part Three
(http://www.bibback.com/downloads.html)
INTRODUCTION IN BRIEF

This Geobasics Guide recognizes the reality that some users want less detail while some want more. It attempts to meet this need by using the phrase ‘guide in brief’ and a vertical line | to designate certain sections for those who want to complete assignments with haste but still observe their main points. They later may want to return and complete the full Guide as others do. All users should feel free to interact with the Guide, especially with ‘personality in texts,’ by highlighting key words and phrases in order to fix them in their minds and later return to review what they earlier found important. In order to have this Introduction readily available it is repeated at the beginning of each arena, together with a specific introductory Master Map for each arena, each with its own markings.


The following provides a quick survey of the main features of the book.

- The three-dimensional map on the front cover communicates that the land of the Bible is a land of variety. We need to learn it; ‘God’s eyes are on it.’
- The outside of the back cover serves as a quick index to find specific maps in the book.
- The reference chart inside the back cover offers introductory discussions on ‘geobasics.’
- The center double-spread (pp. 12/13) presents a full map of the land with a legend and short descriptions of rocks and soils.
- Three full-color, double-spread rocks and soils maps (pp. 2/7) introduce the three arenas of the land: Northern (pp. 2/3), Central (pp. 4/5) and Southern (pp. 6/7) Arenas.
- The remaining maps (pp. 8-23) provide ‘closer views’ of the land but show only soils and not rocks. These maps assist with more detailed regional study.

II. Introducing the map

Look at the rocks and soils map on pp. 12/13 and find the following, arranged in an easy to find order rather than the sequence seen on p. 12. Regional names appear on the map on p. 1.

- Red represents volcanic basalt of Golan and Bashan.
- Green represents thick beds of uplifted limestones particularly well-represented 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 chalks, 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.

The maps in the book divide into two types.

- The first set of maps shows both rocks and soils. It consists of the three introductory arena maps (pp. 2-7) and the center-fold in the book (pp. 12/13), which includes a legend and short description of the rocks and soils. The chart inside the back cover addresses rock characteristics.
- 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.
III. Introducing reference helps and lines

Some reference helps in the Geobasics book require your attention.

• 'Rocks, Force, Water, Soils and Man' chart (inside the back cover). The left-hand column offers a key to your study and the basic physical issues of the land. It summarizes rocks and geological processes; introduces the important factors of rainfall, erosion and water storage; identifies soils in the land and factors of settlement [erratum: change 'page 3' under this discussion to pages 12/13]; and 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.

• Legend and glossary of rocks and soils (pp. 12/13). The 'Legend of Sequence' identifies the geological color scheme in the book. A short glossary of rock and soil terms appears with the legend and identifies the major rock types in each era and briefly introduces soil formation.

• Rainfall Line. A green rainfall line appears on pp. 12/13. Areas with rainfall sufficient for farming north of the line. Areas south of 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 soil quantities for farming.

Highlighting instructions: ‘HL’ means highlight with a colored highlighter, according to the thickness you desire; you can always add more HL but not take it away. Do not use a permanent pen that bleeds through the paper, and do not rest on a line and allow the paper to absorb the ink. Accent highlighters with chisel or wedge tips work well. You will need a green, a red/pink and a yellow which simply highlight the text or road.

HL in green the rainfall line on pp. 12/13. Begin on the coast near Ashkelon, follow the line up to 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 around heights of Jebel Druze and then swings back west before following the eastern face of the Anti-Lebanon range off the map.

Four types of lines on the maps require your attention.

• Uplift Lines: Uplift lines are yellow, dotted lines which mark out the top of an uplift along the crest of mountain ranges. The Lebanon range, for example, displays one long uplift. On pp. 2/3 find the yellow, dotted line marking the crest of this range.

• Divisional Lines: We have divided the land into major divisions in order to facilitate grouping subdivisions and regions. Thicker, solid gray lines mark out these major divisions. On pp. 2/3 find this solid line separating the Damascus plateau, Golan and Bashan from the Anti-Lebanon and Lebanon ranges. This is a divisional line.

• Subdivisional Lines: On pp. 2/3 find the thin, dotted, black line which separates Golan from Bashan; and another which separates Lower Gilead from Bashan. These are subdivisional lines. Both divisional and subdivisional lines should give cause for you to reflect on what distinguishes one region from another or one subregion from another.

• Soil Division Lines. On pp 10/12, find a thin, broken line which divides soils in the valleys of Lower Galilee from the rocks in the hill regions. This line serves to set the soils apart from the surrounding rocks and demarcates valleys and plains where greater amounts of soil have collected. We will never ask you to HL these lines.
IV. Introducing the Northern Arena through marking the Master Map

The Master Map on p. 6 is a key reference tool in your study. By showing the entire country the map allows you to see the full layout of the land. Use the markings below to mark this Master Map. You should also relate this map to the front cover map of *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible* (Geobasics below) as well as to other maps in the Geobasics book. Your exploration of these maps is very important, especially as you locate divisions and their lines (solid dark) and subdivisional/regional names. Some names appear in their longer form on Geobasics maps.

Print out the Master Map on p. 6:

- On the master map find the term Northern Arena and HL (highlight) it in pink
- HL in yellow the three main divisions of the NA: Stable East, Soaring North, Complex West
- Find these same areas on Geobasics front cover map, although they are not named there. This exercise allows you to compare the dramatic contrasts in terrain between the three divisions. The bold names below appear on the Geobasics front cover map:
  1) Stable East is the relatively flat area E of Golan, Gilead and S of Aram-Damascus;
  2) Soaring North is the heights under the name Lebanon and between Lebanon and Aram-Damascus;
  3) Complex West is the variety of valleys and ridges around Galilee.
- On the master map find subdivisional/regional names in the above three divisions of the NA.
  - **In the Stable East** HL in green: Damascus plateau, Upper and Lower Golan, Bashan, Lower Gilead and Jebel Druze
  - **In the Soaring North** HL in green: Lebanon range, Beqaa, Anti-Lebanon range and Dan
  - **In the Complex West** HL in green: Upper and Lower Galilee, Jezreel and Carmel range
- Find the same subdivisional/regional names in Geobasics Rocks and Soils map on pp. 2/3
Master Map for —

Geobasics Study Guide: Part One — Northern Arena

Steven P. Lancaster and James M. Monson

A marking companion to—

Geobasics in the Land of the Bible: Maps for Marking

www.BiblicalBackgrounds.com
D. NORTHERN ARENA—Pages 2/3

As you proceed, make the map your own. Locate various divisional/regional names, feature names and site name on each map when mentioned in discussions. Follow this approach in your study.

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 and note the list of divisions. Three major divisions appear in the Northern Arena—the solid, thicker dark lines on the map. Smaller broken lines indicate subdivisions within these major divisions. Such divisions appear on most maps in the book.

c) After this, follow the instructions below. Marking instructions add color emphasis to each map. Geobasics summarize the essence of each region; rather than memorizing them, observe these geobasics on the map. Personality in texts applies these geobasics in a nuanced reading of related texts from the Bible and other ancient sources. This procedure sets you within the living land, prepared to hear the fuller message of those who spoke from the land.

1. THE STABLE EAST

Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map

- HL (highlight) in green the names in the list under the Stable East on p. 2
- HL in green: Trachonitis, the words Upper and Lower which accompany both Golan and Gilead and Anti-Lebanon Range (west of the Damascus plateau)

We are about to add some color to the separation lines provided in this division. Note that in addition to these subdivisional lines (dark, broken lines), much smaller broken lines separate rocks from soils, like those around the basaltic rocks (red) south of the term Damascus Plateau. We will never ask you to HL soil/rock dividing lines but only the larger subdivisional lines.

- HL in green the subdivisional line (broken) between Golan and Bashan down to the Yarmuk plain
- HL in green the subdivisional line between Gilead (Lower) and Bashan
- HL in red/pink: Damascus (city), Helbon (note stream descending toward Damascus)
- HL in yellow: Abana river, Pharpar river (yellow shows up better in full light)

A. DAMASCUS PLATEAU (glance at map while reading these synopses)

Geobasics

- The Damascus plateau, an uninviting and unnoteworthy plain, becomes an arid desert as rainfall diminishes in a barren ‘rain shadow’ E of the Anti-Lebanon range.
- Barren desert soils cover much of this plateau, but runoff from the Anti-Lebanon range brings water and fertile alluvia to the Damascus oasis around the city.
- The Abana river provides much of the alluvia and waters the Damascus oasis, and drainage from Helbon north of Damascus creates additional agricultural land.
- The Pharpar river from Mt. Hermon waters the southeastern edge of the plateau.
- The Damascus oasis attracts and services highways coming from all directions.
- Damascus is a sentinel city, a great northern gateway to the Land Between, a center of commerce and a coveted prize for invaders in this politically unstable Stable East.

Had uplifting and later volcanic activity not taken place, much of the Stable East would have looked like the Damascus plateau, a mediocre, arid plain, but fresh water from springs and streams high in the adjacent Anti-Lebanon range descends in the Abana river (the modern
Barada or ‘cold’ river, sometimes called the ‘Amana’) and brings about a dramatic change. Together with runoff from the Helbon stream the waters of the Abana create an ideal setting for the early development of the oasis city of Damascus situated at some 680m/2,200f. To the south streams on the eastern slopes of Mt. Hermon form the Pharpar river, today called the Awaj or ‘crooked’ river. Naaman, the leprous military commander of the armies of Damascus, knew the fresh flowing waters of these two streams and thus had good reason to scorn the sluggish, meandering Jordan river in which the prophet Elisha told him to bathe.

This highly strategic site of Damascus straddles a major highway east of the Anti-Lebanon range. Below we mark these routes on a different map, but for now find highways (red lines) converging on Damascus from the NE and from the south. These connected Damascus with great commercial centers to the north (off the maps in the region of Aram, at Tadmor/ Palmyra and beyond to Mari on the middle Euphrates. To the south highways not only connected Damascus to the coastal highway in the Land Between and to Egypt beyond but to Arabia via Moab and Edom and ultimately to the Indian ocean. This unique combination of geobasics gave rise to the sentinel city of Damascus, which covets both northern and southern routes and regions. Its significance cannot be overemphasized since it overshadows the entire region. Indeed, without Damascus one does not fully control the Land Between.

Turn to pp 8/9: LEBANON RANGES, BEQAA AND DAMASCUS map

- HL in green: Damascus plateau and Beqaa valley
- HL in red/pink from N to S: Migdal and Chalcis (in Beqaa valley), Helbon, Damascus
- HL in yellow: Abana river, Pharpar river
- Black write-in (with ball-point pen): TO MIDDLE EUPHRATES along the road east of Ader to edge of map; TO TADMOR/PALMYRA on the road NE of Ader to eastern edge of map
- HL in yellow on red routes: 1) Damascus via Dumah to middle Euphrates (off map) and via Dumah to Tadmor/Palmyra (off map); 2) Damascus to Bathyrha via Ghabaqhib and off the map; 3) Ghabaqhib to Bethsaida (N of Lake Galilee); 4) Damascus to Dan via Pianias; and 5) Damascus to coastal highway by Berytus via Gaddushana

This map (pp. 8/9) shows the position of Damascus as a key road center. It lay on the direct Egypt-Mesopotamia (middle Euphrates) highway with links to the Beqaa valley and to routes in the region of Aram to the north. Leaders in Damascus, ever-desirous to control the Land Between, used the city’s unique setting for expanding militarily and commercially as we see in the Bible and in other historical sources. Indeed, ‘Damascus’ appears some sixty-one times in the Bible, from the days of the Abraham down through the conversion of Paul in Roman days ‘on the road to Damascus.’ After the Islamic invasion around +630 the site continued to play a key role down to the present day. When Damascus unified, or when outside imperial forces took control of the city, the entire northern arena was in peril. A strong Damascus meant that those in the Land Between—on both sides of the Rift—were uncertain of their own security.

Texts: Damascus plateau

Biblical texts do not characterize the Damascus plateau apart from the city of Damascus, so the city—arising from the geobasics of the plateau—provides color to the plateau. The following verses sample the many references to Damascus and offer a glimpse of the city’s personality. Note how the texts emphasize various aspects we have discussed above.

- Beautiful, wealthy, an oasis in the desert and in control of surrounding resources—
  Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? 2 Kings 5:12
  [The ruler of] Damascus … who holds the scepter from the place of Eden [an oasis in the desert]. Amos 1:3
Damascus brought to you [O Tyre] ... the wine of Helbon [a beautiful grape-growing valley descending from the north] and wool of Zahar [probably grazing lands to the southeast of Damascus]. Ezekiel 27:18

Hazael [of Damascus] went to meet Elisha [the Hebrew prophet], and he took with him as a gift forty camel-loads of all the fine products of Damascus. 2 Kings 8:9

The king of Assyria will carry off the wealth of Damascus. Isaiah 8:3

[Shalmaneser III of Assyria besieged Hazael] in Damascus, his royal residence. I cut down his gardens [the orchards of the Damascus oasis]. ANET 280

- Gateway to the Beqaa valley and Lebanon and a road center on routes north—
  Your nose is like Migdal of Lebanon [in the Beqaa] keeping watch toward Damascus [the city which controls the eastern approach into the Beqaa valley]. Song of Songs 7:5
  I will break the bar [on the gate] of Damascus [protecting the eastern approach to the Beqaa], and I will cut [its] inhabitant off from the idolatrous 'Beqaa' [the 'valley' which hosts the sacred space of Baalbek]. Amos 1:5
  Abraham pursed them [the four kings of the north] as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. Genesis 14:14

- Leader in regional politics—
  The head of Aram is Damascus. Isaiah 7:8
  Ben-hadad [of Damascus], the king of Aram gathered his army together with thirty-two kings [of lesser cities ... but later his military counselors advised him to assert his authority], 'Remove the thirty-two kings from their positions and replace them with commanders.' 1 Kings 20:1, 24

- Constant military threat to surrounding regions and peoples—
  Ben-hadad [of Damascus] seized Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maachah and all Chinnereth as well as all of Naphtali [and positioned Damascus to control overland routes to Tyre and Sidon]. 1 Kings 15:20
  Hazael [of Damascus] conquered all Israel's territory east of the Jordan: all the land of Gilead, which belongs to the Gadites, Reubenites and Manassites, from Aror beside the Arnon canyon through Gilead and on through Bashan [and thereby brought much of the Transjordanian highway under his control]. 2 Kings 10:32-33

B. GOLAN

Divisional and subdivisional lines on pp. 2/3 and pp. 14/15 delineate modern Golan, often called the 'Golan Heights.' The origin of 'Golan' and the area it originally designated is still unsure. What is known is that 'Golan in Bashan' was a city given to the Levitical clan of Gershon as a city of refuge within the tribal territory of Manasseh. The city and its surroundings was part of greater Bashan, and over time the term 'Golan' no doubt became attached to the western edge of Bashan, roughly the area defined on our maps. Greek references in Jesus’ day call this region Gaulanitis and divide it into 'Upper' and 'Lower,' reflected on our maps. The modern Syrian village of Sahm el-Jaulan may preserve the historical name 'Golan' and may be the site of the biblical city. The following marking locates this Syrian village and helps you define modern Golan.

Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map

- HL in yellow: Yarmuk canyon (Golan’s southern border)
- Black write-in: MODERN SYRIA in small caps in the blank space between Bathyrá and the elevation reading 700m/2297f and MODERN JORDAN between Beth-arbel and Abila in Lower Gilead
- Black write-in: ASH CONES in small caps (two lines) just east of the Golan-Bashan sub-divisional line between elevation readings 1158m/3799f and 650m/2132f
- (OPTIONAL) Black write-in on map on pp 14/15: find the canyon between the ‘A’ of Ashtaroth and the 435m/1427f elevation, write ALLAN along the west side of the canyon
- (OPTIONAL) Black write-in on map on pp 14/15: place a city dot half-way between 435m/1427f and the ‘D’ of the name Dium; write ‘Golan?’ near your city dot (possible site of the city of Golan at modern Sahm el-Jaulan)
Geobasics

- The Golan is a tilted basaltic plateau, dropping in elevation from Upper to Lower Golan and draining into the Huleh basin and into Lake Galilee.
- Golan’s higher elevations attract significant rainfall resulting in erosion which exposes fields of boulder (see pattern on p. 3) and in places create fertile basins or plateaus.
- Boulders in Golan’s fertile basaltic soils discouraged farming prior to modern times, but heavy stands of wild grasses surrounding the region’s small hamlets were well-suited for grazing herds such as cattle.
- In recent times industrious clans of Druze in the villages below Mt. Hermon planted apple and cherry orchards where Golan’s renowned oak forests once thrived.
- Although rugged terrain can impede travel, Golan’s routes thread their way between the drainage systems to link Damascus with Lower Galilee and Bashan with the Dan region.

Our maps distinguish Golan from Bashan by a HL line which follows a range of ash cones between the basaltic boulder-strewn areas of Golan draining into the Rift and Bashan’s more agricultural areas draining south into the Yarmuk canyon. Compare the drainage systems and rocky pattern west of this subdivisional line with the broader plain east of the line. Topography and erosion thus plays an important part in distinguishing Golan from Bashan, although their rainfall and soils are similar. Indeed, the entire area is a great basaltic flow with intermittent ash cones, including those just south and southwest of the Damascus. Note that this same volcanic covering extends somewhat south of the Yarmuk canyon and southwest across the Rift into eastern Lower Galilee (discussed later).

Interestingly, our HL line is approximately the cease fire line today between the areas in Bashan controlled by Damascus (Syria) and the Golan Heights held by Israel. To the south, ‘Lower Golan’ touches both Syria and Jordan, the modern border running near your HL line dividing Lower Gilead and Bashan. Our subdivisional lines thus reflect natural regions in both the contemporary and the ancient worlds.

The Golan descends from heights well over 915m/3000f in Upper Golan by Mount Hermon to 371m/1217f in Lower Golan on plateaus above the Yarmuk Canyon. Drainage off Lower Golan’s delightfully level basaltic plateaus exploited cracks in the volcanic crust and cut deep canyons in softer marine rocks below. Caravans and armies travelling here had to navigate the area’s sudden descents into the deep depression around Lake Galilee.

The change in elevation across the Golan accounts for its broad range of annual rainfall, some 800mm/31in in higher elevations to 500mm/19in elsewhere. Rich, basaltic soils do form, but much runoff remains atop Golan’s tilted and tough volcanic landscape. This carries soils to lower areas and leaves a covering of heavy boulders which discourages extensive agricultural activity prior to modern times. Thick stands of wild grasses cover much of the area, invading today’s sparse and deserted Syrian villages of dark, basaltic stone. Golan was not an inviting landscape, except for cattle who happily grazed amidst its foliage and small streams.

**Turn to pp. 14/15: LAKE GALILEE AND GALILEAN DEPRESSION map**

- HL in green: Golan, and the words ‘Upper’ and ‘Lower’ above and below Golan
- HL in red/pink: Julias/Bethsaida, Aphek, Hippus
- HL in yellow: Jordan river (northern name), Plain of Bethsaida, Rakkad canyon, Yarmuk canyon, Yarmuk plain
- Black write-in: BOULDER FIELDS between the words Upper and Golan; ASH CONES between Quneitra and Rafid
HL in yellow on red routes: 1) from Yenoam south of Lake Galilee HL NE past Fiq, Chaspho, elevation 650m/2132f and NE off map; 2) from Yenoam HL E past Gadara, er-Ramtha and SE off map; 3) from NW of Quneitra HL S past Rafid, Ashtaroth, er-Ramtha, elevation reading 596m/1955f and S off map

This map (pp. 14/15, without surface rock color) shows boulder fields across Golan but not on the plateau south of Hippus. Note the flow of four major streams from the Golan Heights which fill the depression of the Plain of Bethsaida with alluvia (green) and boulders. The Jordan river also emerges from the Huleh basin via a basaltic canyon and meanders across the plain and into the lake. The higher site of Julias (related to Bethsaida) commands the area.

The Yarmuk canyon system reaches far to the east and is a major obstacle to communication. Your HL routes skirt this drainage system. Near Hippus the Lower Golan route uses what is left of a small ridge between two drainage systems to reach a level plateau of rich soils before descending to the Yarmuk plain. Military advisers to Ben-hadad of Damascus saw Lower Golan’s level plateau (mishor in Hebrew) as an advantageous position from which to engage Ahab of Israel. The Lord’s prophet spoke instead of the plains (amaqim) of the Yarmuk. Ahab must have waited for Ben-hadad to make the first move, and when Ben-hadad descended the difficult descent from the higher mishor to the lower amaqim, God gave the victory to Israel.

Texts: Golan

All four times ‘Golan’ appears in the Bible it is in the phrase ‘Golan in Bashan.’ Rainfall and soils are similar in both regions, and one could consider the Golan as part of greater Bashan. Many texts used below apply to this greater Bashan and therefore also illustrate Golan’s character. ‘Golan’ was simply not used in a regional sense in the Bible.

• A significant city in Bashan, a Levitical city of refuge and of the statue of the historic Ashtaroth, a royal city of Og of Bashan—

Golan in Bashan [was one of six cities of refuge, and it] was in Manassite territory. Deuteronomy 4:43

The Levitical clan of the Gershonites received within the half-tribe of Manasseh Golan in Bashan—a city of refuge for one accused of manslaughter—and its grazing lands. Joshua 21:27
[The Levitical clan of] the Gershonites received from the half-tribe of Manasseh Golan in Bashan and Ashtaroth along with their grazing lands. 1 Chronicles 6:71

• The withering of Golan’s renowned beauty pictures the discipline of God—

[With the loss of God’s blessing] the land mourns and wastes away … Bashan and Carmel shed [their luxuriant foliage]. Isaiah 33:9
[At a time of God’s judgment] they wither, Bashan and Carmel, and flowing Lebanon withers. Nahum 1:4

• A territory with sufficient rainfall to have famed grazing lands and well-fed cattle—

[God satisfied Israel with] curds from the herd, milk from the flock, the fat of lambs and rams from Bashan, goats and the finest wheat. Deuteronomy 32:14

[In describing his antagonists the suffering psalmist chants,] ‘Many bulls surround me, strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.’ Psalm 22:12

[Amos taunts the indulged women of Samaria.] ‘You cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria … who say to your husbands, “Bring us something to drink!”’ Amos 4:1

[Jeremiah depicts restoration as flocks returned to lush pastures.] ‘I will restore Israel to his own pasture, and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan.’ Jeremiah 50:19

[ Ezekiel the priest uses abundant sacrifices as an illustration:] rams, lambs, goats and bulls, the fattened animals of Bashan, all of them. Ezekiel 39:18

• A place that supported celebrated oak forests—

[In depicting pride, Isaiah recalls] all the cedars of Lebanon, high and haughty, all the oaks of Bashan. Isaiah 2:13
[Tyre’s shipbuilders used the best of woods.] Of the oaks of Bashan they made your oars. Ezekiel 27:6
[Loss of the forests depicts judgment.] Wail, oaks of Bashan! The dense forest perishes! Zechariah 11:2
C. Bashan

Bashan proper is a broad basalt-covered depression surrounded by the Damascus plateau, the Golan Heights, uplifted Gilead and the summits of Jebel Druze (p. 3). Northern rainfall has transformed Bashan’s basalt into plains of fertile soil, interrupted by two major volcanic outflows, the occasional ash cone and the eastern foothills of Jebel Druze. Rich soils, adequate rainfall and abundant sun creates an ideal agricultural setting, far exceeding any other region in the land. Bashan is both a grain basket and a grazing paradise, an area of intense settlement from the days of the Bible through Roman times. One evening, at one of Bashan’s important intersections in mid-summer of 1891, the historical-geographer G.A. Smith described its fields, harvests and threshing floors, and then made a comment that accents both Bashan’s boundless productivity, far beyond subsistence farming, and its connections, both N to Damascus and W to Acco/Acre on the Mediterranean.

The winnowed grain is packed in bags and carried on camels to the markets of Damascus and Acre. The long lines of these ‘grain-boats’ sail down the summer roads; one evening at Ghabaghah [on p. 3], our first station out of Damascus, we counted 187 pass our tent. (*The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* [Jerusalem: Ariel, 1966; reprint] p. 409; hereafter cited as Smith, HGHL)

Our marking notes additional surrounding features, obstacles of rough basaltic outflows and commanding positions around and within this depression where settlements, agriculture, grazing lands and highways unite to create the inviting region of Bashan.

**Geobasics**

- Bashan’s broad basin covered by a hard basaltic crust makes up much of the Stable East.
- Generous annual rainfall in much of Bashan yields fertile basaltic soil suitable for both farming and grazing, creating an alluring expanse for both small and large settlements.
- Major highways in the land intersect within Bashan’s relatively flat, easy-to-cross basin making this region a communication conduit for both traders and invaders.
- Bashan’s roads offer Damascus convenient invasion routes to Gilead and to Galilee.
- When Arabian caravans reach Bashan they have two options: continue N via Damascus or make their way around the Yarmuk canyon to the Mediterranean via the Dan region.
- Bashan’s network of trade routes could easily fall prey to marauders from more desolate areas to the E or could entice invaders from the N, the S or the W.
- Bashan’s abounding agricultural potential, built-in settlement attraction, impressive communication network and coveted intersections encouraged the formation of local political entities when those who controlled the area could guarantee adequate security.
Clearly Bashan is an ideal area to settle. Thus we should not be surprised that we read of an early battle near Edrei, principal city of Og’s kingdom of sixty settlements across Bashan, from Mount Hermon to Ashtaroth, Edrei and Salecah. The Israelite victory here opened fertile Bashan to Israelite settlement, and numerous biblical texts underscore the Israelite movement into the same area, from Salecah to Kenath to Ashtaroth, sixty settlements given by Moses to Jair who called the region ‘the dwellings of Jair.’ Thus it is not surprising that Jephthah the judge came from the area E of Edrei, ‘the land of Tob.’

There were others, however, who coveted this fertile region. When Arameans from north of Damascus moved south into Bashan they not only threatened Israelites living there but were also in a position to overrun the country’s two main highways to the S and SW. King David quickly took action and defeated the northern Aramean coalition near Helam (NE of Edrei). His victory in Bashan secured this northern Israelite region, isolated large Canaanite cities in Galilee and made him master of developing and lucrative trade routes between Arabia and the ports at Tyre and Sidon on the Mediterranean. David’s tacit supremacy over Damascus, whose leadership had not yet consolidated, meant that David’s commercial interests extended to important routes in the Beqaa valley and even toward Tadmor/Palmyra and the middle Euphrates. His control of the fertile fields of Bashan with its Israelite settlements and its trade routes had extraordinary implications for the future of his kingdom and that of his son Solomon as they bartered with grain for commercial links to Tyre and Sidon. Obviously, it set the scene for later trade wars between northern Israel and a unified Aram-Damascus.

Lush Bashan continued to be densely settled, well-travelled and fiercely contested through later periods as reflected in the Greek, Maccabean/Hasmonean and Roman periods as strong central governments saw to it that marauding bands from the E were restrained. As control passed elsewhere during the later Islamic periods, the region’s insecurity increased until Bashan became a back-water under centuries of Turkish rule. In the late nineteenth century, speaking about the basalt building blocks of Bashan, Smith could say:

Under the strong sun, the basalt takes a sullen sheen like polished ebony; the low and level architecture is unrelieved even by threads of mortar, for the blocks were cut so fine, and lie so heavy on each other, that no cement was needed ... the cities, emptied of their inhabitants more than a thousand years ago, still stood tenantless. An awful silence filled the sable ruins. (Smith, HGHL, p. 410)

Turn to pp. 10/11: GALILEE, GOLAN, JEZREEL AND LOWER GILEAD map

- HL in green: Golan along with Upper and Lower, Bashan, Waarah flow, Leja flow ‘The Refuge,’ Trachonitis
- HL in yellow the following features: Mount Hermon, Rakkad canyon, Yarmuk canyon, Yarmuk plain
- HL in red/pink these sites: Panias/Caesarea-philippi, Bathysra, Raphon, Bosor, Karnain, Ashtaroth, Chaspho, Helam, Edrei, Tob, Bezer, Salecah
- HL in yellow on red routes: 1) from top of map by the ‘G’ in ‘Galilee’ (map title) S via Bathysra, er-Ramtha, Gerasa and off map via eastern leg (Damascus claims Bashan and Gilead); 2) from Ghabaqhib to Bethsaida, and Ghabaqhib to Yarmuk plain via Chapho (Damascus reaches Galilee); 3) from SW of Hattita (bottom of map) N via Edrei, Ashtaroth, Rafid and on to Dan by Panias; 4) from Hattita N via Tob, Helam, Sanameine and on to Ghabaqhib (caravans determine a destination); 5) from the SE corner of the map (by © symbol) NW via Bezer by Raphon to Quneitra
- Black write-in and HL in green: ARABIA at the very bottom, SE part of the map, just left of the BB logo; HAURAN between Bezer and Gomoha
Your marking on this map (p. 11) clearly reveals Bashan’s road system. Note the flow in various directions as a network of connections link N with S and E with W. This makes Bashan a communication conduit second to none in the Land Between.

1. From the top of the map (from Damascus) S to Gilead and SE to Arabia
2. From the top of the map SW to Lake Galilee and Lower Galilee beyond
3. From Arabia (SE part of the map and beyond) to the Panias/Dan area

Variations in rainfall impact settlement and travel in this communication conduit. The Damascus plateau, as we have seen, lies within the rain shadow of the Lebanese range. These ranges, however, dramatically drop to lower elevations in Upper Galilee, Lower Galilee and the Jezeel valley. Storms systems therefore easily pass E across the Rift and reach Bashan’s basaltic basin and the slopes Jebel Druze (note the rainfall line on pp. 12/13).

To the SW and S of Jebel Druze rainfall quickly decreases behind uplifted Gilead. Arid plains soon replace Bashan’s fertile plains, and desert forts replace agricultural settlements. Three forts from a later period appear in the SW corner of p. 11 (sites without HL). This transitional basin is the area of ‘Hauran,’ a term used by the prophet Ezekiel, perhaps coming from the root ‘hole’ or ‘hollow.’ The Jewish historian Josephus Flavius in the days of Jesus clearly places ‘Auranitis’ (Greek form of Hauran) where you see it on p. 11.

The combination of less rain, decreasing settlement and check points for entry from Arabia sets the scene for Hauran’s history. Settlers such as the Israelites farmed in Salecah but forts to the south guarded Bashan from incursions by Arabians. This ever-present threat of invasion could be held off as long as a strong central government firmly guarded Bashan’s southern flank of Hauran. When for any reason this frontier was compromised, Bashan was easy prey for marauders or organized desert militia such as the Nabateans or the armies of Islam.

Bashan was thus a strategic playing board. Cities such as Damascus, Edrei or Raphon (one of the cities of the Decapolis in Roman times) could flourish here. Numerous agricultural settlements busily provided food for people far beyond Bashan while nearby brigands were always ready to enter and pillage. Organized invaders from Arabia covetously looked N to settled areas and lucrative trade routes.

The playing board became very busy in Greco-Roman times as Greek (known also as Hellenistic) cities grew; the Seleucid empire declined although Roman control was not yet established; and Nabateans from Arabia moved north. Greek cities attacked Jews in Bashan and Gilead, but the Maccabean militia from Jerusalem came to the rescue in a lightning campaign. Several sites on our map figure prominently in this resuce operation: Bozrah (Bezer), Bosor, Alema (Helam), Chaspho, Carnaim (Karnaim) and Raphon. Later king Herod wisely settled a strong Babylonian Jewish militia at Bathrya in the heart of Bashan, and for centuries Bathrya remained a vibrant Jewish center. All of this background provides the interesting background to Luke’s detailed description of the area and Jesus’ sparcely documented travels in this region.

Luke 3:1 tells us that king Herod’s son, Philip the Tetrarch administered the area of Ituraea (Mt. Hermon region) and Trachonitis, while Josephus mentions the additional territories of Batanaea (Bashan), Gaulanitis and Auranitis. These collective regions represent a sweep of rule from Mount Hermon in the N to the Yarmuk in the S, and E across Bashan to Jebel Druze. Jesus passed through this same area on at least two occasions: first, in His circuitous journey to Tyre and Sidon, Philip’s territory and the Decapolis before returning to Galilee; and second, in a journey from Bethsaida into the region of Caesarea-philippi, about which the Gospel of Mark recalls that He went into ‘the villages [under the jurisdiction] of Caesarea-philippi.’ He may well have ministered in Bashan’s Jewish cities on this these journeys.
In Late Roman and Byzantine times fine cities emerged across Bashan. In fact, Philippopolis on the SE corner of the rough Leja flow was the birthplace of a Roman emperor who established the city in +272. The black basalt remains of some of these cities still stand and encourage modern Syrians to exploit this area as an inviting tourist attraction. Indeed, Bashan and its southern flank of Hauran (a term used today by Syrians for the entire region of Bashan) was for centuries the end of the Roman empire and therefore developed in those days far beyond any other period in history. Rome firmly held the area until the empire waned under Byzantine rule. Then, after the battle of Pehel (Fahil) Jan 23, +635, Islamic forces easily flooded north and overran the cities of Bashan and the key site of Damascus.

Texts: Bashan

Texts that discuss the physical geobasics of Bashan—its beauty, grazing lands, fattened livestock and oak forests—already appear on p. 11 of the Guide under the subdivision of Golan. Those texts seem particularly relevant to Golan, that rugged, well-watered, western edge of what we call ‘greater Bashan.’ The texts below speak about the political geobasics of Bashan proper, its numerous cities, the size of Og’s kingdom and Israel’s settlement issues. These present the plain as a well-watered agricultural area with heavier settlement and keen interest in passing trade. Bashan’s greater political context made control of this region well-worth a war.

• Bashan’s agriculture and commerce were sufficient to support an acclaimed sixty cities—

At that time we captured all the cities [of Og, king of Bashan] … we took everyone of the sixty cities in the region of Argob, Og’s kingdom in Bashan. Deuteronomy 3:4

[The descendants of Makir, son of Manasseh received] all of Bashan, the entire kingdom of Og king of Bashan [which became] all the Havvoth Yair [the dwellings of Jair] that are in Bashan, sixty towns [including] Ashtaroth and Edrei, the royal cities of Og in Bashan. Joshua 13:30

[Solomon divided his realm into districts, and] Ben-Geber in Ramoth Gilead [in Lower Gilead governed] Havvoth Yair [the dwellings of Jair]—the son of Manasseh—which were in Gilead and the district of Argob, which was in Bashan, with its sixty large walled cities with bronze gate bars. 1 Kings 4:13

• Bashan’s natural political unit is a large swath that extends from Mount Hermon in the NW to Jebel Druze in the SE—

The boundaries [of the kingdom] of Og, king of Bashan … who dwelt in Ashtaroth and Edrei [included] Mount Hermon [in the N], Salech [in the E on the side of Jebel Druze], all of Bashan to the border of Geshur and Maacah [on the W], and half of Gilead to the border of Sihon king of Heshbon [to the S]. Joshua 12:4-5

The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, [Moses] gave to the half tribe of Manasseh…. Jair, a son of Manasseh, took the region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and he named the cities after himself, so to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Yair [the dwellings of Jair]. Deuteronomy 3:13-14

[During Jesus’ lifetime, Philip received] Batanea (Bashan), Trachonitis [rugged, eastern Bashan] and Auranitis [W of Jebel Druze or Hauran], Philip was tetrarch of the region [from] Ituraea [around Mount Hermon to] Trachonitis [N of Jebel Druze on the eastern edge of Bashan]. Philip, Herod’s brother, died … [he had reigned from] Trachonitis [in the E to] Gaulanitis [in the W], as well as over the tribe called the Bataneans [who inhabited Bashan]. Ant 17:319/xiv.4 (LCL); Luke 3:1; Ant 18:106/iv.6 (LCL)

• Bashan’s strategic location and abundant agriculture is worth a fight—

[In the days of Abraham the first invasion recorded in the Bible occurred in Bashan for] in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and subdued the Rephaim in [the region of] Ashteroth-karnaim [adjacent cities along the area’s main highway]. Genesis 14:5

[After defeating Sihon of Heshbon, Israel turned and went up along the road toward Bashan [which receives all traffic moving N in Transjordan and directs it either N to Damascus or NW to the coast], and Og king of Bashan and his whole army marched out to meet them in battle at Edrei. Numbers 21:33

[When David learned that the Arameans had mustered at Helam, he] gathered all Israel, crossed the Jordan and came to Helam [in Bashan, Manassite territory since the time of Moses and strategic to controlling northern trade]. 2 Samuel 10:16-17

[During the advances of Jeroboam II, Israel boasted,] ‘Haven’t we, by our own might, taken Karnaim,’ [a bold step toward controlling Bashan and its network of trade routes routes]. Amos 6:13
Various drives to settle Bashan argue that it’s location and security are a high priority—

The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, [Moses] gave to the half tribe of Manasseh.... Jair, a son of Manasseh, took the region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and he named the cities after himself, so to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Yair [the dwellings of Jair]. Deuteronomy 3:13-14

[The descendants of Makir, son of Manasseh received] all of Bashan, the entire kingdom of Og king of Bashan [which became] all the Havvoth Yair [the dwellings of Jair] that are in Bashan, sixty towns [including] Ashtaroth and Edrei, the royal cities of Og in Bashan. Joshua 13:30

Herod [the Great], wishing to be safe from attack by the Trachonites, decided to build between them and the Jews ... a city [both to protect his own territory and to launch military assaults on the Trachonites] and when he learned that a Jew from Babylonia had crossed the Euphrates with five hundred horsemen ... he sent for this man with his band of followers, promising to give him land in the toparchy of Batanaea [Bashan], which bordered on Trachonitis, for he wished to make a buffer-zone out of such a settlement, and he promised that this land should be free of taxes and that they should be exempt from all the customary forms of tribute ... the Babylonian [Jew] went there to take possession of the land and built on it fortresses and a village, to which he gave the name Bathyra. This man was a shield to both the inhabitants exposed to the Trachonites and to the Jews who came from Babylonia to sacrifice in Jerusalem [as they passed from the middle Euphrates, through Damascus and across Bashan on their way to Jerusalem]; these he kept from being harmed by the brigandage of the Trachonites. Ant 17:23-28/ii.1-2 (LCL)

A region renowned for beauty, grazing lands, fattened livestock and oak forests—

See verses under Golan, p. 11 of this Guide.

D. Jebel Druze

Rugged slopes around an impressive volcanic complex of 118 basaltic cones—the highest of which rises to over 1800m/5900f—stands above eastern Bashan. Together this basaltic mass is known today as ‘Jebel (Mt.) Druze/Jabal ad-Duruz,’ a name taken from the religious-ethnic community of the Druze who have inhabited the region in modern times. Only the western slopes of Jebel Druze appear on p. 3. These slopes gather the rains and snow which fall on Jebel Druze and direct them W in streams which also carry rich alluvia. Thus the area spreading out to the W from Jebel Druze hosts important sites, settled from earliest times through the coming of the Israelites to the centuries of Late Roman and Byzantine rule.

Turn to pp. 2/3: Northern Arena map

HL in red/pink: Canatha (easternmost city of the Decapolis; Greek for ‘Kenath’ of early Egyptian inscriptions and Num 32:42, 1 Chron 2:23); Dionysias Soada (the Nabatean ‘Soada’ became Greek ‘Dionysias’ in Roman times); Bostra (Greek for earlier Egyptian ‘Bezer’; a Nabatean city which became a key Roman administrative center on the border with Arabia)

Geobasics

- A volcanic complex of irregular, rugged peaks now called ‘Jebel Druze’ formed on the E edge of Bashan around persistent volcanic vents as new spots continued to expel lava.
- The complex of lava flows and volcanic cones of Jebel Druze rises in some places well over 1525m/5000f, high enough to draw precipitation from passing western storms.
- Rain and snow on Jebel Druze erode its volcanic rock into rich basaltic soils that fill valleys within its western slopes and reach the plains of Hauran/Bashan below.
- The combination of soils and precipitation on slopes and plains to the W of Jebel Druze support pastures, forests and fields of grain, vegetables and fruit orchards.
- Early inscriptions, abundant references in the Bible and impressive remains from Greco-Roman times clearly reveal a pattern of settled communities near Jebel Druze, the eastern frontier of Bashan. Beyond lies vast areas of basaltic wasteland and arid desert.
- Protecting cities and caravan traffic in Bashan from marauders hiding in the volcanic complex of Jebel Druze and in the Leja flow, ‘The Refuge’ to the N was imperative.
Without the heights of Jebel Druze the setting of the surrounding area would have been quite different. This basaltic complex is also called ‘Mt. Bashan’ or ‘Mt. Hauran,’ and its various heights have their own local names. On clear days the feature is not only visible in Bashan but also from summits in Galilee, Golan, Gilead and even in the Central Hill Country. The Mishnah testifies to the mountain’s visibility in its statement that Hauran was part of the signal system between Jerusalem and Babylon to proclaim the new moon:

Where did these signal fires begin? From the Mount of Anointing [Mount of Olives] to Sartaba [see map, pp. 16/17], from Sartaba to Agrippina [see map, pp. 10/11], from Agrippina to Hauran [Jebel Druze on map, pp. 10/11], from Hauran to Beth Baltin; they did not move from there but waved [the burning torches] back and forth, up and down, until they saw all the exile before them like a blazing fire. (m.Rosh haShanah 2:4)

These heights gather winter storms of abundant rain and snow which erode the region’s black rock and allow runoff to carry rich basaltic soil down western slopes out on to broad plains. Lush fields and broad grazing areas make this area famous for farms and well-fed cattle. To the E of Jebel Druze, however, beyond the limits of this map, one enters a different world. Rain, soil and settlements dwindle quickly as an arid maze of volcanic outflows and drifting sand appears. This secluded area provided ample hideouts from which marauders could pillage settled areas to the W. Only a strong central authority could deal with this constant threat.

Sites on this map along the western slopes of Jebel Druze—Kenath/Canatha, Bezer/Bostra and Salecah—were significant throughout various periods. Indeed, Kenath and Bezer appear in inscriptions in both the Middle and Late Kingdoms of Egypt. Evidence in the form of Bronze Age dolmens may argue that these sites existed earlier as part of pre-historic occupation across Golan, Bashan and the western slopes of Jebel Druze.

In Israelite times Salecah on the southern slopes of Mt. Bashan served as shorthand for the eastern frontier: Og’s kingdom extended ‘as far as Salecah’; Moses assigned the eastern tribes the territory of Bashan ‘as far as Salecah’; and the Gadites settled ‘as far as Salecah.’ Kenath on the northern slopes of Mt. Bashan designated much the same as Salecah. Nobah of Manasseh pushed farther east than his fellow tribesman Yair; he reached Kenath on the frontier and captured it. Later, Geshur and Aram (Damascus) seized these routes as far east as Kenath. The entire area from Salecah to Kenath invited settlement and conquest.

To the east, beyond the frontier line of Mt. Bashan, ‘O mighty mount ... where peaks abound,’ the land became wild, untamed and outside the pale of settled civilization. Should God’s enemies seek refuge on the frontier, ‘from Bashan,’ He says, ‘I will turn them back.’ Personified Jerusalem should go to distant heights on the borders of the land—Lebanon, Bashan and the Abarim—to cry out to neighboring peoples who have abandoned her. In Hebrew thought, Mt. Bashan was the end of the land.

With increased trade from Arabia, the sites of Salecah, Bezer and Kenath on the western slopes of Mt. Bashan were important positions to monitor passing caravans and protect them from desert raiders. Note the HL routes coming from the SW and moving N and NW across Hauran and Bashan. The only serious obstacles NW of Jebel Druze were the Leja and Waarah volcanic outflows and ash cones by Golan and to the south of Damascus.
The intriguing saga in Hauran (Greek ‘Auranitis’ in southern Bashan) during the century prior to Jesus’ birth tells us much about this region. Nabateans, who were advancing N via Transjordan, were bitterly opposed by the Jewish Hasmonean state. Like Israelites of earlier eras both nations knew the necessity of controlling this fertile area’s trade routes. Josephus records these tensions in Auranitis and across the entire region (c. -96 and c. -79).

Auranitis, gateway to Bashan, was a stepping stone for the Nabateans, and in -85 they entered Damascus. Meanwhile, the Hasmoneans desperately campaigned in western Bashan and the prosperous but threatened Greek cities of the Decapolis felt helpless. Their patron, the former Seleucid kingdom to the north, had been weakened by Roman advances, but Rome had not yet taken full control of the East. The region was in chaos, and Salecah, Bezer/Bostra, Dionysias Soada and Kenath/Canatha were part of this saga. Some of these sites still feature Nabatean remains and temples where Nabatean gods were once worshiped.

What followed changed history. Armenia briefly entered the fray, but then Roman legions under Pompey swept across the East, annexing the former Seleucid kingdom, dissolving the Hasmonean state, restoring the status of Greek cities (including a group in this area known as the ‘Decapolis) and stemming the tide of Nabatean advances (-65 to -64).

The saga continues when Caesar Augustus granted king Herod control of Auranitis and surrounding territories (-30 to -20). Again, Josephus records bountiful intrigue as Herod attempted to check the Nabateans and bring security to trade routes entering this coveted region from Arabia via Auranitis below Jebel Druze. Under the watchful and sometimes critical eye of Rome, Herod had to contend with the designs of Damascus (N), the Decapolis (W), the Nabateans (S) as well as the brigands of Trachonitis (E). During this period Canatha, the easternmost Decapolis city, served the same purpose as its forerunner, Kenath. Like Salecah in the south it was a check on the eastern frontier.

The steady growth of Greco-Roman cities in this commercial conduit between Arabia and the Roman East culminated in the Late Roman period. Bostra—the Greek name for the important ancient city of Bezer mentioned in early Egyptian periods—clearly demonstrates the importance of this territory at the SW foot of Jebel Druze. For centuries the site held the key to the region of Hauran/Auranitis, gateway to and from the commercial riches of Arabia. Trajan, the Roman emperor born in the days of the apostles, ruled Rome from +98 to +117 in the decades after the fall of Jerusalem and in +106 finally brought the Nabateans under firm Roman control. Trajan recognized the significance of Bostra and Auranitis and made Nabatean Bostra the capital of the Roman province of ‘Arabia.’ He built what is known as ‘Trajan’s New Road,’ a major Roman artery which began at Bostra and reached south along the border of arid Arabia to Aila (Aqaba) on the Red sea. With its system of forts this impressive route (parts still visible today) defined the ‘Limes Romanus,’ the eastern border of the Roman empire. In 1980 the magnificent ruins of Bostra became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Later, a mounted Roman garrison by Salecah guarded the frontier.

**Texts: Jebel Druze/Mt. Bashan**

Texts about the physical aspects of Mt. Bashan—its beauty, grazing lands, fattened livestock and oak forests—appear on p. 11 of the Guide under Golan. These texts are also relevant to Bashan’s well-watered, western slopes of Mt. Bashan. The name ‘Bashan’ may sometimes apply specifically to this high eastern frontier.

- Mt. Bashan is a complex of heights that are rugged, well-watered and fertile in crops, pastures and forests, a place of beauty—which should be the envy of all.

**Mt. Bashan [Jebel Druze] is like a divine mount—Mt. Bashan where peaks abound! Why do you, with such heights and summits, keep an envious eye upon ‘the Mount’ that God inhabits with delight [i.e., humble Mt. Zion]; yea, where God dwells forever? Psalm 68:15-16**
Mt. Bashan is a high, habitable region on edge of the untamed desert, a distant place on the frontier—

[Should God’s enemies seek distant places to flee and hide,] the Lord says, ‘From Bashan [that distant height on the edge of the uninhabited desert] I will turn them back; I will turn them back from the depths of the sea’ [a poetic way/device of implying ‘from everywhere’: from the distant, eastern heights of Mt. Bashan to the distant, western depths of the sea]. Psalm 68:22

As Jerusalem finds itself abandoned and alone in its struggle with Babylon, the prophet taunts the city suggesting that it stand on distant heights and call for its unfaithful neighbors, ‘Go up on the Lebanon range and cry out [to Tyre and Sidon], and on Bashan send out your voice [to Damascus or Edom], and cry out from the Abaram [to Ammon, Moab and Edom], but all your alliances are broken. Jeremiah 22:20

Various peoples contended for settlement on the fertile slopes of Mt. Bashan, which was essential to controlling and protecting trade routes from Arabia—

[After defeating Og of Bashan, Israel seized control as far as Mt. Bashan and took] all Gilead [on both sides of the Jabok canyon from the Medeba plateau to the Yarmuk canyon], and all Bashan as far as [east] as Sela[c].

[opt. Look at the distribution of basalt, eocene and senonian in Lower Gilead (pp. 2/3; 12/13) and note their ‘characteristics’ on the chart inside of the back cover.

E. LOWER GILEAD

‘Lower’ Gilead designates the broad, northern plain in Gilead where elevations drop from the hill country in adjacent Upper Gilead. This plain is part of Lake Galilee’s geological depression which extends into Lower Galilee, Lower Golan, Lower Gilead and the Jezreel valley. Compare these regions with their higher (‘upper’) counterparts: Upper Galilee, Upper Golan, Upper Gilead, Samaria and Carmel range (pp. 2/3; 10/11). Note the contrast between volcanic-covered Bashan (red) and chalky Lower Gilead (yellow and brown). Lack of a hard crust in Lower Gilead allows surface erosion to cut the myriad of smaller canyons seen on these maps.
Geobasics

- Lower Gilead is a plain of lower elevations and rolling hills descending N toward the Yarmuk and W toward the Rift, an area distinct from Upper Gilead’s heights to the S.

- Softer marine rocks cover most of Lower Gilead, except in places covered by Bashan’s volcanic outflow before the Yarmuk canyon formed, such as the plain by Gadara.

- Lower Gilead’s softer limestones and chalks produce poorer soils which generally do not support the type of agriculture and settlement found on Bashan’s adjacent basaltic soils.

- Slopes across western Lower Gilead’s network of canyons expose weaker chalky rock, but remaining plains, such as those around Abila and Ephron, support farming while a broad basaltic crust by Gadara preserves heights on a fertile plain overlooking the Rift.

- Erosion in the western half of Lower Gilead results in disruptive canyons which restrict most travel to E-W ridge-travel and crossings between various drainage systems.

- The full force of erosion has not reached the eastern plain of Lower Gilead between Beth-arbel and Ramoth-gilead, a communication conduit similar to adjacent Bashan.

- The major obstacle of the Yarmuk canyon defines the path of highways in the area and gives great potential to the site of Ramoth-gilead as an administrative center for roads linking Arabia, Damascus and Mediterranean ports.

For the most part the basaltic outflow of Bashan and Jebel Druze did not reach Lower Gilead. Remnants of what must have been a larger basaltic crust in this area appear on p. 3 (red) on the plateau W of Gadara and in two small areas E and SE of Abila. The absence of a basaltic crust means that Lower Gilead mostly consists of soft limestones (yellow) or chalks (darker brown). You can note characteristics of these rock types on the chart inside the back cover. Lower Gilead’s less fertile soils no doubt account for its less dense pattern of settlement.

In eastern Lower Gilead fields quickly disappear south of Bashan and rainfall diminishes behind uplifted Upper Gilead. Israel’s early contact with the N was at a battle in the vicinity of Edrei against ‘Og the king of Bashan,’ who also controlled Ashtaroth. This was key to Israelite expansion to Salecah and to Kenath on the slopes of Jebel Druze. A stream of passages in the Bible reflects the long-term Israelite settlement in this area, from eastern Lower Gilead across southern Bashan, focusing on Bashan’s fertile fields rather than the less productive plains of Lower Gilead. Such settlement would have been farther from the watchful eye of Egypt and its strongholds, such as Beth-shan in western Canaan.

Later, in the period of the Israelite monarchy, control of E-W commerce grew and eastern Lower Gilead’s plains with their trade routes took on added significance. In this regard the site of Ramoth-gilead in the midst of this broad eastern plain is strategically located amidst routes from every direction. Its modest mound, however, is only high enough to survey surrounding trade routes. Today sheepfolds cover the site but construction is changing the landscape from here to Beth-arbel (bustling Irbid with its nearby modern university). These are the same broad plains where Israel and Damascus met in battle in the days of Elijah and Elisha, an area of limited agricultural potential but of great strategic importance.

In western Lower Gilead the landscape changes N and W of Beth-arbel. Eroded canyons drain into the Rift. The large ‘Arab’ (not named on this map) creates a sizable drainage system between Beth-arbel and Gadara. This divides western Lower Gilead into three basic regions.

1. Small but more fertile plains in the NE around the city of Abila support orchards, and surrounding canyons drain N into the Yarmuk. A nearby perennial spring and natural defenses make Abila an ideal site. Recent excavations reveal a thriving community and Greco-Roman city with evidence of much earlier occupation.
2. Gadara in the NW, another Greco-Roman city, lies along a ridge route linking eastern Lower Gilead to the Yarmuk plain. Its fertile basaltic plain, marvelous view and hot springs in the Yarmuk canyon make this an ideal setting for a prosperous, influential city.

3. Other ridge routes above canyons in the area of Ephron link Lower Gilead's eastern plains with the Yarmuk plain in the Rift. Further to the SW as the Rift drops in elevation and scarps in the area of Pehel/Pella begin to rise higher into Upper Gilead, canyons draining into the Rift grow deeper. This accentuates the need for ridge travel, and Pehel, with a spring-fed stream and a small fertile plain, stood beside an important route descending from Upper Gilead (see on p. 17). The site experienced early and continuous settlement, culminating in the beautiful Greco-Roman city of Pella, perhaps named for the birthplace of Alexander the Great in Macedonia.

Turn to pp. 14/15: LAKE GALILEE AND THE GALILEAN DEPRESSION map

- HL in green: Bashan, Lower Gilead, Upper Gilead
- HL in red/pink: Ramoth-gilead, Beth-arbel, Abila, Gadara, Ephron and Pehel/Pella
- Black write-in: ‘ARAB CANYON’ (all caps) between the names Gadara and Lower Gilead
- HL in yellow on red routes: 1) from Gadara to Beth-arbel (already partially HL) and SE off the map; 2) from Ramoth-gilead to Beth-shan (W of the Rift) via Beth-arbel and Ephron; 3) from Beth-shean to Jabesh-gilead via Pehel/Pella and SE off the map

This map (p. 15) allows you to step into the region of Lower Gilead and explore its sites and routes. Note that the plains of eastern Lower Gilead (between Beth-arbel to Ramoth-gilead) are quite distinct from the eroded canyon systems to the N and W of Beth-arbel. Find the road between Beth-arbel and Gadara, and note how it follows the ridge dividing drainage N into the Yarmuk from canyons descending into the Arab system and then W to the Rift. For the most part other routes W of Beth-arbel also follow ridges above canyon systems.

The three impressive Greco-Roman cities discussed above (Abila, Gadara and Pella) form an arc around the northern and western edge of Lower Gilead and underscore the commercial importance of this area, a fact confirmed by recent excavations at Tell Ziraa (SW of Gadara but not named). Finds here reveal a continuous record of settlement along routes linking Beth-arbel and the Yarmuk plain. The influence of these Greek cities grew in the centuries prior to Jesus’ birth, and historical references to them became more numerous as Greeks, Hasmoneans and Herodians fought to control trade routes adjacent to these cities. One story in the period of Maccabees (-163) speaks about the ridge on which Ephron is located. In -64 under Pompey and his Roman army these Greek centers regained their independence and became part of the Decapolis, a league that oversaw trade routes from Lower Gilead to Bashan in Jesus’ day.

Turn to pp. 10/11: GALILEE, GOLAN, JEZREEL AND LOWER GILEAD map

- HL in green: Lower Gilead, Upper Gilead
- HL in red/pink: Ramoth-gilead, Beth-arbel, Abila, Gadara, Ephron, Pella
- HL in yellow: Yarmuk plain (if not already HL) and the following elevations—
  Four elevations from the area of Ramoth-gilead to near Beth-shean: 596m/1955f and 576m/1889f (similar readings in the E); 369m/1210f (lower here in the W); -237m/-777f (a sharp descent into the Rift)
  Three elevations in Upper Gilead beginning at Agrippina and moving E: 1023m/3355f, 1247m/4091f, 1025m/3363f (compare these heights with the readings in Lower Gilead)
- HL in yellow the same routes in Lower and Upper Gilead as p. 15, to bottom of map
We step back on this map (pp. 10/11) to see how Lower Gilead fits into the Northern Arena. First, however, again note the eastern plain between Beth-arbel and Ramoth-gilead, a repository of poorer soils (large slate-colored area) but relatively free of deeply eroded canyons. Here routes moves freely through major intersections in the northern trade corridor, to and from Arabia, Bashan and via western Lower Gilead to the Yarmuk plain and to Mediterranean ports. The strategic value of the plains around Ramoth-gilead explains fierce battles here between Damascus and Israel. King Ahab’s rhetorical question, ‘Don’t you know that Ramoth-gilead is ours?’ echoed earlier Israelite settlement in and beyond this area. These trade wars continued after Ahab’s death, but a lightning campaign by the Assyrian, Shalmaneser III through this area (recalled by the prophet Hosea) left Beth-arbel of Gilead destroyed. The subsequent bloody revolt of Jehu (which began as he commanded Israel’s forces at Ramoth-gilead) ultimately gave Damascus, ruled by the ruthless Hazael, control of the entire region and much of the Land Between. When Israel later recovered they boasted of having taken Karnaim in Bashan, due north of Ramoth-gilead. Biblical events during this period reveal that geobasics in eastern Lower Gilead made it highly coveted territory, potentially alive with conflict.

Perhaps one of the most important perspectives this map (pp. 10/11) shows us is the serious obstacle created by the extensive Yarmuk drainage system, its deeply eroded canyons reaching far to the NE and to the E. Its formation is part of what we call the ‘Galilean depression’ surrounding Lake Galilee. The Yarmuk (sometimes spelled ‘Jarmuk’) gathers drainage descending through the plains of Bashan and Lower Gilead, as well as soils which ultimately are deposited on the Yarmuk plain south of Lake Galilee. Indeed, it is this plain that creates a natural dam south of Lake Galilee and keeps the Jordan river to the W side of the Rift. The obstacle of the Yarmuk canyon is a no-travel zone inside the triangle of routes that surround it, a zone which also stands out clearly on the enlarged map of the area (p. 15).

Finally, the map on pp. 10/11 shows us how Lower Gilead fits into the larger Northern Arena: it falls between the obstacles of Upper Gilead and the Yarmuk with connections around Ramoth-gilead to Arabia, Bashan and destinations beyond. At the same time, ridge routes in western Lower Gilead lead W to the Yarmuk plain and the key site of Beth-Shan/Scythopolis (the only Decapolis city W of the Jordan). Upcoming studies connect these routes to Galilee’s highways N and S of Lake Galilee and to ports on the Mediterranean. We shall see that Lower Gilead functioned much the same from earliest times though the days of the Decapolis down to the present day as modern Syria/Damascus, Jordan and Israel trace their frontiers along these same natural lines provided by the obstacle of the Yarmuk canyon and its tributaries.

Texts on Gilead abound in the Bible, but few designate specifically Lower Gilead. As the early Israelites explored Transjordan the tribes of Reuben and Gad saw the land of Jazer and the southern hill country of Upper Gilead and said, ‘Look, the area is a place for [our] herds!’ Indeed, fertile terra rosa soils and abundant rainfall make this a perfect grazing and agricultural region (west of ‘Ammon’ on p. 5, today covered with modern buildings of greater Amman, Jordan). Similarly, the fertile basaltic soils of northern Bashan must have attracted settlers from the tribes of Manasseh and Gad, as the Bible emphasizes (see related texts for Bashan on p. 16 and for Jebel Druze on p. 19).

In the case of Lower Gilead, however, poorer parent rock and less fertile soils may have discouraged early Israelite settlement and explain the absence of texts specifically relating to this part of Gilead. Current and future excavations may well yield additional evidence. As nations emerged, Lower Gilead also emerged as a key commercial and tactical region, a stepping stone to reach destinations far beyond its confines. One can intuit this almost immediately by standing at Ramoth-gilead and looking around at the broad, open plain...
with its lackluster grain fields. Yet, when lifting the eyes to scan the horizon, modern Syria lies just to the N, Iraq to the E and Arabia to the SE. Back to the SW the rounded heights of Upper Gilead stand out, that backbone of Transjordan that lent its name at times to all Transjordanian settlement: e.g., ‘The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land,’ but most inspiring is the view W across the stepping stone of the plain to roads that reach the Mediterranean ports. Is it any wonder that references to Ramoth-gilead provide most of the texts on Lower Gilead and that the region around this humble site controlled much of the commerce coming from Arabia or Damascus and continuing W along ridge routes leading to the later magnificent cities of Gadara and Beth-shan/Scythopolis?

- Ramoth in Gilead—a centrally accessible point for expansive Gadite settlement—served as both a city of refuge in Gad and a Levitical city—

[Moses appointed three cities of refuge for the Transjordanian tribes. A man-slayer, while awaiting trial, could flee to] Bezer, a Reubenite city in the wilderness, on the land of the [Medeba] plateau; Ramoth in Gilead, a Gadite city [and road center]; and Golan in Basham, a Manassite city. Deuteronomy 4:43 (see also Joshua 20:9; 21:38)

[When the Levitical family of the Merarites received their cities] they received from the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in [Lower] Gilead. Mahanaim [in Upper Gilead], Heshbon [on the border with Reuben] and Jazer [on the southern slopes of Upper Gilead] together with their grazing lands. 1 Chronicles 6:80

- The relatively flat, eastern half of Lower Gilead’s plain from the area around Ramoth-Gilead to Beth-arbel was a strongly contested road center—

[As kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat sat in state, Ahab asked his cabinet,] ‘Don’t you know that Ramoth-gilead is ours?’ ... So [Ahab] the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went out to Ramoth-gilead [to contest control of Ramoth-gilead’s intersection of routes with Ben-hadad of Damascus]. 1 Kings 22:3, 29

[Ahaziah of Judah] accompanied Joram, Ahab’s son to do battle at Ramoth-gilead against Hazael the king of Aram ... Joram and all Israel had been protecting Ramoth-gilead against Hazael the king of Aram. 2 Kings 8:28, 9:14

[In -841 Shalmaneser III claimed victory over Hazael of Damascus and declared,] ‘I marched as far [east] as Haaran ... and I marched as far [west] as Ba’al Ra’si [probably Mount Carmel] at the side of sea.’ [His] march evidently used the stepping stone of Lower Gilead to move from Bashan to Galilee, and Hosea declared to Israel] all your fortresses will be destroyed, as Shalman[eser] in the day of battle destroyed Beth-arbel [a site in Lower Gilead guarding various approaches to ridge routes descending into the Rift]. ANET 280; Hosea 10:14

- Deeply eroded canyons on the western edge of Lower Gilead’s plain allowed strategically placed cities to control access along well-defined ridge routes: Ephron, Gadara, Pella—

[Judas Maccabeaus campaigned in Gilead and Bashan to rescue an oppressed Jewish population, but during the evacuation process] they came to Ephron [in Gilead which guarded a narrow ridge from Arbela into the Rift]. This was a large and very strong city on the road, and they could not go round it to the right or to the left; they had to go through it. But the men of the city shut them out and blocked up the gates with stones. 1 Maccabees 5:46-47

[Cleopatra’s son, Ptolemy ravaged Judea—Alexander Jannaeus’ territory—until Cleopatra drove Ptolemy from Coele-Syria and formed an alliance with Alexander.] Thenupon Alexander, being rid of his fear of Ptolemy, at once marched on Coele-Syria and took Gadara [a well-placed Greek city on a narrow ridge that connects eastern Lower Gilead with the Yarmuk plain and the old Geshur road to Tyre; the ridge avoids the defiles of the Yarmuk and Arab canyons]. Ant 13:356/xiii.3 (LCL)

[When Antiochus IV fell in battle against the Nabateans] Alexander, for his part, captured Pella [in Gilead which guards the ascent along the Scythopolis-Gerasa road] and proceeded against Gerasa [the intersection of the Transjordanian highway and the Scythopolis road with its connections to the coast]. War 1:104/iv.8 (LCL)

- Controlling Lower Gilead’s plain seemed cause to boast and offered a stepping stone to greater destinations; such as, Damascus, Sidon, the Beqaa or even Lebo-hamath—

[After years of oppression under Hazael of Damascus, Jeroboam II regained lost territory in Transjordan. As Israel retook the western approaches to Lower Gilead, Amos taunted them,] ‘You who rejoice in the conquest of Lo-debar.’ [It was good rhetoric. Amos chose a city that evidently fell in the assault on Lower Gilead, but its name sounds like the term for ‘Nothing.’] Amos 6:13a

[Lower Gilead gave Jeroboam II the opportunity to push N into Bashan, and Israel boasted,] ‘Haven’t we, by our own might, taken Karnaim [a strategic site in Bashan on a route N to Damascus]?’ Amos 6:13b

[Lower Gilead and Bashan gave Jeroboam II the trade routes crossing from Arabia to coastal ports, but holding them also allowed a move N beyond Damascus and through the Beqaa valley. Jeroboam II was the one who restored the boundaries of the land from Lebo-hamath to the Sea of the Arabah [Dead Sea].] 2 Kings 14:25
F. Looking at the Big Picture: The Stable East

Your final task is to sit back and take a look at this entire area of the Stable East on maps you have marked in order to consider the position and importance of the Stable East within the framework of the entire country. As you do this consider these questions:

- What geographical features (from rain to rocks) dominate the Stable East?
- Do these features assist human settlement, and if so, where and how?
- Do these features assist human activities, and if so, which activities and how?
- What are the main obstacles to travel and commerce in the Stable East?
- What ultimate destinations do you propose for routes crossing the Stable East?
- Try to follow a road from Ramoth-gilead or Edrei to each of the following destinations: Berytus, Sidon, Tyre, Acco and Caesarea on the sea.
- What sites did you encounter and what obstacles did you have to overcome?
- Which route do you think provided the easiest access to ports on the Mediterranean coast?
- If you were king in Damascus what would you want to control in the Stable East and why?
- If you were king in Israel what would you want to control in the Stable East and why?
- If you were an Arabian leader what would you want to control in the Stable East and why?
- If you were senator in Rome how would you propose controlling the Stable East?
- Summarize three main insights you have gained in studying the Stable East?

Turn to pp. 12/13: Rocks and Soils Map

One of the most useful exercises you can do now is to compare insights gained on your marked maps with the map on pp. 12/13. You may want to reconsider the questions above as you use this comparative study to evaluate your insights. Present observations are important as you proceed in this study and build an ever-increasing 'library of impressions' of the larger Land Between.

- Black write-in: The names of the five divisions of the Stable East that you have just studied in their proper places (listed under Stable East in the text on p. 2).

- Optional: See how many city initials you now recognize in each subdivision; remember that regular type represents sites from Bronze-Iron periods (e.g., ‘K’ = Karnaim), italic type represents sites from Greco-Roman periods (e.g., ‘G’ = Gadara) and text in parentheses represents a later or modern name, such as, (Q) = Quneitra. For some sites you may recognize a name from another period: for example, ‘C’ on the slopes of Jebel Druze could signal various name to you: Kenath, Canatha and (Qanawat) which are names from various periods but all the same location.

- Optional: On this same map (pp.12/13) note areas in the Northern Arena which we still have to discuss, mountain ranges in the Soaring North and the well-known regions in and around Galilee in the Complex West. Once you have marked sites and routes in these two divisions you will be quite surprised at how your insights will have expanded and how events in the Bible make very good sense in this Northern Arena.
2. THE SOARING NORTH

Turn to pp. 2/3: Northern Arena map

- HL (highlight) in green the names in the list under the Soaring North on p. 2
- HL in green: Litani depression

Compare the Soaring North with the Stable East. The differences are obvious, and it should not surprise us that the Bible abounds with some seventy references to 'Lebanon.' As before, we HL the dividing lines and discuss the five subdivisions.

- HL in green: The subdivisional line (broken line) which begins just W of Abel in the Dan region and runs N-NE, dividing the lofty Lebanon range from the three regions you just highlighted in the great Rift
- HL in red/pink: Berytus, Sidon, Tyre and Acco along the coast; Ijon in the Dan region

A. LEBANON RANGE

The crest of Lebanon’s uplifted range (the broken yellow line in the center of this map) rises by the Dan region and stretches some160 km/100 mi N-NE far beyond the northern border of this map. The entire range is known as 'Mt. Lebanon,' and its long summit creates a serious obstacle between the Rift valley and sites along its narrow sea shore. Heights on this map reach around 1,830m/6,000f, but summits farther N attain elevations of over 3,000m/10,000f.

Geobasics

- The lofty uplifted Lebanon range N of Ijon dominates the relatively narrow mountainous area between the shores of the Mediterranean sea and the Rift valley.
- On the W the Lebanon range consists of deep canyons, forested slopes and highland valleys draining SW to the sea, but on the E it plunges headlong into the Rift.
- The high Lebanon range, adjacent to the Mediterranean sea and the northern storm belt, captures heavy rains and snows along western slopes.
- Lebanon’s coasts are narrow and difficult with intermittent rocky promontories.
- With limited farmland but abundant timber the inhabitants in Lebanon’s coastal ports turned to the sea as a way of life and depended upon inland peoples for staple foods.
- Lebanon’s dramatic uplift and eroded western slopes kept E-W trade routes to the S, in what we call the Litani depression linking the interior to ports at Tyre and Sidon.
- The beauty of the Lebanon range, its heights, water resources, forests and wild animals attracted conquering kings from Egypt, from Mesopotamia and from nearby local lands, and also provided extraordinary imagery for ancient Israel’s prophets and poets.

Snow-covered peaks, ancient forests and rushing streams make ‘Mt. Lebanon’ an extraordinary feature along the eastern Mediterranean coast, different than anything in the Land Between to the south. In the S it ends along the large Roum fault, the solid black line between the Lebanon range and lower hills we call the 'Litani Depression.' Find this solid line as well as features identified in the above 'Geobasics' on the map (pp. 2/3).

Small stands of ‘the cedars of Lebanon’ still exist at a few locations, but Lebanon’s skilled lumberjacks and workers in wood have long disappeared. Its ancient forests supplied timber for sea-faring fleets of the Phoenicians (coastal Canaanites), as well as for lumber-hungry Egypt which lacked it’s own timber. Even Solomon in the not so far removed hill country of Judah had to exchange his country’s plentiful grain for lumber from Lebanon before he could build the Temple in Jerusalem.

1 Kgs 5:1-11
Fleets from Tyre and Sidon sailed the Mediterranean in search of trading partners, bringing home exceptional wealth. Ezekiel extols this wealth but condemns the resulting arrogance. From their confined setting the Phoenicians sought pacts with inland trading partners who could ensure safe delivery of goods, such as spices, which their fleets could in turn deliver to a network of Mediterranean ports for great profit.

**Turn to pp. 8/9: LEBANON RANGES, BEQAA AND DAMASCUS map**

- HL in green: Lebanon, Litani depression and Golan
- HL in red/pink: Berytus, Sidon, Tyre, Acco (Alexander the Great constructed an isthmus from the mainland to the island fortress of Tyre as it appears on your maps)
- HL in yellow on red routes: 1) the Coastal highway from N of Juniyah to S off map by Aphek; 2) from Dan to Sidon via Abel-beth-maachah and Nabatiya (use route that passes near Beaufort); 3) from Dan through Quneitra, Rafid and off map; 4) from Beth-saida to Tyre via Hazor and Taphnith (include route S of Beth-saida off map)

For all its beauty, Mt. Lebanon was an obstacle to E-W travel. The northern trade corridor therefore passed to the S of Mt. Lebanon through the Litani depression along routes you have just highlighted on p. 8/9. This corridor linked Bashan and Gilead with the ports of Tyre and Sidon—and with Phoenician merchants renowned for their maritime shipping network. We discuss this corridor later, but for the moment note that Damascus could not reach coastal ports directly and thus needed to extend its control SW to the routes through the northern trade corridor. This corridor was also a top priority for the economies of Israelite kings such as David, Solomon and Ahab. Once a strong central government rose to power in Damascus trade wars with Israel raged as we read in the Bible. In addition to revenues from passing caravans the livelihood of inhabitants in Tyre and Sidon depended upon a supply of grain from inland plains such as Bashan. All of this contributed to the struggle to control the northern trade corridor, a corridor formed by the geobasics of Mt. Lebanon, the Phoenician coast and the Litani depression. Within this context writers of the Bible drew their message.

**Texts: Lebanon range**

Lebanon stands out along the eastern Mediterranean as a distinct region, a border, a symbol of copious water and abundant timber: its height is staggering; its rugged western slopes verdant beyond imagination. Kings sought its cedars for ships and palaces. Its mysteries fed prophetic allusion and offered poets ready imagery for all that was grand. As you read these texts note the topics under which they fall, the importance of Lebanon as a geographical marker and how writers use contrast to emphasize their messages.

- Ancient geographical descriptions treat the uplifted range of **Lebanon** as a distinct region and a demonstrable border—

  Region: [The LORD instructed Moses,] 'Move out against the Amorite hill country—against all its inhabitants in the Arabah [the Rift valley from the Dead Sea to Lake Galilee], in the [Central] Hill Country, in the Shephelah [rolling lowlands W of the Hill Country], in the Negev [a defined depression of loess soils] and on the coast, the land of the Canaanites and Lebanon, as far as the great Euphrates river.' Deuteronomy 1:7

  Region: [Moses asked for permission to] go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan: this good hill country and Lebanon [which rises to the N of the Central Hill Country and the hills of Galilee]. Deuteronomy 3:25

  Border: When all the kings who were west of the Jordan heard [that Israel had entered the land]—[the kings] in the Hill Country, in the Shephelah, and on the whole coast of the Great Sea to the beginning of Lebanon … gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel. Joshua 9:1

  Border: Your borders will extend from the desert [in the S] to Lebanon [in the N], and from the Euphrates river [on the E] to the hinder [or western] sea. Deuteronomy 11:24 (see Joshua 1:4)

  Border: [In a dedicatory inscription at Calah, the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II boasts of his conquests for he] has acquired dominion over the mountain regions and received their tribute: he takes hostages, triumphs over all the countries from beyond the Tigris to the Lebanon and the Great Sea [an apparent triangle of territory from Calah on the E side of the Tigris river SW to Lebanon and N along the Mediterranean coast]. ANET 558
- **Lebanon**’s heights dominate the eastern Mediterranean and draw broad attention—

[The Assyrian king Sennacherib boasted that he had conquered Lebanon’s heights! With my many chariots I ascended the heights of the mountains, the farthest reaches of Lebanon. I cut down its towering cedars, the best of its pines. 2 Kings 19:23 (also Isaiah 37:24)]

[The Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar revealed in his mastery of Lebanon’s heights and difficulties.] I organized my army for an expedition to Lebanon … I cut through steep mountains, I split rocks, opened passages and (thus) I constructed a straight road for the (transport of the) cedars. ANET 307

[As Jerusalem finds itself abandoned and alone in its struggle with Babylon, the prophet taunts the city suggesting that it stand on distant heights and call for its unhateful neighbors.] Go up on the Lebanon range and cry out [to Tyre and Sidon], and on Bashan send out your voice [to Damascus or Kedar], and cry out from the Akram [to Ammon, Moab and Edom], but all your alliances are broken. Jeremiah 22:20

[The wooer calls his darling from Lebanon through the Beqaa to the mysteries of Anti-Lebanon’s peaks] With me from the heights of Lebanon, my betrothed; with me from the heights of Lebanon, Come! Look out! From the summit of Amana, from the summit of Senir and Hermon! Song of Songs 4:8

[‘The bride’ describes the impressive appearance of her lover.] His physical form is as Lebanon: he is excellent as the cedars. Song of Songs 5:15

- The heights force passing storms to water Lebanon’s western slopes abundantly—

[To illustrate the absurdity of faltering faith, Jeremiah asks.] ‘Does snow ever leave Lebanon’s rocky slopes? Do its cool, far away waters ever fail to flow?’ [The refreshing waters of Lebanon always flow!] Jeremiah 18:14

[You are] the One who sends forth springs in the canyons; between the mountains they descend … He waters the mountains from His roof-chambers; through your potent rain-making you quench the earth … the LORD’s trees quench their thirst; the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. Psalm 104:10, 13, 16

[You are like] a spring in a garden, a well of living water, flowing streams from Lebanon. Song of Songs 4:15

Look at Assyria, a cedar in Lebanon… water made it huge; the subterranean deep gave it height … its roots reached Lebanon’s peaks, waters, foliage, forests and animals yield rich literary imagery—

Symbol of verdure: Mary abundant grain be on the land; may it wave on mountain tops; its produce like Lebanon. Psalm 72:16 / [As images of destruction] the land laments, languishes; Lebanon [although unthinkable] displays shame, yea withers. Isaiah 33:9 / They languish, Bashan and Carmel; the blossoms of Lebanon languish. Nahum 1:4 / [As images of restoration] the [verdant] glory of Lebanon is given [to the parched regions of the land]. Isaiah 35:1:2 / The glorious [forests] of Lebanon will come to you—pine, juniper and cypress together—to adorn the place of My sanctuary. Isaiah 60:13

Images of blessing and abundance: The righteous will blossom like a palm tree; he will grow great like a cedar of Lebanon. Ezekiel 31:3-4, 7

- **Lebanon**’s peaks, waters, foliage, forests and animals yield rich literary imagery—

Symbol of verdure: Mary abundant grain be on the land; may it wave on mountain tops; its produce like Lebanon. Psalm 72:16 / [As images of destruction] the land laments, languishes; Lebanon [although unthinkable] displays shame, yea withers. Isaiah 33:9 / They languish, Bashan and Carmel; the blossoms of Lebanon languish. Nahum 1:4 / [As images of restoration] the [verdant] glory of Lebanon is given [to the parched regions of the land]. Isaiah 35:1:2 / The glorious [forests] of Lebanon will come to you—pine, juniper and cypress together—to adorn the place of My sanctuary. Isaiah 60:13

Images of power: Look at Assyria, a cedar in Lebanon, beautiful branches and shady limbs, towering high, its top a mesh of boughs. Ezekiel 31:3 / The voice of the LORD splinters the cedars; the LORD splinters apart the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them frolic like a calf—Lebanon and Sirion—like a young wild ox. Psalm 29:5-6 / [When Gilgamesh and Enkidu went on their forest journey, they ascended the heights of Lebanon and encountered Huwawa, the powerful watcher of the forest. To harvest cedars, they must kill this mighty defender of the trees.] Gilgamesh struck him (Huwawa) in the [neck] … Enkidu killed [the watchman] of the forest, at whose [very] word [the word of Huwawa] Saria and Lebanon [trembled]. ANET 504

Images of blessing and abundance: The righteous will blossom like a palm tree; he will grow great like a cedar of Lebanon. Psalm 92:12 / [Because of the LORD’s singular rule, even] Lebanon [with its cedar forests] does not have enough [wood] for altar fires, nor are its [abundant] animals enough for burnt offerings. Isaiah 40:16

Essence of fragrance: The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. Song of Songs 4:11 / I will be like the dew of Lebanon to Israel … he will extend his roots as if in Lebanon … he will have the fragrance of Lebanon. Hosea 14:5-6 / [Nebuchadnezzar recorded.] At that time, the Lebanon, the [Cedar] Mountain, the luxurious forest of Marduk, the smell of which is sweet … Marduk [had desired] as a fitting adornment for the palace of the ruler of heaven and earth. ANET 307

Stock characters for fables: A thistle in Lebanon sent a request to a cedar in Lebanon, ‘Give your daughter to my son as a wife.’ Then a wild beast in Lebanon passed by and trampled on the thistle. 2 Kings 14:9 / The atab-tree [a large, thorny tree with poor quality fruit] said to the trees, ‘If you truly want to anoint me as your king, come and seek refuge in my shade [where harvesters and herdsmen seek shady rest, although the atab-tree’s root system destroys other trees], but if not, let fire go out from the atab-tree [a very combustible wood] and consume the cedars of Lebanon [a total destruction from lowland environments of the atab-tree to mountain heights where cedars grow].’ Judges 9:15.

Premier example in prophetic judgment: The LORD of hosts has a day [of humbling prepared] against all that is proud and high; against all that is lifted up—it will be low: against all the high and lifted up cedars of Lebanon; against all the oaks of Bashan; against all the high mountains; against all the lifted up hills… Isaiah 2:12-14 / [God will cut down proud leaders and abase the lofty.] He will cut down the stands of forest with an iron axe, and Lebanon by the Mighty One will fall. Isaiah 10:34 / [God’s judgment against the proud will bring reversals of status; the high
The Anti-Lebanon range, east of the Beqaa, consists of a series of uplifts, but in order to reduce complexity only one broken yellow line (in two parts) appears on the map on pp. 2/3. Find the various uplifted ranges of the Anti-Lebanon on p. 3 and contrast them with the single Lebanon range and its western deeply eroded slopes descending to the Mediterranean. Like the Lebanon range the Anti-Lebanon range mostly consists of deep, hard limestones, now raised far above the surrounding landscape.

**B. ANTI-LEBANON RANGE**

The Anti-Lebanon range, east of the Beqaa, consists of a series of uplifts, but in order to reduce complexity only one broken yellow line (in two parts) appears on the map on pp. 2/3. Find the various uplifted ranges of the Anti-Lebanon on p. 3 and contrast them with the single Lebanon range and its western deeply eroded slopes descending to the Mediterranean. Like the Lebanon range the Anti-Lebanon range mostly consists of deep, hard limestones, now raised far above the surrounding landscape.
Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map

- HL in green: The subdivisional line (broken line) that separates the great Rift depression from the Anti-Lebanon range; it begins just above the name ‘Baalbek’ and extends down to the solid divisional line in the Dan region by Caesarea-philippi
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Caesarea-philippi, Abel/Abila (NW of Damascus), Helbon, Zabadani, Sirghaya, Chalcis (in Beqaa valley)
- HL in yellow (if not already HL): Mt. Hermon
- Black write-in: SIRION in small caps east of the dotted yellow line between Zabadani and Sirghaya

Geobasics

- Unlike the unified Lebanon range Anti-Lebanon consists of roughly parallel uplifts which form several detached ranges between the Rift and the Damascus plateau.
- The southern end of Anti-Lebanon’s highest uplift culminates in Mt. Hermon while the uplift’s northern extension forms the Sirion range.
- Abundant winter rain and snow on Hermon’s heights feed the headwaters of the Jordan and Pharpar rivers; summer dew provides nightly refreshment to Hermon’s vegetation.
- The Sirion uplift rises in the NE to some 2,000m/6,500f and its western, well-watered slopes drain into the fertile Zabadani/Sirghaya valley, abounding with orchards.
- Anti-Lebanon’s eastern ranges become increasingly arid, but rivers and streams sustain farming in areas like Abila and Helbon while winter rains bring some life to NE valleys.
- Geological faulting severs the Hermon/Sirion uplift and encourages E-W passage through Anti-Lebanon in the area of Abila at the southern end of the Zabadani/Sirghaya valley.
- The Anti-Lebanon range is a natural bulwark W of Damascus, but the faulted E-W passage near Abila creates a connection with the Beqaa valley and accentuates the importance of the sentinel site of Chalcis in the Rift and intersections by Abila.

Anti-Lebanon’s southern massif of Hermon crowns this range and dominates the entire Land Between. Its summit reaches over 2800m/9200f, and with adjacent uplifts Hermon forms an immense barrier between the Stable East and the central Rift. Its Arabic name, ‘Jebel esh-Sheikh’ (Mount of the Aged-Chief), reflects its commanding position and the white-haired appearance of its snowy slopes. Hermon’s southern slopes plunge to almost sea level near the site of Dan, and its waters feed springs and rivers which emerge from its depths.

The Hermon uplift continues in the Sirion range to the NE (broken, yellow uplift line running off the map, p. 3), reaching over 2,000m/6,500f and towering above the Sirghaya valley. Sirion’s rain, snow and dew water orchards in the long Zabadani/Sirghaya valley. Clans and communities thrived in these regions, such as ‘the Zabadeans,’ preserved perhaps in the place-names Zabadani and Beth-zabdai. The Itureans, a nomadic people skilled in combat, once inhabited regions of Hermon, an area called ‘Iturea’ in the days of Jesus. Farther east the Anti-Lebanon range becomes increasingly arid, but the potential for agricultural activity does exist, especially in some inter-range valleys with surrounding runoff and soil deposits.

The fault which defines the Zabadani/Sirghaya valley turns SE near Abila and breaks through the Hermon-Sirion uplift. This geological weakness creates the ‘Abila pass’ through Anti-Lebanon welcoming routes from the Stable East and the Beqaa. This E-W pass enhanced the importance of Damascus and changed the course of history. This is best illustrated during the agitated century prior to Jesus’ birth when Rome with a keen sense for geobasics recognized the significance of the E-W route linking Damascus and the Beqaa via the Abila pass.

1 Macc 12:31
Cf. Ant 13:179/v.10
Luke 3:1
The rival cities of Chalcis and Damascus struggled to control the roads between them. Ptolemy of Chalcis, with considerable territory in Lebanon, the Beqaa and Anti-Lebanon made threatening moves. As this ‘troublesome neighbor’ stirred, leaders in Damascus entreated the Arabian king of Nabatea to protect them. The fate of Damascus also brought Jewish troops from Jerusalem and an army from Armenia into the fray. Finally, Roman forces under Pompey entered Chalcis in the Beqaa and disciplined Ptolemy before marching through the Abila pass to Damascus. This entire sequence of events emerged because of the importance of the E-W route across the Anti-Lebanon via the Abila pass.

The story does not end there for subsequent events set the scene for the Gospels. Ptolemy died and his son Lysanias received the throne of Chalcis. Meanwhile, Egypt’s Cleopatra desired to dominate the fertile Beqaa. Her lover, the Roman general Anthony, executed Lysanias and gave Chalcis to Cleopatra. Our record fades, but we do know that a certain Zenodorus saw this route’s great potential. He leased ‘the domain of Lysanias’ in the Beqaa and encouraged Trachonite bandits to harass Damascus. Since Zenodorus already ruled Bashan and Auranitis, lands ‘between Trachonitis and Galilee,’ adding Damascus, Chalcis and the Beqaa (with the Abila pass) would make his mastery of northern trade complete. Rome wisely put an end to this intentional anarchy by giving the territory of Zenodorus to a pro-Roman strongman, king Herod.

We thus meet this area in Jesus’ day, disunited according to Rome’s policy of divide and conquer. 1) Philip the Tetrarch ruled Iturea (Hermon’s southern slopes, part of ‘the domain of Zenodorus’) as well as Gaulanitis, Batanea, Auranitis and Trachonitis; 2) Lysanias the Tetrarch ruled ‘Abilene’ around Abila, another part of the domain of Zenodorus by the fertile banks of the Abana river between Damascus and Chalcis (given later to king Herod Agrippa of Acts 12); 3) areas around the city of Chalcis itself, went to Herod (of Chalcis), Herod Agrippa’s brother. Rome’s intense concern for this part of Anti-Lebanon and adjacent territories demonstrates the importance of its geobasics throughout all periods of history.

We now turn to p. 8/9: LEBAON RANGES, BEQAA AND DAMASCUS map.
high mountain.’ Within Hermon’s context of human agendas, competing worldly powers and vain human glory, Jesus told His disciples of His impending journey to the cross. Paul, who ‘on the road to Damascus’ in the shadow Hermon encountered this same Jesus, later wrote: ‘He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.’

Texts: Anti-Lebanon range

References to the Anti-Lebanon range focus primarily on the high western uplift of Mt. Hermon and Sirion. As with the Lebanon range, the heights of this uplift inspire the imagination and become landmarks and border descriptions, symbols of copious water, sources of abundant timber supply as well as rich imagery for ancient poets.

• Ancient geographical descriptions use Mt. Hermon—visible from great distances—as well as Sirion and Senir as border descriptions and landmarks—

At that time we seized the Transjordanian territory from the control of the two Amorite kings [all the way] from the Arnon range [a large natural border on the southern side of Sihon’s territory] to Mt. Hermon [in the Anti-Lebanon, which marked the northern extent of Og’s territory]. Deuteronomy 3:8 / [Israel possessed Sihon’s and Og’s territory] eastward in Transjordan from the Arnon range [on the S] as far as Mt. Hermon [on the N] and everything eastward of the Aravah [which served as a western border]. Joshua 12:1

[Israel took possession of the territory of the two Amorite kings] in Transjordan from Aroer, which is on the rim of the Arnon canyon, as far as Mt. Sirion [following Syriac], a part of the Hermon [uplift in the Anti-Lebanon range]. Deuteronomy 4:48

[Og, king of Bashan] ruled over [a large territory including] Mt. Hermon [in the Anti-Lebanon on the N to] Salecah [on the E and] all Bashan [which lay between] as far as the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites [on the W] and half of Gilead to the border of Sihon, king of Heshbon [on the S]. Joshua 12:5 / [In addition to Sihon’s territory Moses gave the eastern tribes] Gilead and [N along] the Gershurite and Maachathite border [to include] all Mt. Hermon and all Bashan as far as Salecah; that is, the entire realm of Og, king of Bashan who ruled in Ashtaroth and Edrei. Joshua 13:11

The people of the half tribe of Manasseh settled in the land from Bashan in the S as far as Baal-hermon and Senir and Mt. Hermon [various landmarks in the Anti-Lebanon]. 1 Chronicles 5:23


• Mt. Hermon’s heights and water resources on the southern end of the Anti-Lebanon inspire poetic expression—

[A Levitical singer agonized over his separation from temple service as the foreign army that was leading him into captivity rested by Hermon’s rushing springs.] I remember You, [O Lord], from the land of the Jordan, from the Hermon range [whose springs give rise to the Jordan], from Mount Mizar; deep calls to deep at the roar of Your waterfalls. Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me. Psalm 42:6-7

[The well-watered, lush] north and [the waterless, sorched] south, You created them. Tabor and Hermon [two high, watered and verdant mountains of the north] shout joyfully at your name. Psalm 89:12

[How good and pleasant is it when men honor God’s instruction by dwelling together peaceably?] It is as if the dew [raked by the heights] of Hermon [from the westerly sea breezes of summer] were descending on the [low and humble] hills of Zion. Psalm 133:3

• The Anti-Lebanon range, standing parallel to and across the Beqaa valley from the Lebanon range, displays an array of summits and various names—

[The wooer calls his darling from Lebanon through the Beqaa to the mysteries of Anti-Lebanon’s peaks:] Amana, Senir and Hermon. With me from [the heights of] Lebanon, my betrothed; with me from [the heights of] Lebanon, Come! [Cross the Beqaa, the valley of Lebanon! Look out! From the summit of Amana [high in the Anti-Lebanon chain above the source of the Abana/Amana river], from the summit of Senir and Hermon [the crown of the Anti-Lebanon], look out over the land!] Song of Songs 4:8

The people of the half tribe of Manasseh settled in the land from Bashan as far as Baal-hermon and Senir and Mt. Hermon [specific designations in the southern Anti-Lebanon]. 1 Chronicles 5:23
C. BEQAA VALLEY

Having discussed the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges we turn to one of the most bustling and action-packed regions of the Soaring North, the Beqaa valley (beqaa simply means 'valley' in Arabic). The Beqaa is a long, fertile plain in the heart Lebanon, deep within the earth's great crack called the Rift running through the center of the map on pp. 2/3. Solid, gray divisional lines outline the Rift in the S part of this map, but in the Dan region this crack takes a dramatic turn. Thin, dotted sub-divisional lines (already HL) designate its path to the NE. North of the Bir ed-Dahr blockage, the broad Beqaa valley offers agricultural advantages and settlement opportunities absent in the arid southern Rift until one reaches the heart of Africa. Take a moment to survey various parts of the Rift, from the southern edge of this map through Lake Galilee to the source of the Litani river by Baalbek in the N.

Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map

- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Baalbek (in the N) and Chalics/Ain el-Jarr (near the center of the Beqaa valley)
- HL in yellow: Source of Litani, Litani river
Geobasics

- The Beqaa is clearly defined between the uplifted Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges and extends N from the Bir ed-Dahr blockage to far off this map.

- Rich alluvia from surrounding ranges fill much of the Beqaa (green on this map) while the Litani river begins by Baalbek and gathers streams on its way S through the fertile valley. A less fertile Beqaa N of Baalbek lies in the rain shadow of the Lebanon range.

- Surrounding ranges define N-S travel through the entire Beqaa, a critical portion of what we call the 'conquerors' corridor' between the region of Aram and Egypt.

- In contrast, E-W travel from the Beqaa over the Lebanon range to coastal ports is difficult, but travel to Damascus via the Abila pass is more convenient.

- The enclosed, fertile and broad Beqaa encourages the formation of political entities, but they must contend with adjacent local rivals and conquering imperial armies.

- The Beqaa is part of a geopolitical triangle around lofty Mt. Hermon with its strategic connections to Damascus in the E and the region of Dan and Land Between to the S.

The fertile Beqaa valley enjoys the double blessing of rich alluvial soil washed down from the surrounding slopes and waters of the Litani river springing from its source near Baalbek and joined by other streams. As it flows S the Litani navigates the Bir ed-Dahr blockage but suddenly is diverted in the Dan region, turning abruptly west through the Litani depression to reach the Mediterranean just N of Tyre. The Beqaa is the bread basket of the interior, but the Lebanon range effectively separates it from Lebanon's coastal port cities. Thus the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon relied upon imports from fertile plains S of Lebanon's ranges, plains in the Land Between controlled by kingdoms in Israel or in Judah, or earlier by Galilee's city-states.

Turn to pp. 8/9: LEBANON RANGES, BEQAA AND DAMASCUS map

- HL in green: Beqaa valley (if not already HL)

- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Baalbek, Chalcis/Ain el-Jarr; Berothah and Tubihi/Tebah (cities David conquered); Hazi, Ain-Shasi, Gaddashuna, Tubihi (already HL), Migdal and Kumidu (cities of interest to both Egypt and Hatti in the Amarna Letters)

- HL in yellow: Source of Litani, Litani river, Litani canyon (in the Litani depression)

- HL in yellow on red routes: 1) Baalbek to Damascus via Sirghaya; 2) Baalbek to Kumidu via Rayak and Chalcis

The Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges define the 'conquerors' corridor' which is one of the main themes in the rest of our discussion of the Soaring North. This corridor collects roads in the critical region of Aram (far beyond this map’s N border) and funnels them into the Rift on a route through a drier, less productive zone. This route appears on our map near the source of the Litani river by Baalbek and descends S through the fertile Beqaa (green on p. 9).

Once within the fertile Beqaa the conquerors' corridor intersects with routes to Damascus via the Abila pass in Anti-Lebanon. South of the Beqaa the corridor must navigate through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage (discussed below) to reach the all-important Dan region, gateway to the Land Between. Here the corridor continues S to Hazor and into the heart of Galilee along a route we call the 'Hazor Highway.' You should make two important observations on this map (pp. 8-9). 1) The conquerors' corridor follows a N-S course through the Rift valley to the section of the corridor we call the 'Hazor Highway,' but the Bir ed-Dahr blockage is an obstacle along the way. 2) From the Beqaa the conquerors' corridor offers access through Anti-Lebanon to Damascus and from there to Bashan, Gilead and adjacent eastern regions with important connections to the Hazor Highway, to the Rift and to Arabia.
These observations underscore the significance of the intersection by Chalcis/Ain el-Jarr, the administrative center of this part of the Beqaa and explain why conquerers from S and N placed high priority upon this part of the Beqaa throughout history.

Pharaoh Thutmose III (c. -1480) lists approximately ten cities in the southern Beqaa—including Khashabu (T. Hashbeh), Hazi, Berothah, Tubihi and Kumidu (on p. 9)—as sites that he wrested from the Canaanites after his victory at Megiddo. Of these Kumidu becomes a regional Egyptian center, perhaps overseeing a much larger area.

Over a century later during the Amarna period, these Canaanite cities began sending letters to pharaoh describing a dual threat to Egyptian interests in the Beqaa: 1) chaotic raids by the Apiru, and 2) a more concerted invasion by the northern neighbor of Kedesh at the behest of the king of Hatti. Hatti’s interest in the Beqaa speaks to the valley’s importance as a communication conduit giving access S to the Jordan valley, Galilee, Damascus and Bashan.

Shortly after -1000, a campaign of Jerusalem’s king David in the Beqaa illustrates its strategic prominence. Hadadezer, king of Zobah controlled the heart of the Beqaa, menacing Hamath-on-the-Orontes to the N where the conquerers’ corridor emerges into the region of Aram. The Bible summarizes David’s dramatic move against Hadadezer, stating that David ‘took a great amount of bronze from Tebah (Tubihi, p. 9) and Berothai.’ This dismantling of the kingdom of Zobah shows the priority placed upon the Beqaa by David and his son Solomon. What happened next highlights the geobasics of this map. Rezon (one of Hadadezer’s officers) shifted Aramean attention to the Damascus plateau on the eastern side of the Anti-Lebanon—and from there he began pushing south via Bashan into Israelite territory.

The Beqaa emerges again as an enclosed heartland for local rule in the century before Jesus. With the disintegration of Greek rule, Ptolemy son of Mennaeus (c. -85 to -40) rose to power in ‘Chalcis at the foot of Mount Lebanon’ and strove to expand his control across Anti-Lebanon to Damascus. Rome wisely split the larger holdings of Ptolemy of Chalcis into smaller territories. The remnants of his kingdom appear in some titles in the Gospels: ‘Philip, tetrarch of Iturea’ and ‘Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene.’ One could mention many other invaders and administrators as nations and empires have expanded along the eastern Mediterranean, using the Beqaa as a means to this end. It is indeed a conquerors’ corridor.

Texts: Beqaa valley

The English term ‘Beqaa valley’ does not appear in ancient texts. Beqaa derives from a Semitic word for ‘valley,’ and as a result, references to the geographical feature use several designations. Texts that speak of ‘the Valley,’ however, take into account 1) its open N-S route between the Lebanon ranges; 2) its enclosed nature as a place of political centrality and exchange; or 3) the converse, the valley’s tenuous security as a conquerers’ corridor.

• Ancient geographical descriptions use a variety of terms in reference to the Beqaa valley, such as Valley of Lebanon; Zobah; Beth Rehob; Amqu; Coele-Syria; and Massyas—

  - Valley of Lebanon: [The Hebrew designation bigat ha-Lebanon, ‘the valley of Lebanon’ provides a ancient precursor of the modern al biqa, ‘the Valley’ or Beqaa, which lies below Lebanon.] Joshua took the entire land [region by region]: the hill country, all the Negev, all the land of Goshen, the Shephelah, the Arabah and Israel’s hill country and its Shephelah from Mt. Halak [S of the Negev] ... as far [north] as Baal Gad in the valley of Lebanon [the Beqaa valley] below Mt. Hermon. Joshua 11:16-17 / These are the kings of the land that Joshua and the Israelites conquered west of the Jordan from Baal Gad [a northern terminal] in the valley of Lebanon as far as Mt. Halak [a southern terminal]. Joshua 12:7 / From the waters of Merom in Upper Galilee, Joshua pursued the Canaanite forces to the NW] as far as greater Sidon and as far as Misrephoth Mayim [‘burning’ perhaps ‘boiling/foaming waters,’ either at a rocky promontory N of Sidon or S along the narrow Ladder of Tyre where sea water surges up in the caves of Ras el-Musheirifeh (a good toponym for Misrephoth) and as far as the valley of Mizpeh to the east [bigat Mizpeh] or ‘plain of observation’ which fits the geographical situation in the Beqaa.] Joshua 11:7-9 / I will break the bar [on the gate] of Damascus [protecting Damascus from approach via the Beqaal, and I will cut [its] inhabitant off from the idolatrous ‘Beqar’ [the valley which hosts the sacred space of Baalbek]. Amos 1:5
guide in brief—

**PERSONALITY IN TEXTS continued**

Zobah: [Biblical texts position the Aramean kingdom of Zobah in the Beqaa valley.] David defeated Hadadezer king of Zobah [throughout the middle-northern Beqaa], as far as Hamath, when he extended his authority along the Euphrates River. 1 Chronicles 18:3; cf. 2 Samuel 8:3 / From Tebah [Tubni N of Chalcis on p. 9] and Berothai—cities [in the middle Beqaa], which belonged to Hadadezer [king of Zobah]—king David took a great quantity of bronze. 2 Samuel 8:9; cf. 1 Chronicles 18:9-10 (note that nearby Chalcis in Greek means 'Copper-town'; see J.P. Brown, The Lebanon and Phoenicia [Beirut, 1969], pp. 31 and 97) / When Toi, king of Hamath, had no alliance with anyone else. The city was in a valley, which belonged to Beth Rehob. Judges 18:28 / [Beth Rehob appears together with Zobah (middle-northern Beqaa) and Maacah (in the Dan region) in a historical text. The southern Beqaa between Chalcis and Kumidu offers a 'broad open place,' which lies between the neighboring states of Zobah and Maacah.] When the Ammonites saw that they had become odious to David, they sent to Aram-Beth Rehob [in the southern Beqaa] and Aram-Zobah [in the middle-northern Beqaa] and hired twenty thousand foot soldiers, as well as [hiring] the king of Maacah [in the Dan region] with a thousand men and twelve thousand men from Tob [in Bashan]. 2 Samuel 10:6; cf. 10:8

Beth Rehob: [The elusive Beth Rehob, 'broad open place' must lie somewhere between the Dan region and Lebo-hamath. Two biblical texts provide these termini. The Israelite spies left Kadesh-barnea and went up to explore the land from the Desert of Zin [in the S] as far as Rehob [on the road through the Beqaa to Lebo-hamath. Numbers 13:21 / The Danites successfully captured the city of Laish/Dan.] No one rescued [the city] because it was far from Sidon; furthermore, its inhabitants] had no alliance with anyone else. The city was in a valley, which belonged to Beth Rehob. Judges 18:28 / [Beth Rehob appears together with Zobah (middle-northern Beqaa) and Maacah (in the Dan region) in a historical text. The southern Beqaa between Chalcis and Kumidu offers a 'broad open place,' which lies between the neighboring states of Zobah and Maacah.] When the Ammonites saw that they had become odious to David, they sent to Aram-Beth Rehob [in the southern Beqaa] and Aram-Zobah [in the middle-northern Beqaa] and hired twenty thousand foot soldiers, as well as [hiring] the king of Maacah [in the Dan region] with a thousand men and twelve thousand men from Tob [in Bashan]. 2 Samuel 10:6; cf. 10:8

Amq: [The Canaanite term for Beqaa is Amq meaning 'valley' or 'plain' and a cognate to the Hebrew emeq, 'valley.' Various Canaanite cities in Amq (some identified in the Beqaa today) wrote to pharaoh requesting military assistance against the attacks of the ruler of Qedesh from the northern Beqaa.] Message of ... the ruler of Khashaba [in the Beqaa, p. 3 W of 'Source of Litani'] / Look, we are in Amq [the Beqaa valley] (in) the cities of the king [the pharaoh of Egypt] ... [the ruler] of Kh porous [pharaoh] ... set [the cities of the king ... on fire. EA 174 (William L. Moran, The Amarna Letters [Baltimore, 1987]) / [Identical or similar messages reached pharaoh from ... the ruler of Hazar [in the Beqaa, p. 3 S of 'Source of Litani'] ... set [the cities of the king on fire ... on fire. EA 174 (William L. Moran, The Amarna Letters [Baltimore, 1987])] / Look, we are in Amq [the Beqaa valley]—EA 175 / ... the ruler of ... Look, we are in Amq [the Beqaa valley].—EA 176 / the ruler of Ain-Shaish [in the Beqaa, p. 9 S of 'Source of Litani'] ... Look, we are in Amq [the Beqaa valley]—EA 176 / the ruler of Gadadzana [in the Beqaa, p. 3 N of 'Beqaa valley']—EA 177 / [The ruler of Qedesh acted in concert with the forces of Hatti, and another letter reports ... the troops of Hatti ... have captured cities of Amq] [the Beqaa valley]. EA 170 / ... Still another letter confirms that the ruler of Qedesh located far to the N of Baalbek and beyond the arid Beqaa smote all the lands of Amq, lands of the king [pharaoh]. Now he has sent his men to seize the lands of Amq. EA 140 (cf. EA 53) / [Hatti's own record of entrance into the Beqaa uses the term Amq. Suppiluliumas dispatched forces to the country of Amq. They proceed to attack the country of Amq ... When the people of the land of Egypt heard about the attack on Amq, they became frightened. ANET 319 / Cognates of Amq appear later with reference to the northern Beqaa/southern and middle Orontes valley, which is still known as el-Amq. The Orontes takes the origins of its waters from the regions of Libanos and Antilibanos; it then passes through what is called the plain of Amyke, and arrives at Antioch itself. Polybius 5.59.10

Coele-Syria: [Although the Greco-Roman designation Coele-Syria includes the Beqaa valley, most uses refer to a much larger geographical area than the Rift valley between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges. Strabo begins with a description of Coele-Syria that seems to limit the term to the Beqaa, but his description soon advances S into the Jordan valley.] There are two mountain ranges, Libanus and Antilibanus, which form Coele-Syria [literally, 'the hollow, which is called Syria'], as it is called, and are approximately parallel to each other. They both begin slightly above the sea—Libanus in line with Tripolis ... and Antilibanus in line with Sidon [Strabo's view from the sea as he lines up the lofty parts of the ranges with known coastal cities ...] They leave a hollow plain between them ['hollow plain,' the probable folk etymology for Coele-Syria, and presumably, the Beqaa valley, but a more likely source for Coele-Syria is Aram Kola, 'All Aram' or 'All Syria'], the breadth of which, near the sea, is two hundred stadia, and the length, from the sea to the interior, is about twice that number. ... It is intersected by rivers [such as the Litani flowing S and the Orontes flowing N] the Jordan being the largest [herewith the discussion advances S of the Beqaa]. Strabo, Geographica 16.2.16 (cf. LCL) / [Strabo later refers Coele-Syria.] Now the whole of the country above the territory of Seleucis [at the mouth of the Orontes], extending approximately to Egypt and Arabia, is called Coele-Syria; but the country marked off by the Libanus and the Antilibanus is called by that name in a special sense [that is, the folk etymology 'hollow plain']... Strabo, Geographica 16.2.21 (LCL) / [In describing Pompey's advance on Damascus, Josephus sets the Beqaa within Coele-Syria.] And passing the cities of Helopolis [Baalbek] and Chalcis [both in the Beqaa], Pompey crossed the mountain [the Anti-Lebanon] that divides the region called Coele-Syria from the rest of Syria, and came to Damascus. Ant 14.40.10-12 (LCL) / [Coele-Syria and Phoenicia appear together as if to distinguish Mt. Lebanon from at least the Beqaa in the Rift valley, if not more of the Rift and Syria.] Apollonius of Tarsus ... was governor of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia. 2 Maccabees 2:5; cf. 44 / Ptolemy [was] the governor of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia. 2 Maccabees 8:8 / Lysias was appointed in charge of the government and as chief governor of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia. 2 Maccabees 10:11

Massyas: [Strabo used the designation Massyas specifically of the Beqaa valley.] After the Macnas plain ['Big plain,' today the Nahar al-Kabir, 'Big River' N of Tripolis] comes the Massyas [the Beqaa], which also...
includes some mountainous regions; among these is Chalcis, which is in effect the acropolis of the Massyas. Strabo, Geographica 16.2.16 / [A papyrus from the Ptolemaic period supports the Greco-Roman term Massyas. A certain Herakleitos reports on business activities in Syria and Phoenicia.] We are journeying through Massuan [presumably, Strabo’s Massyas/Beqaa] in order to meet him face-to-face in Sidon. P.Cam.Zen. 1 59093

• The Beqaa valley and soil water resources from the Lebanon ranges offers excellent agricultural prospects as well as pictureque images of flourishing gardens—

They leave a hollow plain between them [the Beqaa between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges] ... It is intersected by rivers, watering a land that is fertile and all-productive [translation follows the Greek syntax. Strabo’s discussion continues with descriptions of the Jordon valley, Lake Galilee, the Abana river and fanciful ideas of Arabian merchants sailing up the Jordan and Lycus rivers.] Strabo, Geographica 16.2.16 (cf. LCL) / The [northern] commencement of this [Massyas/ Beqaa] plain is Lusiticia below Lebanon. All the mountainous districts are held by Ituraeans and Arabs; they are robbers every one. The plain-dwellers [on the fertile soils of the Beqaa, however,] are farmers. Strabo, Geographica 16.2.18

[The lover in Song of Songs draws imagery for one of his poems from the Lebanon ranges and the Beqaa. He first calls his darling from Lebanon through the Beqaa to Anti-Lebanon’s peaks but then focuses on the fertile Beqaa between the twin ranges (literally, ‘your loved ones’). He looks more intently at a garden park, contained within one of Lebanon’s well-watered canyons that opens onto the Beqaa.] The fragrance of your garments is as the fragrance of Lebanon [brought into the Beqaa by western breezes]. A garden secured is my sister, my bride; a garden secured with a sealed spring. Your produce! A paradise of pomegranates with exquisite fruit; henna with nard; nard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon along with every incense tree; myrrh and aloes with every fine spice. The garden’s spring is a well of living water, and it is flowing down from Lebanon [into the rich soils of the Beqaa]. Song of Songs 4:8-15

[Although impossible to say with absolute certainty, the language of Psalm 104 is the language of the Soaring North, and when read from the perspective of Lebanon and the Beqaa, imagery leaps to life. He makes the clouds his chariots; He treads on the wings of the wind [as heavy storms water Lebanon’s heights] ... The mountains rose; the valleys [beqauot, including the Beqaa] settled ... He produces springs in canyons; they flow between the mountains ... He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; from the fruit of Yoar works the land is satisfied. He causes grass to sprout for cattle and crops [in agricultural regions like the Beqaa] from man’s work, bringing forth bread from the earth and wine to gladden man’s heart, making faces radiant with oil; with bread He sustains man’s heart. The trees of the LORD are well-watered, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted ... the high mountains [above the timberline] are for the wild goats; the grasses a refuge for the hyrex ... they return and lie down in their dens [cf. Song of Songs 4: 8] ... This is the sea! Great and broad as arms flung apart! [when seen from the top of Mt. Lebanon]. Psalm 104:3, 8, 10, 13-16, 18, 21-22, 25

• The Beqaa valley is the only open N-S thoroughfare between the Lebanon ranges—

[The Israelite spys left Kadesh-barnea and] went up to explore the land from the Desert of Zin [in the S] as far as Rehob [in the southern Beqaa, a thoroughfare that continues N between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges to Lebo-hamath]. Numbers 13:21

[The listing of unoccupied territories included the coastal regions of Lebanon and the eastern interior:] From Arav [presumably, a southern terminus, perhaps near the mouth of the Litani], which belongs to the Sidonians, as far as Asphakah [a northern terminus near Byblos] and up to the Amonic border [Amuru]; the land of the Gebalites [around Byblos]; and all Lebanon to the east [the Beqaa and Anti-Lebanon], from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo-hamath [a well-known measurement through the thoroughfare of the Beqaa, which stretches between Baal Gad and Lebo-hamath]. Joshua 13:5

• The Beqaa valley, enclosed by the Lebanon ranges but open to intra-regional exchange, encouraged the formation of political or administrative centers—

Circa -1365: [Canaanite correspondence with pharaoh of Egypt in the Amarna period suggests that Kumidu [in the Beqaa] housed an Egyptian administrator. Kumidu may have served as a royal Egyptian center for the Beqaa, the Damascus plateau, Bashan and northern Jordan valley. Rib-Hadda the mayor of Byblos appealed for assistance from Egypt’s commissioner in the Beqaa. Now as the king [pharaoh] is going to send the royal commissioners, may the king tell them to decide between us [between Rib-Hadda and an opponent who appears in league with raiding Apriu]. The commissioner from Kumidu [Egypt’s administrative center in the Beqaa ...] EA 116 / [Rib-Hadda appealed again regarding inaction on the part of the commissioners/ magistrates.] If the king, my lord, keeps telling the magistrates of ... and the magnate of Kumidu [in the Beqaa], ‘Take them,’ they have not taken them. EA 129 / [Rib-Hadda then addressed the escalating conflict that threatened both him and Egypt’s commissioners.] Now Hapi has handed over Sumur [the royal Egyptian center over the northern Beqaa, Upper Galilee, the Phoenician coast and Amuru]. May the king not neglect this deed, since a commissioner was killed [presumably the commissioner of Sumur]. If you are negligent, then Pihura [the commissioner in Kumidu] will not stay in Kumidu, and all your mayors will be killed. EA 132 / [The mayor of Damascus evinced his loyalty to Pharaoh by his service to Kumidu.] Since my brothers are at war with me, I am guarding Kumidu, the city of the king, my lord [the city which serves as the king’s administrative center in the Beqaa]. May the king indeed be at one with his servant. EA 191 / [The mayor of Kumidu] also pledged his loyalty to Pharaoh declaring that the royal commissioners could confirm his claim.] Message of ... the ruler
of Kumidu ... I am indeed your loyal servant. May the king, my lord, inquire of all his commissioners [who have resided in Kumidu in the Beqaa] whether I am a loyal servant of the king, my lord. EA 198

Kedesh in the northern Beqaa was a strong political center and with the support of Hatti became an increasing threat to other cities in the Beqaa. See the discussion under Amqu above.

Circa -1000: See discussion above on Zobah, an expanding realm in the Beqaa during the days of David.

Circa -80: [In the century before Jesus, Chalics at the crossroads of the Beqaa valley thoroughfare and the Abila pass served as the political center for the Itureans under] Ptolemy, son of Menmaeus, who was the prince of Chalics at the foot of Mount Lebanon, Ant 14:126/vi.4 (LCL); cf. War 1:185/vi.2 / [His efforts to extend his territory earned him the ignoble assessment that] Ptolemy, son of Menmaeus, [was] a worthless fellow, no less than was Dionysius of Tripolis, a relative of his by marriage, who was beheaded. Ant 14:39/vi.2 (LCL) / [Aretas the Nabatean was] called to the throne by those who held Damascus because of their hatred of Ptolemy, the son of Menmaeus [who from Chalics and probably also Panias effectively contained and threatened Damascus]. Ant 13:392/vi.2 (LCL) / [Even the Jewish queen, Alexandra] sent out her son Aristobulus with an army to Damascus against Ptolemy, the son of Menmaeus, as he was called, who [from Chalics in the Beqaa valley] was a troublesome neighbour to their city, Ant 13:418/vi.3 (LCL) / [In addition to] Chalics, which is in effect the acropolis of the Massaya [Beqaa valley]. All the mountainous districts are held by Itureans and Arabs; they are robbers every one. The plain-dwellers are farmers; when harrassed by the robbers they have appealed for assistance from various sources at various times. The robbers use fortified places as the base of operations for their raids. Thus, those who control Mount Libanus occupy fortresses high up on the mountain.... Lower down they [held coastal areas.] It was from these [lower] places (destroyed by Pompey) that they overran Byblos and the next city afterwards, namely Berytus. Strabo, Geography 16.2.18 / [On his march from Antioch to Damascus, Pompey] demolished the citadel at Apamea ... and he also devastated the territory of Ptolemy, son of Menmaeus ... but Ptolemy escaped punishment for his sins by paying a thousand talents

- As an open thoroughfare the Beqaa valley becomes a conquerors’ corridor that falls before the march of empire—

Egyptian campaigns: [Eighteenth and Nineteenth dynasty pharaohs made numerous campaigns N against Mitaanni and the Hittites through the conquerors’ corridor.] Haziz, Gaddashana, Tubhi, Kumidu ... Berothah ... Hashaba [all cities in the Beqaa in the lists of Thutmoses III testify to his use of the corridor]. Cf. Y. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 159-163 / [A single site may indicate use of the corridor. Thutmos III recorded.] Year 30. Now his majesty was in the country of Retenu [from the Negev in the S to the Orontes in the N] on his majesty’s sixth victorious campaign. [At the northern end of the corridor of the Beqaa lies Kadesh-on-the-Orontes.] Arrival at the town of Kadesh. Destroying it. Felling its trees. Cutting its grain. ANET 239 / [On a return trip S through the corridor Amenhotip II recorded:] His majesty reached Kadesh [at the northern end of the Beqaa’s corridor].... His majesty proceeded by chariot to Khashabu [in the Beqaa by the source of the Litani]. ANET 246 / [Ramses II recorded:] His majesty was in ... the town which is in the Valley of Cedar [the Beqaa valley]. His majesty proceeded northward. After his majesty reached the mountain range of Kadesh, ... His majesty reached the town of Kadesh. ANET 255-256

Assyrian campaigns: [When Shalmanezer III encountered Damascus’ first line of defense at the Hermon-Senir-Sirion uplift, he was approaching Damascus from the corridor of the Beqaa.] Hazael of Damascus put his trust upon his numerous army ... making the mountain Senir (Sa-ni-ru), a mountain facing Lebanon [across the Beqaa valley], his fortress. ANET 280 / [In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria came down the corridor of the Beqaa] and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maachah [in the Dan region], Janoah [on the road W to Tyre], Kedesh [in Upper Galilee on the road between Hazor and Tyre] and Hazor [in the Huleh basin along the Hazor highway] ... 2 Kings 15:29

Pompey’s campaign: [On his march from Antioch to Damascus, Pompey] demolished the citadel at Apamea ... and he also devastated the territory of Ptolemy, son of Menmaeus ... and passing the cities of Helopolis and Chalics [in the corridor of the Beqaa] he crossed the mountain ... and came to Damascus. Ant 14:38-41/vi.2 (LCL)

D. BIR ED-DAHR BLOCKAGE

Traders and invaders using the conquerors’ corridor in the Rift had to navigate the Bir ed-Dahr blockage, which effectively separates the Beqaa from the Dan region. The Bible underscores this when it notes the sites of Ijon, Abel (beth-maachah) and Dan as the Land Between’s northern gateway—a broad intersection of routes S of the limited passage through the blockage. A brief summary of forces and features help us understand this blockage.

Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map

- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Hasbani, Ijon, Abel (beth-maachah), Dan
- HL in yellow: Litani canyon (in the Litani depression and just above this name)
The Bir ed-Dahr blockage challenges the conquerors’ corridor and separates the two open areas of the Beqaa valley and the Dan region, along with their important intersections. The Bir ed-Dahr blockage forms as uplifted Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon draw closer, narrowing the Rift before they plunge underground as part of a large, faulted complex. Within this tightly constricted Rift a series of smaller, uplifted ridges appear and almost close the southern Bir ed-Dahr blockage to N-S travel. The N-S route through this blockage stays to the E, accenting the importance of Chalcis and Kumidu and passing the Hasbani spring, the northernmost source of the Jordan. Suddenly, at the tight southern end of the Bir ed-Dahr blockage, geological pressure is released as faulting spreads across Upper Galilee and the Rift shifts direction to due S. The Litani river flows through deep, western canyons of the Bir ed-Dahr blockage, but uplifts abruptly divert it to the W, out of the Rift to the Mediterranean.

The Bir ed-Dahr blockage creates a challenge to N-S travel through the Rift and effectively separates the convenient Beqaa valley from the Dan region. Ridges and canyons between Mt. Lebanon and the steep western slopes of mighty Mt. Hermon reduce passage to one reasonable route along slopes and through narrows. Hermon’s snows and rain emerge within a gorge along this route as a splendid spring. This is the source of the Hasbani river, part of the headwaters of the Jordan river which flows S through the Rift to Lake Galilee and the Dead Sea. A settlement by the same name arose near the Hasbani spring, and other villages dot the adjoining slopes of Hermon where hard limestones yield fertile soil in small mountain valleys. Since the Bible associates the name Senir and Hermon as part of the same uplift, Israelis today attach ‘Senir’ to the Hasbani, a stream which in winter and spring can turn to a raging torrent.

**Turn to pp. 8/9: LEBANON RANGES, BEQAA AND DAMASCUS map**

- HL in green: Bir ed-Dahr blockage
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Hasbani, Ijon, Abel (beth-maachah), Dan
- HL in yellow: Litani canyon (in the Litani depression), Mt. Hermon 2814m/9232f
- HL in yellow on red routes: Kumidu to Abel-beth-maachah via Hasbani

This map (pp. 8/9) clearly shows the increasing compression of the Rift as one moves S of the fertile Beqaa (shown in green) through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage to Ijon in the Dan region. One can only imagine Egyptian troops and chariots making their way through this obstacle on their way to the Beqaa valley and beyond if need be. Assyrians, Babylonians and others would have carefully considered this challenge as they moved S through the Beqaa, especially since they could turn E through Anti-Lebanon to Damascus and then S through Bashan. The shortest route into Galilee and to Egypt, however, lay directly through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage to the Dan region and the Hazor highway and its descent to Lake Galilee. Such decisions were paramount in the minds of military commanders. The importance of military bases and administrative centers in the southern Beqaa and in the Dan region is clear.

**Texts: Bir ed-Dahr blockage**

Texts do not use the name Bir ed-Dahr since it is a term we have coined to designate this natural obstacle. There are texts, however, which imply this blockage dividing the Beqaa valley from the Dan region, two distinct geological and historical areas. The fact that writers of the Bible present the Dan region as the northernmost extent of Israelite settlement certainly infers that some natural border existed to the N. When Israelites ventured farther north the Bible takes special note for they had gone beyond the blockage.
The Bir ed-Dahr blockage effectively separates the area of Beth Rehob in the Beqaa valley from the Dan region—

[The Israelite spies left Kadesh-barnea and] went up to explore the land from the Desert of Zin [in the S] as far as Rehob [the broad, open lobe of the Beqaa valley after the difficult passage through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage on the road to] Lebo-hamath. Numbers 13:21

[The Danites successfully captured the city of Laish/Dan.] No one rescued [the city] because it was far from Sidon; furthermore, [its inhabitants] had no alliance with anyone else; the city was in a valley [the Rift] which belonged to Beth Rehob, but the Bir ed-Dahr blockage separated the city from Beth Rehob. Judges 18:28

Various uses of Dan, Abel-beth-maachah and Ijon imply that the Bir ed-Dahr blockage provides a conceptual terminus to the land N of the Dan region—

The phrase ‘from Dan as far as Beer-sheba’ marks out the dimensions of the land against the northern backdrop of Mt Lebanon W of the Rift, the Bir ed-Dahr blockage in the Rift and Mt. Hermon E of the Rift. All Israel from Dan [just below the Bir ed-Dahr blockage] as far as Beer-sheba [just above of the Great wilderness] knew that Samuel was confirmed as the LORD’s prophet. 1 Samuel 3:20 / King [David] said to Joash ... ‘Move through all the tribes of Israel from Dan [just S the Bir ed-Dahr blockage] as far as Beer-sheba [just N of the Great wilderness] and register the people in order that I might know the number of the people.’ 2 Samuel 24:2 / Judah and Israel lived securely from Dan [in the N] as far as Beer-sheba [in the S] during all Solomon’s days.’ 1 Kings 4:25; cf. Judges 20:1; 2 Samuel 3:10; 17:11; 24:15; 1 Chronicles 21:2; 2 Chronicles 30:5

[When Sheba, son of Bichri, the Benjamite fled from Joash,] he passed through all the tribes of Israel, [Ephraim just N of Benjamin, then Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun and Naphtali to the northernmost city in Israel], to Abel; that is, Beth-maachah [just S of the pass through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage]. 2 Samuel 20:14

In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria came [through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage] and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maachah [in the Dan region]. 2 Kings 15:29; cf. 1 Kings 15:20

From Dan, the snorting of the [Babylonians’] horses is heard! [They have passed through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage and entered the land!] At the sound of their neighboring stallions, the whole land trembles. Jeremiah 8:16

‘Baal Gad’ in the valley of Lebanon below Mt. Hermon,’ most likely the Hasbani spring in the Bir ed-Dahr blockage, served as an actual terminus for measuring the land from various perspectives: N to Baal Gad and N from Baal Gad; or S from Baal Gad—

Joshua took the entire land [region by region]: the hill country, all the Negev, all the land of Goshen, the Shephelah, the Arabah and Israel’s hill country and its Shephelah, from Mt. Halak [the land’s southern limit]—which goes up to Seri—as far as Baal Gad [the copious Hasbani spring within the Bir ed-Dahr blockage, the land’s northern limit] in the valley of Lebanon [which lies W and] below Mt. Hermon. Joshua 11:16-17

These are the kings of the land that Joshua and the Israelites conquered west of the Jordan, from Baal Gad [the Hasbani spring within the Bir ed-Dahr blockage, the land’s northern limit] in the valley of Lebanon as far as Mt. Halak [the land’s southern limit]. Joshua 12:7

[The listing of unoccupied territories included] all Lebanon to the east, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon [the Hasbani spring in the Bir ed-Dahr blockage and north] to Lebo-hamath [the northern end of the Beqaa valley beyond the limit of our maps]. Joshua 13:5

[Among the nations, which the LORD left in the land to test Israel, were] the Hivites, who lived in Mt. Lebanon, from Baal Hermon [the Hasbani spring in the Bir ed-Dahr blockage and north] to Lebo-hamath [the northern end of the Beqaa valley beyond the limit of our maps]. Judges 3:3

The N-S route through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage accents the importance of administrative site like Chalcis and Kumidu—

See texts under Beqaa valley: Circa -1365—Kumidu, p. 36; and Circa -80—Chalcis, p.37, in this Guide.

E. Region of Dan

As one travels S from the Beqaa valley through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage the road navigates a narrow canyon and finally ascends to a small plateau where a unique region comes into view, an area we call the ‘Dan region.’ Here the Rift turns S, and we find ourselves in a totally new setting. Given its position along the conquerors’ corridor the Dan region falls within the Soaring North, but the Hazor highway, which passes the site of Hazor, begins in the Dan region and continues S into the heart of Galilee. The region around us is now part of the Land Between but belongs to the north.

Geobasics

- The open region of Dan emerges just S of the Bir ed-Dahr blockage, precisely at the point where Lebanon’s ranges plunge underground and the Rift turns due S.
- Abundant water, fertile soils and routes entering the Dan region from all directions make this hub an attractive but dangerous area of settlement over the millennia.
- The conquerors’ corridor emerges from the Bir ed-Dahr blockage and intersects the hub of the Dan region before it continues S via the Hazor highway to Galilee and Gilead.
- Invaders from the N view the Dan region as a gateway to the entire Land Between; invaders from the S see this same region as a springboard to the Beqaa and beyond.
- The open region of Dan, S of Lebanon’s obstacles, invites E-W trade through this area and links Damascus, Bashan and Arabia with the ports of Tyre and Sidon.
- Spring-fed streams from Hermon’s slopes flow through the Dan region and form the headwaters of the Jordan, but the Litani river leaves the Rift and veers W to the sea.

The region of Dan lies in the midst of an array of geological drama seen on p. 3. The Hermon massif of Anti-Lebanon (large purple area NE of the site of Dan) rises some 2800m/9200f in stark contrast to the Huleh basin just slightly above sea level. The uplifted Lebanon range with its western slopes suddenly ends along a great fault (along the solid dark line extending NW from the area of Abel toward Sidon). Rift faulting shifts to the S but leaves an uplifted limestone range extending S to the area of Kedesh (green left of Huleh basin on p. 3). Volcanic outflows have emerged between Abel and Dan and between Hazor and Lake Galilee. In the midst of all this the marshy Huleh basin lies in stark contrast to the Bir ed-Dahr blockage. The Litani river (which has made its way through the Bir ed-Dahr blockage) abruptly leaves the Rift as it meets uplifts by Abel and flows to the Mediterranean. This entire drama takes place in a small, confined area which hosts highly strategic sites and intersections.

Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map

- HL in green: Huleh basin
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Panias/Caesarea-philippi, Hazor and Kedesh

As you look at this map (pp. 8/9) note how HL routes gravitate to the Dan region. First note the path of the conquerors’ corridor: from Baalbek in the Beqaa (top of the map) it runs SW to intersections in the region of Chalcis, along the E side of the Bir ed-Dahr blockage via Hasbani, then along the W side of the Dan region and Huleh basin (the Hazor highway leading to the site of Hazor) over the Rosh Pinna Sill and into the depression of Lake Galilee and the site of Chinnereth. Note the larger context of this corridor as it moves S between Lebanon’s ranges and through the Rift depression between uplifted Galilee and Golan. This corridor is one of the main features on this map, mentioned or implied throughout history.
Having ‘taken control’ of the conquerors’ corridor now note the **east-west routes** which flow in and out of the Dan region and intersect this corridor (which at this point we call the Hazor highway). The remarkable position of the Dan region, just S of the Lebanon ranges and N of marshland and swamps in the Huleh basin, allows a network of routes to pass from Bashan and Damascus to Tyre and Sidon. Note this network on this map as roads from the Golan reach Panias and Dan and then cross to the region of Abel. At this pivotal point they continue to Tyre south of the Litani river canyon or they ascend to the Ijon/Ayun plateau, cross the deep Litani canyon to the modern plateau of Nabatiya and continue along a ridge route descending to the coast and the coastal highway near the port-city of Sidon.

The intersecting of the conquerors’ corridor and E-W trade routes makes the Dan region an extremely coveted gateway and a hub. Political entities in and beyond the northern arena seek to control this small area. With this in mind we now look more closely at some important sites in this region and their individual settings.

**Ijon** (Ayun) was a group of settlements along a low ridge above the deep Litani river gorge. Springs in the area feed small streams which flow across this Ayun plateau-basin (green on map). The streams unite and descend through a small canyon (today a nature reserve) to lower ground W of the site of Abel (beth-maachah) before making their way into the Huleh basin to join the headwaters of the Jordan. The impressive site of **Abel** sits atop an isolated remnant of a ridge stretching south of the Ayun plateau. It overlooks much of the Dan region and awaits the excavator’s spade. Both Ijon and Abel lie along the conquerors’ corridor emerging from the Bir ed-Dahr blockage and continuing S via the Hazor highway. Routes from intersections by Abel radiate westward to Sidon, to Tyre and to Acco on the coast. Its importance is second to none in this critical region of Dan.

In contrast the site of **Dan** lies to the east, at the foot of Hermon’s steep slopes and near the mouth of a large canyon emptying into the region. This canyon also feeds underground fissures of fresh water which emerge along the north side of the artificial mound of Tel Dan. A visit to these springs and the nature reserve which surrounds them is one of the most exciting parts of a visit to the land, especially in the summer when most of the country languishes in the heat of the day. Excavations at the site have yielded extensive remains of fortifications, gates, temples and inscriptions, including the famous ‘David Inscription.’

**Panias** lies E of Tel Dan and higher, with its own fresh water spring forming a river called the ‘Banyas’ in Arabic. Seeing such a flow emerge from beneath Hermon’s southern slopes and walking in the river’s lush surroundings explains why it was named for Pan, the god of the forest. This mystical site, well-known throughout antiquity, became Caesar’s city in the days of Jesus. King Herod built a temple dedicated to Caesar above the spring while an elaborate city emerged nearby and along the river which ran through this ‘Caesarea.’ We know this city in the Gospels as Caesarea-philippi, for Philip, king Herod’s son, then governed the Hermon/Golan district from this magnificent site. Torrents and waterfalls characterize the Banyas river as it descends into the Huleh to join the other streams in the Dan region. The psalmist thinks of this river and other streams which descend Hermon’s steep slopes into the Rift.

One cannot ignore this area’s massive structures which protected its passes and routes. The Crusaders never took Damascus and thus never fully controlled the Land Between. They understood the importance of the Dan region and knew that they had to hold its routes. The spectacular **Beaufort** fortress, high on a rocky scarp (NW of Abel), a natural bulwark atop the yawning Litani gorge and its fords, was their statement on the area. This massive structure overlooks the entire Dan region and routes around Abel and Ijon as they make their way to the coastal port of Sidon. It is said that whoever controls Beaufort controls the entire southern Lebanon. Other Crusader forts guard the Abel-Tyre route S of the Litani and tell the
same story. The similar fortress of Nimrod (not named on our maps) rises high above Panias on a southern spur of Hermon but is now thought to be of Moslem origin.

Given all that you now know about the Dan region it should come as no surprise that the region was the natural northern frontier of the land, reflected in the Bible’s use of the phrase ‘from Dan to Beer-sheba.’ The name ‘Dan’ became attached to the area only after the Israelite tribe by this name concluded that they would never occupy their allotted territory along the southern coast by Joppa and set out in search of ‘an inheritance to dwell in.’ They found the inhabitants of Laish (the site’s earlier name) living ‘with need of nothing’ and ‘in security, after the manner of the Sidonians,’ coastal Canaanites to whom they were connected by the route via Nabatiya (NW of Beaufort). Dan subdued Laish, and many (but not all) Danites moved to this inviting area, later to find themselves living along the conquerors’ corridor, the land’s main northern gateway. Arameans of Damascus and the cruel war machines of the Assyria and Babylon finally overtook them. Judgement had come to Dan, meaning ‘he judges.’

In our day Israel controls the Dan region and the southern slopes of Hermon, but the Beaufort fortress and other regions to the west and north of Beaufort lie in modern Lebanon. Damascus, capital of modern Syria, lies to the NE but in recent history it held the area of Panias where a swimming pool along the Banyas river still exists, once reserved for Syria’s army officers. The Dan region is today called Israel’s ‘panhandle,’ a relatively narrow region extending N to the edge of the Ayun plateau (modern Metulla). From our discussion above it is clear why modern (and ancient) Israel fiercely defended the region of Dan. If this area were lost, invaders from the N would flood along the conquerors’ corridor to the Hazor Highway and into Galilee.

Texts: Region of Dan

The term region of Dan does not appear in any text but references to cities in this region point to this specific northern area of the land, a region of water, wonder and danger.

• Uses of Dan and Abel-beth-maachah and the sentinel height of Mt. Hermon indicate that the Dan region is a northern limit in the Land Between—

When Abram heard that his nephew [Lot] had been taken captive, he rallied his trained men—318, born in his household—and pursued [the four kings of the N] as far as Dan [a well-watered, resting place at the northern limit in the land. During the night Abram surprised the unsuspecting kings at Dan,] defeated them and pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. Genesis 14:14-15

From the plains of Moab, Moses climbed Mt. Nebo to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land—Gilead [on the E side of the Jordan] and as far as Dan [on the W side]. Deuteronomy 34:1

[The phrase ‘from Dan as far as Beer-sheba’ places clear limits on the land in biblical thought.] All Israel went out from Dan [in the N] as far as Beer-sheba [in the S] as well as the land of Gilead, and the assembly gathered as one man to the LORD at Mizpeh. Judges 20:1 / [Saul’s old general, Abner, when insulted by Saul’s son, vowed] to establish David’s throne over Israel and over Judah [that is, all Israel] from Dan [in the N] as far as Beer-sheba [in the S]. 2 Samuel 3:10; cf. 1 Samuel 3:20; 2 Samuel 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 4:25

[The chronicler with his Judean-centric view reverses the fixed phrase ‘Dan as far as Beer-sheba’ to ‘Beer-sheba as far as Dan’ but by the phrase places the same limits on the land.] David said to Joab and the officers of the people, “Go and take a census of [inhabitable] Israel from Beershba [at the edge of the Great Wilderness] to Dan [below Lebanon’s ranges].” 1 Chronicles 21:2 / [King Hezekiah] established a decree to proclaim throughout all Israel, from Beersheba [in the S] to Dan [in the N] that the people should come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. 2 Chronicles 30:5

[Jeroboam marked out the southern and northern limits of his newly established kingdom of Israel.] He made two golden cakes ... and set up one in Bethel [at the southern limit of his territory], and the other in Dan [at the northern limit], but this matter became a sin: the people went to worship before one [or the other of them], even as far as Dan [in the extreme northern part of Israel’s territory]. 1 Kings 12:29-30; cf. 2 Kings 10:29

[When Sheba, son of Bichri, the Benjamite fled from Joab,] he passed through all the tribes of Israel, [Ephraim just N of Benjamin, then Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun and Naphtali to the northernmost city in Israel], to Abel: that is, Beth-maachah [in the Dan region]. 2 Samuel 20:14

I remember You, [O Lord], from the land of the Jordan [Jordan’s headwaters in the Dan region], from the Hermon range … [i.e., the northern frontier of the land from which the writer was being taken into exile]. Psalm 42:6
The Dan region is a hub with roads entering and leaving in various directions—

Road to Sidon: [When the Danites captured the city of Laish/Dan.] No one rescued [the city] even though [the city was a Sidonian colony with a road to Sidon for it] it was far from Sidon. Judges 18:28 / [Joab and the officials who were to take the census of Israel] went to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi [or perhaps, the land below Moon Lake; that is, the Golan below Birkat Ram], and on to Dan Jaan [Dan and Ijon in the Dan Region before continuing along the Dan to Sidon road which brought them] around toward Sidon. 2 Samuel 24:6 / Then Jesus left the region of Tyre and went through Sidon [and by way of the Sidon to Dan road passed through the Dan region] to Lake Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. Mark 7:31

Road to Tyre: [Hiram, king of Tyre wrote to Solomon.] Now I am sending you Huram-abi, a skilled man who has expertise [in working with metal, stone, wood and cloth]. He is the son of a woman from Dan and his father is from Tyre [two sites linked by trade and a road]. 2 Chronicles 2:13-14 / In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah [in the Dan region] and Jaoath [along the road between the Dan region and Tyre]. 2 Kings 15:29

Road to Damascus: When Abram heard that his nephew [Lot] had been taken captive, he rallied his trained men—318, born in his household—and pursued [the four kings of the N] as far as Dan. [During the night Abram surprised the unsuspecting kings at Dan,] defeated them and pursued them [along the road from the Dan region to Damascus] as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. Genesis 14:14-15

Road from Beqaa to Hazor highway: Ben-Hadad was responsive to King Asa's offer and sent the commanders of his armies against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah [in the Dan region] and all Kimmereth in addition to Naphtali [along the Hazor highway S of Dan]. 1 Kings 15:20 / In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah [in the Dan region], Janaath, Kedesh and Hazor [along the Hazar highway]. 2 Kings 15:29 / [Ezekiel plotted out the future tribal territories.] At the northern end [of the land], Dan will have one portion along the the Hethlon road [which presumably in the geography that Ezekiel knew ran N from the Dan Region through the Beqaa] to Lebo Hamath. Ezekiel 48:1

The hub of the Dan region also makes it a dangerous place—

[The Danite spies assessed the city of Laish.] They came to Laish [Dan] and saw that the people who lived in it dwelt securely after the manner of the Sidonians [who lived by trade and commerce—not warfare; they lived] quietly and trustingly, and no one who seized dominion [across the N] harmed them in the land of Dan. [They were linked by trade with the Sidonians], but they were far from the Sidonians [and would receive no military assistance from them], and they had no alliance with anyone else. Judges 18:7 / [The Danites came against Laish [Dan], against a people who were quiet and trusting, and they conquered them with warfare and burned the city with fire ... and they named the city Dan after the name of their forebear, Dan. / [It became as Moses said], ‘Dan is a lion’s cub that springs from Bashan,’ Deuteronomy 33:22 / [The Danites, however, had erected for themselves the idol which Micah the Ephraimite had made, and Jonathan the son of Gershom the son of Moses and his sons served the Danites as priests until the day of the captivity of the land [when Assyria began a series of deportations that carried Dan and later all Israel into exile]. Judges 18:30

[Just as the Danites conquered Laish, the region of Dan would see other conquerors.] Ben-Hadad [king of Damascus, with a proprietary eye toward the region of Dan] was responsive to King Asa's offer and sent the commanders of his armies against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah [towns at the crossroads of the Dan region] and all Kimmereth in addition to Naphtali. 1 Kings 15:20

In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria came [into the Dan region] and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah [the northeithmost towns in Israel]. 2 Kings 15:29

[Jeremiah anticipated the Babylonian approach through the Dan region.] A voice declares from Dan [the northern gateway to the land]. ... ‘Besieging forces are coming from a distant land, and they are raising their battle shout against the cities of Judah.’ Jeremiah 4:15 / From Dan, the snorting of the [Babylonians'] horses is heard! At the sound of their neighing stallions, the whole land trembles. Jeremiah 8:16

The Dan region is an attractive area with fertile fields, orchards, water and the backdrop of Mt. Hermon's heights; its a place of wonder, mystery and worship as evidenced at sites like Dan and Panias/Banyas—

[A Levitical singer agonized over his separation from temple service as the foreign army that was leading him into captivity rested by rushing springs in the Dan region.] I remember You, [O Lord], from the land of the Jordan, [from the Dan Region which gives rise to the Dan, Banyas and Ayun (Ijon) streams and carries them along with the Hasbani stream into the Huleh], from the Hermon range, from Mount Mizhar; deep calls to deep at the roar of Your waterfalls. Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me. Psalm 42:6-7

The sanctuary at Dan: [The Danite spies encouraged the tribe to seize the attractive Dan region.] Let’s go up against them! We have seen the land, and indeed, it is very good [a well-watered land with the most copious, karstic spring in the Middle East]! ... When you enter [the Dan region] you will come to a trusting people, and the land is spacious ... [the Dan region is] a place where nothing is lacking that is on the earth. Judges 18:10
guide in brief—
PERSONALITY
IN TEXTS
continued

[In the shadow of Mt. Hermon, with gushing springs, rushing streams and verdant forests, the Danites]
themselves erected [a shrine and Micah, the Ephraimite’s] idol, and Jonathan the son of Gershom the son of
Moses [that is, Moses’ grandson] and his sons served the Danites as priests until the day of the captivity of the
land. They established for themselves [in the region of Dan] the idol that Micah [the Ephraimite] had made, for the
whole time that the house of God was in Shiloh. Judges 18:30-31

[Jeroboam] made two golden calves ... and set up one in Bethel, and the other in Dan [where the Danites had first
established an Israelite sanctuary, but this matter became a sin: the people went to worship before one [or the
other of them], even as far as Dan [in the shadow of Mt. Hermon]. 1 Kings 12:29-30

[The prophet Amos uses skillfully the boundary sites of Dan and Beer-sheba to demonstrate that the whole
land has become apostate.] Behold! Days are coming! An utterance of the Lord GOD—I will send a famine on
the land: not a famine for bread nor a thirst for water, but [a famine] for hearing the words of the LORD.... In that
day beautiful young women and young men will faint from thirst, those who swear by the shame of Samaria [but do
not hear the word of the LORD]. Should they swear, ‘As your gods live, O [abundantly watered] Dan ...’ [thus
swearing by the shame of Dan] or [should they swear] ‘As the way of Beer-sheba lives ... ’ [i.e., claiming to be
children of Abraham but not practicing the obedient faith of the patriarch] they shall fall and not rise again.
[The prophet’s use of ‘Dan’ and ‘Beer-sheba’ underscores that the entire land is faithless.] Amos 8:11-14

The sanctuary at Panias: [In his criticism of Zenon’s report, Polybius speaks of a] pitched battle between
Antiochus [the Seleucid king from the N] and Scopas [commander of the Ptolemaic-Egyptian forces from the
S, a critical struggle which took place] in Coele-Syria, at Mount Panium [c. -198]. The use of Mount
Panium, a sanctuary to the god Pan, suggests that the Pan grotto at Banyas E of Dan already existed at the
time of this battle. Ptolemy II Philadephus, who built a Paneion in Alexandria, may have built the Paneion
at the flowing spring of Banyas. The Paneion (at Banyas) was a well-established sanctuary at the time of
Herod the Great who increased the sanctity of the site with a temple to Caesar. Polybius, Histories 16.18.1ff.

And when [Herod] returned home after escorting Caesar to the sea, he erected to him a very beautiful temple of
white stone in the territory of Zenodorus, near the place called Paneion. In the mountains here there is a beautiful
cave, and below it the earth slopes steeply to a precipitous and inaccessible depth, which is filled with still water, while
above it there is a very high mountain. Below the cave rise the sources of the river Jordan. It was this most celebrated
place that Herod further adorned with the temple which he consecrated to Caesar. Ant 13:363-364/xvii.3 (LCL)

Philip [the tetrarch (Luke 3:1) and son of Herod the Great] too made improvements at Paneas, the city near the
sources of the Jordan, and called it Caesarea (Philippi). Ant 18:28/ii.1 (LCL); cf. War 2:168/xv.1

The Jordan river] has its apparent source at Panion; in reality it rises in the pool called Phiale [probably Birka
t Ram on the Golan] from which it passes by an unseen subterranean channel to Paneion. Phiale will be found at a
distance of a hundred and twenty furlongs from Caesarea (Philippi) ... It was for long unknown that this was the
true source of the Jordan, but the fact was proved by Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis: he had chaff thrown into the pool
of Phiale and found it cast up at Paneion, where the ancients believed that the stream [of the Jordan] had its origin.
The natural beauties of Paneion have been enhanced by royal munificence, the place having been embellished by
Agrippa II, the great grandson of Herod] at great expense. After issuing from this [Pan] grotto the Jordan, whose
course is now visible, intersects the marshes and lagoons of Lake Semechonitis [the swamps of the former Lake
Huleh], then traverses another hundred and twenty furlongs, and below the town of Julias cuts across the Lake of
Gennesar, from which, after meandering through a long desert region, it ends by falling into Lake
Asphalitis [the Dead Sea]. War 3:510-515/x.7 (LCL)

[Against the backdrop of the pagan sanctuaries to Pan and to Caesar and Philip the tetrarch’s contemporary
investigations into the marvel of the Paneion at Caesarea-philippi, Mark records that] Jesus and his disciples
went on to the villages in the region of Caesarea-philippi. On the way [perhaps their thoughts turned to
accounts they had heard of these pagan sanctuaries, and Jesus] questioned his disciples, ‘Who do people say I
am?’ They responded, ‘Some say John the Baptist ... Elijah ... one of the prophets.’ Then he asked them, ‘Who do
you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah.’ Mark 8:27-29; cf. Matthew 16:13-16

[The Golan Heights offer a stunning view over the Dan region and the sites of Dan and Panias/Banyas.
The broad area of the city of Caesarea-philippi lies in front of the rock scarp containing the Pan grotto.
In this geographical context and making use of the plain, the mountain, the slopes of Golan and the river,
Antiochus III defeated the Ptolemaic forces in -198 and gained the eastern Mediterranean world. In this
same context, Jesus said to his disciples,] ‘What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? For
what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ Mark 8:36-37; cf. Matthew 16:26

Using texts on field trips

Many who use this book visit modern Israel and/or Jordan as tourists, students or teachers. The amplified
texts in our study of the Dan region and in studies which follow (as well as in earlier studies of Lower Gilead and Golan) are helpful as previews and reviews during field trips in the land of the Bible. Be sure to use them in regional discussions and at sites.
F. LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE: THE SOARING NORTH

As before, it is now very useful to survey the entire area of the Soaring North on the maps you have been marking. This allows you to consider the position and importance of the Soaring North within the framework of the entire country. Consider these questions as you do this:

- What outstanding geographical features dominate the Soaring North?
- How do these features encourage or discourage human activities such as settlement, travel, defense and commerce?
- Where would you expect to find most human settlement in the Soaring North?
- Main obstacles to travel and commerce are obvious in the Soaring North, but what would you propose as ultimate destinations in or beyond the Soaring North?
- Which routes would provide the easiest passage between Egypt far to the S and the region of Aram and Mesopotamia to the N and NE beyond the border of our maps?
- Identify the triangle of connections around Mt. Hermon (Damascus, the Beqaa and the Dan region) and consider the implications of routes which link each part of this triangle.
- As the leader of Damascus how would control of other parts of this triangle help you extend your dominance over the Soaring North?
- As the leader of Israel what is your highest priority in this triangle, where would you establish your northern border and what would your policy be concerning the other parts?
- As the leader of Tyre (who depends upon goods coming from Arabia) what would be your approach to the powers who control various points of this triangle?
- What part of the Soaring North do you think plays the greatest role in terms of relations between Tyre, Damascus and Israel?
- Summarize three main insights you have gained in studying the Soaring North?

Turn to pp. 12/13: ROCKS AND SOILS map

Consider the following statements on this map (pp. 12/13). The Stable East was a large open area which allowed commerce to flow N from Arabia. The Soaring North, however, presented major obstacles to travel. The obstacles of Mt. Hermon and the Huleh swamps funnel traffic N through the Beqaa or W through the Dan region. Recognizing such larger geobasics helps you to expand your ‘library of impressions’ for the larger Land Between.

Black write-in: The names of the five divisions of the Soaring North that you have just studied in their proper places (listed under Soaring North in the text on p. 2).

Optional: See how many city initials you now recognize in each subdivision; remember that regular type represents sites from Bronze-Iron periods (e.g., 'I' = Ijon), italic type represents sites from Greco-Roman periods (e.g., 'C' = Chalcis) and text in parentheses represents a later or modern name, such as, (H) = Hashani. For some sites you may recognize a name from another period: for example, 'A' in the Anti-Lebanon signals Abel, a site which was later known as Abila. The object of this exercise is not to learn all of these names but rather to see how these initials reflect maps on pp. 2/3 and 8/9.

Optional: On this same map (pp.12/13) you have written regional names in the Stable East and the Soaring North. The last major division of the Northern Arena is still devoid of regional names. A glance at the map reveals the complexity of this area and the possibilities in crossing it from E to W. This is the Complex West, and the upcoming study of this division will fill out your understanding of the north.
3. THE COMPLEX WEST

The Complex West is the third and final division of the Northern Arena. It has little unity compared to the Stable East and Soaring North. Subterranean pressures, the huge ‘hinge’ (the Rift’s turn due south), a deep Galilean depression and a myriad of diagonal cracks all come to bear upon this area’s structural diversity. As we discuss the emerging regions we enter the division covered by Biblical Backgrounds’ Regional Study Map 5 (RSM5, as we refer to it below). If you have it, keep it handy and visible. It is a very useful reference tool.

**Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map**

- HL in green the names in the list under the Complex West on p. 2
- HL in green: The names Western and Eastern which further define Lower Galilee
- As you look at this map (pp. 2/3) note what you recall about the Stable East and Soaring North. Compare the relatively simple aspects of these two divisions with what you see across the Complex West and the regional names you HL above. Note the changing colors, hills and valleys and the orientation of various features.

Before beginning our regional discussion the diverse nature of this division requires us to pause and gather a few general impressions. Events recorded in Egyptian inscriptions, Mesopotamian annals and throughout the pages of the Bible all tell the same story. The Complex West is fragmented, open to invasion on all sides and challenging to unify politically. Within its midst, cross-faulting and geological slippage leaves the Jezreel valley and parts of Lower Galilee as areas easily overrun by imperial armies and competing local peoples. Upper Galilee may be elevated but its heights are dramatically lower and more inviting than those along the Lebanon ranges. On the SE corner Upper Galilee drops rapidly to Lake Galilee deep within the Galilean depression. Such diversity, however, is the ‘playing board’ of many of the Bible’s most dramatic events. Our study of this division is thus inviting and adds an important chapter to our understanding of the Northern Arena.

A. UPPER GALILEE

Find the region of Upper Galilee. It is somewhat triangular-shaped with a southern base along the broken subdivisional line separating Lower from Upper Galilee and a northern apex near Sidon. It reaches W to E from the hills above a narrow coastland to the solid, dark divisional line running from Lake Galilee to above Sidon. This includes the hills N of the Litani canyon within Upper Galilee, but some would place Upper Galilee’s border at the Litani itself.

**Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map**

- HL in green the broken subdivisional line between Upper Galilee and Lower Galilee; Litani Depression (if not already HL)
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Hazor, Kedesh, Taphnith, Sidon, Tyre, Acco
- HL in yellow: Selaim, Ladder of Tyre (along coast); Mt. Meron with its 1208m/3964f elevation; elevation reading 872m/2862f W of Kedesh (see the triangle of roads around the elevation and the modern city of Maroun er-Ras on map 8/9 = ‘Merom crossroads’)
- Black write-in: 1) DISHON midway between Kedesh and the ‘G’ above Mt. Meron (Dishon is a large canyon draining E into the Rift); DOUBBE S to N along drainage system flowing N to the Litani canyon = from the ‘K’ of Kedesh N past the final ‘h’ of Taphnith (the Dishon and Doubbe systems appear more clearly on map 10/11)
- HL in yellow: DISHON, DOUBBE and Kesiv canyon (E of Achzib; a large canyon system from the area of Mt. Meron and flowing W to the sea near near Achzib)
**Geobasics**

- Upper Galilee’s hill country rises between the coastal highway and the Conquerors’ Corridor (in the Rift) and thereby creates a broad and serious blockage to N-S travel.
- Upper Galilee’s routes on both sides of the Litani river canyon offer E-W connections between Tyre and hubs on the Hazor Highway, as well as from Sidon to the Dan region.
- The site of Kedesh and the high ground between Maroun er-Ras (872m/2861 elevation) and Taphnith (885m/2904f) play key roles in Upper Galilee’s routes from Hazor to Tyre.
- Upper Galilee’s abrupt southern and eastern scarps make the Kedesh plateau a valuable stepping stone from the area of Hazor in the Rift to the high ground of Maroun er-Ras.
- Higher elevations and deeply eroded canyons in the S (such as the Kesiv system) keep Upper Galilee’s main trade routes farther N and allow local Jewish settlement to thrive.
- The SE corner of Upper Galilee traditionally has been Jewish territory, semi-secluded but in part agriculturally fertile, especially for the production of olive oil.
- Surrounding areas of rugged limestone highlight the importance of weaker limestones and chalks within the Litani depression for routes in the midst of Upper Galilee.

The marking and geobasics above introduce the very important but generally neglected region of Upper Galilee. The significance of the Phoenician ports of Tyre and Sidon to the W of Upper Galilee cannot be overemphasized. Their commercial maritime network on the Mediterranean stimulated the economic growth of the entire northern trade corridor. Tyre and Sidon lay near the lofty Lebanon range and benefited from its forests and lumber, a natural resource for ship-building and for export. The plunging Lebanon range, however, did not cut off these ports from the interior. Routes across the lower hill country of Upper Galilee connected both Tyre and Sidon with commercial hubs in the Rift valley: Hazor and the Dan region. In turn, these hubs drew caravans from Damascus, Bashan, Gilead and Arabia. As our study below shows, the sites and routes of Upper Galilee are key components in the great northern trade corridor which functioned S of both Lebanon ranges.

Upper Galilee’s uplifted hill country may appear to be a stable zone, but its various limestones and chalks suffer from severe cross-faulting from two directions. Discussing these geological aspects of Upper Galilee lies beyond this book, but noting the following features on this map (pp. 2/3) is useful, especially before we turn to other maps.

1. **The impact of the Lebanon range appears in large areas of deep, harder limestones (green hill country) and an uplifted ridge (green) just W of the Rift, above the Huleh basin.**
2. **Weaker, later limestone (yellow) lies in the heart of Upper Galilee, an area we call the Litani depression. Most of this area, including the long ‘Doubbe’ system, drains into the Litani river canyon and then W to the Mediterranean sea.**
3. **Mt. Meron, rising in the S, is Upper Galilee’s highest point. The nearby Kesiv canyon system creates a rugged but fertile area SW of Mt. Meron which together with other valleys flows W to empty into the Mediterranean by Achzib. Mt. Meron’s eastern flank drains into the Rift and Lake Galilee through areas of less fertile limestones.**

The deep Litani river canyon may create a barrier in the midst of the Litani depression, but both sides of the canyon allow E-W routes to reach the coast from the interior. Cannanite coastal ports and inland city-states dominated trade along these trade routes. This was not the case, however, in the most southern part of Upper Galilee where geobasics create a more secluded area, both in western fertile valleys and canyons (green) and on eastern plateaus and in less fertile chalks and limestones (red, brown and yellow). Early Israelites and Jews in Jesus’ day were free to settle here but not along Upper Galilee’s major trade routes.
Turn to pp. 8/9: Lebanon Ranges, Beqaa and Damascus map

- HL in green: Upper and Lower (N and S of Galilee)
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Hazor, Kedesh, Maroun er-Ras, Taphnith, Beaufort, Nabatiya, Sidon, Tyre, Acco
- HL in yellow: Selaim, Ladder of Tyre (along coast); Mt. Meron with its 1208m/3964f elevation; elevation reading 872m/2861f (by the modern city of Maroun er-Ras = ‘Merom crossroads’)
- HL in yellow on red route: from Chinnereth to Tyre via Gischala, Yiron and Kanah

This map (pp. 8/9) places Upper Galilee within the context of the Soaring North and Damascus. It shows the full extent of Upper Galilee from Sidon in the N to the broken subdivisional line separating Upper and Lower Galilee toward the bottom of the map.

The Litani river canyon (above ‘Litani Depression’) separates Upper Galilee into two sectors. The northern sector hosts a road from the Dan region to Sidon via Beaufort and Nabatiya. The southern sector offers E-W connections from the port of Tyre across Upper Galilee to the Hazor highway and its various hubs: the regions of Dan, Hazor and Chinnereth. Most of these routes make use of high ground between the region of Taphnith and the area we call the ‘Merom crossroads’ (around Maroun er-Ras). You also HL a new route on this map which ascends from Chinnereth and makes its way through the semi-secluded southern part of Upper Galilee to the Merom crossroads. Settlers across southern Upper Galilee used this route to press N to the Merom crossroads and access Upper Galilee’s trade routes to Tyre.

Turn to pp. 10/11: Galilee, Golan, Jezreel and Lower Gilead map

- HL in green: Huleh basin, Dan region, Litani depression and Upper Galilee
- HL in red/pink: Chinnereth, Hazor, Kedesh/Cadasa, Merom, Maroun er-Ras, Taphnith, Abel-beth-maachah, Dan, Janoah (E of Tyre), Tyre, Achzib, Acco, Bethsaida, Aphek (E shore of Lake Galilee) and Hippus
- Black write-in: 1) Dishon on canyon E of Merom and above Meroth; Doubbe vertically along canyon between Maroun er-Ras and Beth-anath
- HL in yellow: Litani canyon, Selaim, Ladder of Tyre; Mt. Meron with its 1208m/3964f elevation; elevation reading 872m/2861f (by the modern city of Maroun er-Ras), Kesiv canyon, Ammud canyon, Dishon, Doubbe, Rosh Pinna Sill, Plain of Bethsaida
- HL in yellow on red routes: 1) from Chinnereth via Hazor to Abel-beth-maachah and straight N off map = Hazor highway; 2) from Acco N off map via Tyre; 3) from Dan to Tyre via Abel-beth-maachah (road just N of Janoah); 4) from Abel-beth-Maachah to Acco via Merom crossroads (at Yiron) and Beth-emek; 5) from Yarmuk plain to Hazor via Aphek and Bethsaida; 6) from Hazor to Tyre via Merom crossroads and Taphnith; 7) from Chinnereth to Tyre via Gischala, Merom crossroads and Kanah (near Tyre)

This map (pp. 10/11) allows you to place Upper Galilee within the context of your previous work in the Stable East, especially the system of highways connecting Arabia with the ports of Tyre and Sidon via Bashan, the Rift and Upper Galilee itself. This is a major part of the northern trade corridor which we continue to study in our later work.

The following exercise illustrates the importance of Upper Galilee within its trade corridor. Glance over your work on the Stable East (p. 11) and note its extent. Then focus your eyes on Upper Galilee (top of p. 10). Note its steep eastern scarp along the solid dark line and its southern scarp along the broken subdivisional line from E of Acco to near Chorazin. Obviously, Upper Galilee covers a much smaller area than the Stable East.
Continue this visual exercise (or better yet use your hand) to gather the routes from Arabia as they flow across Bashan, E and N of the Yarmuk canyon. Lead them to the Dan region, recalling the connections which this region has both to Sidon (off the map) and to Tyre. Return to p. 11 and again gather routes from Arabia but this time lead them through Lower Gilead S of the Yarmuk canyon to the Yarmuk plain. From there follow the narrow eastern shore of Lake Galilee via Aphek and Bethsaida (the 'land of Geshur') to Hazor and across Upper Galilee via Kedesh, the Merom crossroads and Taphnith to Tyre. This simple exercise reveals the significance of the hubs in the regions of Hazor and Dan and the importance of hill country routes to Tyre and Sidon. All these routes and hubs lie S of the lofty Lebanon ranges. To reinforce this do the same exercise on pp. 8/9, 2/3 and 12/13.

Geobasics in Upper Galilee restrain E-W roads and explain the paths of HL routes on pp. 8/9 and 10/11. It is useful to find some large features noted below on pp. 10/11.

1. Upper Galilee’s eastern and southern scarps, Litani canyon and deeply eroded hard limestone hills (green, pp. 2/3) keep its main trade routes to specific hill country paths.

2. The eastern scarp and deep Litani canyon present immediate obstacles to routes moving W from the Dan region (W and NW of Abel), but once atop the eastern scarp or across the Litani challenges diminish as routes continue westward to Tyre and Sidon.

3. Structural complexities NW of Hazor have left an intermediate plateau between the Rift and the hill country. The deep Dishon dissects this plateau and forces routes N to the convenient region of Kedesh. From there they climb to the Merom crossroads.

4. Rugged canyons to the W force roads from the Merom crossroads in the direction of Tyre along the hill country’s convenient watershed. An uplifted blockage forces one route by Taphnith and through adjacent canyons and another via high ground to Kanah.

Our discussion above makes it clear why local powers vied for control of these routes through Upper Galilee and the Rift valley hubs which feed them. Imperial powers were quick to take control and maintain their dominance in this region. This explains Egyptian and Assyrian policies as well as the dispute between Tyre and Hazor for control of Kedesh and routes through Upper Galilee. This also lay at the heart of ongoing trade wars between Israel and Damascus. The Hazor highway was part of the Conquerors’ Corridor, but more importantly its commercial hubs and their links with Tyre and Sidon were a critical part of the busy northern trade corridor. That corridor linked inland suppliers with a vast Mediterranean network of ports and markets. No one could afford to overlook Upper Galilee.

This reality exists across the pages of the Bible, but nowhere is it more explicit than in the days of Ahab of northern Israel, closely allied to coastal Canaanites in Sidon and Tyre. Everyone benefited, but Ahab bitterly fought Damascus and gave free reign to his wife Jezebel of Sidon and her prophets of Baal. The prophet Elijah (from Tishbe/Tob in Gilead!) arose and accused Ahab of forfeiting the faith of Israel. In Jesus’ day Decapolis Greek cities served as middlemen within this same northern trade corridor. Under Rome’s watchful eye commerce flowed to Tyre and Sidon via Kedesh/Cadasa and Caesarea-philippi. When Jesus took the disciples 'to the region of Tyre and Sidon' they passed through the Merom crossroads and into 'enemy territory' N of the Dishon. Geobasic realities in Upper Galilee resound in what transpired there.

Texts: Upper Galilee

The term Galilee appears numerous times in the Bible and in ancient literary works such as the books of the Jewish historian Josephus who wrote in the decades after Jesus (Life, Jewish Antiquities and History of the Jewish War against the Romans). A distinction between Upper and Lower Galilee is inferred in the Bible and overtly stated by Josephus. This is not surprising since Upper and Lower Galilee are strikingly different regions in terms of...
elevation, drainage systems, rocks, soils, settlement and routes. Often the reader must
determine what the author means by the general term ‘Galilee.’ Specific sites and features
may point to all of Galilee, Lower Galilee, Upper Galilee or distinctive subregions such
as the secure Jewish part of Upper Galilee or the hotly contested Gentile high ground
between Hazor and Tyre. Biblical and other historical texts offer us abundant opportunity
to illustrate the personality of various parts of Upper Galilee. Topics below organize
these texts and help you navigate the following pages. Many texts marked as ‘optional’
are nevertheless useful to students interested in Egyptian sources or portions of Josephus
which describe Galilee in the days of Jesus’ Galilean ministry.

• Galilee divides into two subdivisions: Upper Galilee and Lower Galilee—

[The list of fortified cities of the Israelite tribe of Naphtali first include] Hammath … Chinnereth … Ramah
/sites in Lower Galilee on pp. 10/11 and 14/15, and continue with] Hazor, Kelelesh … Yiron … Beth-anath
and Beth-shemesh/sites related to or actually in Upper Galilee on pp 10/11).Joshua 19:32-39
[After a first conflict at Jerusalem between Jewish and Roman forces (+68),] the Jews … appointed additional
generals to conduct the war … Josephus, son of Matthias was given the two Galilees. War 2:563-658xx.3-4 (LCL)
[The numbered sections below are from the description of Jewish Galilee by Josephus Flavius, the Jewish
general of all Galilee, during the First Revolt against Rome which broke out shortly after the close of the
book of Acts. Josephus may have confused the locations of ‘Baca’ and ‘Meroth’ which we transpose below.]

(1) Galilee has two divisions known as Upper and Lower Galilee which are enveloped by Phoenicia [W along the
coast] and Syria [E of the Huleh basin].

(2) Its western frontiers are the outlying [costal] territory of Ptolemais [Acco] and Carmel, a mountain which once
was included in Galilee but now belongs to Tyre….

(3) On the south, [if one includes the adjoining bays of the Jezreel valley, Galilee] is bounded by Samaria and the
territory of Scythopolis [Beth-shan, which extend] to the waters of Jordan;

(4) on the east, by the territory [of the Decapolis cities of Hippus, Gadara, and [the region of Golon]
Gaulanitis, which forms the frontier-line of Agrippa’s kingdom [the Agrippa who heard Paul’s defense in Acts 23];

(5) on the north Tyre and its dependent district mark [Galilee’s political or Jewish] limits.

(6) Lower Galilee extends in length [E-W] from Tiberias [on Lake Galilee] to Chabulon [see map 10/11], not
far from Ptolemais on the coast; in breadth [S-N], from a village in the Great Plain called Exaloth [in the Jezreel
valley; see RSM5] to Bersabe [by Ramah below the southern scarp of Upper Galilee; see RSM5].

(7) At this point [along the southern scarp] begins [Jewish] Upper Galilee, extending in breadth [S-N] to the
village of Meroth, [because of the Jewish] Upper Galilee;[the region of Tyrian territory [in non-Jewish Upper Galilee];

(8) in length [E-W], [Jewish Upper Galilee] reaches from the village of Thella [in the Huleh basin], near the
Jordan, to Baca [W of which is again Tyrian territory in Josephus’ day].

(9) With this limited area, and although surrounded by such powerful foreign nations, the two Galilees have
never resisted any hostile invasion, for the inhabitants are from infancy inured to war, and have at all times been
numerous; never did the men lack courage nor the country men. War 3:35-43(ii.1-2 (LCL, revised)

[Josephus, the new Jewish General of all Galilee set up town administrators] and proceeded to take measures
for [the towns’] security from external attack. Foreseeing that Galilee would bear the brunt of the Romans’ opening
assault, he fortified the most suitable places … in Lower Galilee … and in Upper Galilee the rock known as
Achabaron, Seph, Jammith and Mero. War 2:572-574xx.6 (LCL); cf. Life 187-188/37

• Rugged terrain and fertile valleys in Upper Galilee south of the Merom crossroads
(especially around Gischala) served as a secure and prosperous center for Jewish life—
[When Josephus spoke about his fortifications in Golan and Upper Galilee, he also commented on the
naturally rugged terrain of the regions.] I erected walls at Seleucia and Sogane, villages [on the Golan] with very
strong natural defenses, and provided similar protection for certain villages in Upper Galilee, also in very rugged
surroundings, named Jamnia, Ameinath [Meroth S of the Merom crossroads], Acharabhe. Life 187-188/37 (LCL)

[In discussing all Galilee, Josephus described its productivity. His description may best fit Lower Galilee,
but Upper Galilee is also very fertile:] With this limited area, and although surrounded by such powerful foreign
nations, the two Galilees have always resisted any hostile invasion, for the inhabitants are from infancy inured
to war, and have at all times been numerous; never did the men lack courage nor the country men. For the land
is everywhere so rich in soil and pasture and produces such variety of trees, that even the most indolent are
tempted by these facilities to devote themselves to agriculture. In fact, every inch of the soil has been cultivated
by the inhabitants; there is not a parcel of waste land. The towns, too, are thickly distributed, and even the villages,
thanks to the fertility of the soil, are all so densely populated that the smallest of them contains above fifteen thousand
inhabitants [no doubt an exaggerated number unless misunderstood]. War 3:41-43(ii.2 (LCL)
optional—

Josephus found an adversary in John of Gischala who in the guise of protecting Jewish interests enriched himself through Upper Galilee's bounteous olive oil industry. With the avowed object of protecting all the Jews of Syria from the use of oil not supplied by their own countrymen, Josephus of Gischala sought and obtained permission to deliver it to them at the frontier [which separated Upper Galilee from Syria]. He then bought up that commodity [i.e., olive oil], paying Tyrian coin of the value of four Attic drachmas for four amphorae of oil and proceeded to sell half an amphora at the same price. As the Galilee is a special home of the olive and the crop had been plentiful, John, enjoying a monopoly... amassed an immense sum of money, which he forthwith employed against the man who had brought him his gains. Supposing that, if he could get rid of Josephus, he would himself become governor of Galilee. War 2:591-593 (iii.2) LCL; cf. Life 70-76/13 in which Josephus discusses both John's attempt to lay hold of the grain stores of Upper Galilee and his olive oil shenanigans.

After the more open Lower Galilee had fallen to the Roman forces, only Gischala, a small town in [Upper Galilee], now remained unsubdued. The inhabitants were inclined to peace, being mainly agricultural labourers, whose whole attention was devoted to the prospects of the crops. [Their misfortune, however, was that John and his band of guarding were defending the city]. War 4:84/6:1 (LCL)

Some clans from the tribes of Asher and Naphtali settled in Upper Galilee but faced competition from surrounding inland or coastal Canaanites—

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps.

Asher: [When Israel cast lots for the remaining parts of the land,] the fifth lot fell to the descendants of Asher by their clans. Their territory ... [in Upper Galilee included] Hammon and Kanah as far as greater Sidon. The boundary then turned back to Ramah and as far as the fortified city of Tyre; then the border turned toward Hosah [Usa] and its limits on the west were the region of Achzib ... These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the descendants of Asher by their clans. Joshua 19:24-31 / Asher did not dispossess ... the inhabitants of Sidon, Ahab on Achzib ... , but the Asherites lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land. Judges 1:31-32

Naphtali: The sixth lot fell to the descendants of Naphtali by their clans. Their territory ... touched Zebulan on the south, Asher on the west and the Jordan on the east. The fortified cities were ... [in Upper Galilee: Jezreel, Ke-desh, Edrei, En Hazor, Yiron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth-anath and Beth-shemesh]. These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the descendants of Naphtali by their clans. Joshua 19:32-39 / Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'Tell the Israelites to allocate cities of refuge, as I directed you through Moses.' ... So they set apart Ke'desh in [Upper Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali,... Joshua 20:1, 7 / Naphtali did not dispossess the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh or Beth-anath [in the heart of Upper Galilee] but lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land. The inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath [eventually] became their labor-force. Judges 1:33

Israel's kings looked to Tyre and Sidon on Upper Galilee's coast for building products and as trading partners, but Hebrew prophets viewed them as rich and godless cities—

David: [In making preparations for the temple, David provided] cedar logs without number, for the Sidonians and Tyrians had brought an abundance of cedar logs to David. 1 Chronicles 22:4 / Hiram, king of Tyre ... had been David's ally throughout his reign. 1 Kings 5:1

Solomon: Hiram [of Tyre] provided Solomon with all the cedar logs and pine logs that he desired, and Solomon provided Hiram with twenty thousand measures of wheat as food for his court and twenty measures of pressed olive oil—Solomon provided this nearly to Hiram. 1 Kings 5:10-11 / Hiram, king of Tyre supplied Solomon with all the cedar logs, pine logs and gold that he desired, so King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 1 Kings 9:11 / King [Solomon] had ships of Tarshish on the sea with the ships of Hiram [king of Tyre]. Once every three years the ships of Tarshish came in carrying gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. 1 Kings 10:22

Ahab: [To become trading partners with the Phoenicians, Ahab] took as a wife, Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and [to seal the alliance] he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal which he built in Samaria. 1 Kings 16:31-32

Various kings of Israel and Judah: You, O Tyre, ... [the kings of] Judah and the land of Israel were your trading partners. They gave wheat from [as far away as] Minnith, fig cakes, honey, olive oil and balm for your imports. Ezekiel 27:17

Zerubbabel and Joshua: Joshua [the High Priest] and Zerubbabel [the High Commissioner] ... gave ... food, drink and olive oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar logs from Lebanon by sea to Joppa. Ezra 3:7

Herod Agrippa: [Herod Agrippa] was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, but with one intent they came to meet with him.... They were seeking peace because they depended on the king's country for their food. Acts 12:20

Hebrew prophets: An oracle concerning Tyre. Hosea, O ships of Tarshish [on your return voyage to Tyre], for it is in ruin without home or haven! From the land of Cyprus [the report of Tyre's ruin] is confirmed to them by [Tyre's refugees]. Be alarmed, O inhabitants of the [Phoenician] coast! Sidonian merchants, who crossed over the sea, enriched you ... and she [i.e., Tyre] became the trade-broker of the nations. Be appalled, O Sidon! Indeed, the sea, yea, the Fortress of the Sea [the island Tyre] says, 'I am bereaved. It is as if I had not with birth pains, given birth, raised young men or reared young women.' When the report reaches Egypt [on the southern coast], they will tremble at this report concerning Tyre. Flee across to Tarshish [on the far western side of the Great Sea]: Hosea, O inhabitants of the [Phoenician] coast! Is this [ruined city of Tyre] yours, the exultant one, whose antiquity is from ancient days, whose feet carried her to colonize distant places? Who planned this against...
Tyre, the one who bestows crowns [on her colonies], whose merchants are princes, whose traders are the esteemed ones of the earth? The LORD of hosts planned it to dishonor the majesty of all [Tyre’s] splendor, to humble all the esteemed ones of the earth. Isaiah 23:1-9 / O, merci man! Though Tyre said of Jerusalem: ‘Aha! The gateway of the nations is broken [Jerusalem’s control of the northern trade corridor and especially the contested Hazor-Tyre road]. It will swing open to me! I shall be enriched for she lies wasted!’ Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold! I am against you, O Tyre.’ Ezekiel 26:2-3; see also Amos 1:9-10; Jeremiah 25:22; 47:4; Ezekiel 26:28; Joel 3:4; Zechariah 9:2-4

• Both Tyre and Sidon desired more of Upper Galilee’s hinterland as well as control of trade routes crossing it—

Sidon toward the Dan region: [The Danites] came to Laish [Dan] and saw that the people who lived in it dwelt securely after the manner of the Sidonians [who lived by trade and commerce—not warfare; the people of Laish lived quietly and trustingly, and no one seized dominion [across the N] harmed them in the land, but they were far from the Sidonians [although linked with them as a colony], and they had no alliance with anyone else. Judges 18:7 / There was a disagreement between the people of Damascus and those of Sidon on the subject of boundaries [in the region of Dan]. Ant 18:153/vi.3 (LCL)

Tyre toward the Huleh basin: [Canaanite Tyre complained to Pharaoh about the westward advance of Hazor into Upper Galilee’s hinterland]. The king of Hazor has abandoned his place and has aligned himself with the Apiru.... He [the king of Hazor] has taken over the land of the king [in Upper Galilee] for the Apiru. EA 148 / [Tensions often flared up between Tyre and Jewish Galilee.] Marien [the prince of Tyre] therefore invaded Galilee, which lay on his borders, and captured three strongholds, in which he put garrisons. But Herod came against him also and took him from all these places; the Tyrian garrison, however, he considereably reduced. Ant 14:298/xii.1 (LCL); cf. War 1:238/xii.2 / [With the outbreak of the revolt,] parties of Jews sacked the Syrain villages and the neighboring [Greek-Roman] cities ... and advanced to Kedasa [Kedesh in Upper Galilee], a Tyrian village [above the Huleh basin]. War 2:457-460/xviii.1 (LCL) / The Tyrians dispatched a considerable number [of their Jewish population], but imprisoned the majority in chains. War 2:478/xviii.5 (LCL) / [When Vespasian with king Agrippa II] arrived at Tyre ... the citizens ... denounced [Agrippa] as an enemy of their own and of the Romans. [Such tensions reflect a conflict of interests over common borders.] Life 4410/LCL / [Kedesh in Upper Galilee was] a strong inland village of the Tyrians, always feud at feud with the Galileans, having its large population and stout defences as resources behind it in its quarrel with the nation [over boundaries in Upper Galilee]. War 4:105/vi.3 (LCL)

• High ground in Upper Galilee from the Merom crossroads to the area of Taphnith carried a critical and contested trade link between Hazor and Tyre—

Circa -1470: [The conquered city lists of Thutmose III name numerous sites in and around Upper Galilee along with some identifiable sites along Upper Galilee’s routes.] Hazor [in the Huleh basin and anchoring the Hazor-Tyre road which passes through the Upper Galilee along the Hazor-Tyre road] ... Galilee [perhaps Kedesh in Upper Galilee along the Hazor-Tyre road] ... Meron [in Upper Galilee]’s high ground at the Merom crossroads] ... Taphnith [in Upper Galilee]’s high ground near the Taphnith, Taphnith [in Upper Galilee]’s high ground carrying the Hazor-Tyre road. City Lists of Thutmose III (cf. Y. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible [Philadelphia, 1979] and S. Ahituv, Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents [Jerusalem, 1984])

Circa -1365: [Canaanite Tyre asked Pharaoh for neighboring Usu and complained about tensions on the coast with Sidon and the westward advance of Hazor. May the king [pharaoh] ... give Usu to his servant [the ruler of Tyre] for water, for fetching wood, for straw; for clay... The one who raids the land of the king is the king of Sidon. The king of Hazor has abandoned his place and has aligned himself with the Apiru.... These are treacherous fellows. He [the king of Hazor] has taken over the land of the king [in Upper Galilee] for the Apiru. May the king ask his commissioner, who is familiar with Canaan [and Upper Galilee]’s high ground route via the Merom crossroads and Taphnith]. EA 148 / [As the Israelites advanced into Upper Galilee and threatened Hazor’s hold on the Hazor-Tyre road], Jabin, king of Hazor ... sent [an order to muster to all the neighboring kings]... All these kings joined together and went out to battle at the Waters of Merom [near the Merom crossroads] in order to engage Israel in battle.... So Joshua and his whole fighting force came against them at the Waters of Merom suddenly and pounced on them. Then the LORD gave them into the hand of Israel and they defeated them and pursued them ... Then Joshua returned at that time, and he captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword. So formerly Hazor had led all these kingdoms. Joshua 11:1-10

Circa -1300: [Seti I reclaimed the Tyre-Hazor road, restoring Egyptian dominance in Upper Galilee. This line of march emerges from his city lists.] Tyre, Usu [along the coast], Beth-anath [on Upper Galilee’s high ground near Taphnith] ... Kedesh [on the descent from the Merom crossroads to Hazor in the Huleh basin] ... Hazor [anchoring the Tyre-Hazor road]. City Lists of Seti I (cf. Y. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible [Philadelphia, 1979])

Circa -735: [In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maachah [in the Dan region], Ijon [along the road through the Merom crossroads between Dan and Tyre], Kedesh [on the descent between the Merom crossroads and Huleh basin], Hazor [anchoring the Tyre-Hazor road and the Huleh highway], as well as Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali [whose tribal lands included parts of both Lower and Upper Galilee]. 2 Kings 15:29 / [Isaiah responded to Israel’s humiliation along
guide in brief—

the Hazor highway and in Galilee and Gilead.] Formerly he humbled the land of Zebulun [in Lower Galilee] and the land of Naphtali [in Lower and Upper Galilee], yet in the end he will honor the Way of the Sea [the Hazor highway], [Gilead] across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. Isaiah 9:1

Circa -260: [Zenon, a Ptolemaic trade agent, visited Upper Galilee and used the Merom crossroads on an itinerary that took him to Beth-anath [on Upper Galilee's high ground near Taphnith] ... Kedesh [on the descent from the Merom crossroads to Hazor in the Huleh basin] ... Ptolemäus [Acco, for his return by sea to Egypt]. P.Cair.Zen. 59004

Circa -150: [The Greek ruler Demetius advanced to Kedesh/Kedasa in Upper Galilee to assert Seleucid control of the Hazor-Tyre road and challenge Jewish expansion.] Demetris' generals were advancing to Kedasa with a great army—this city lies between the land of Tyre and [Jewish] Galilee; for they supposed that they could draw [Jonathan, the Jewish-Hasmonean leader] off from [his assault on] Syria to Galilee as an ally of the latter country, and that he would not suffer the Galilæans, who were his own people, to be attacked by the enemy. [Jonathan] went out to meet them ... [and] set out from Galilee from the waters of Genesaret, as they are called—for this was where he was then encamped [by Lake Galilee], and proceeded to the plain of Hazor, not knowing that the enemy was there. [The Greeks had set an ambush on the slopes of Upper Galilee, while the main force lured Jonathan into engagement on the plain. Upon engagement, the Jewish forces found themselves fighting on two sides, and many fled. The few who remained fought furiously and routed the Greeks.] When those of Jonathan’s soldiers who had retreated saw the enemy in rout, they rallied after their flight and hastened to pursue them, which they did [from Hazor along the Hazor-Tyre road] as far as Kedasa, where the enemy had their camp. Ant 13:154-162/v.6-7 (LCL); cf. 1 Maccabees 11:63-74

Circa +65: [With the outbreak of the revolt, parties of Jews sacked the Syrian villages and the neighboring [Greek-Roman] cities ... and advanced to Kedasa [Kedesh in Upper Galilee], a Tyrian village as Tyre sought to control the road through the Merom crossroads.] War 2:457-460/v.1 (LCL) / [As the Roman’s Galilean campaign drew to an end] only Gischala, a small town in [Upper Galilee] remained unsubdued ... Titus, on riding up to Gischala, saw that the town might easily be carried by assault. [He called on Gischala to surrender. It was the Sabbath, however, and John of Gischala prevailed on him to delay the decision until the Sabbath was over.] Titus was not only influenced by this pretext for delay, but even pitched his camp farther from the city, at Cydasa [Kedesh in Upper Galilee]. This is a strong inland village of the Tyrians, always at feud with the Galilæans, having its large population and stout defences as resources behind it in its quarrel with the nation [over who would control the Merom crossroads and the Tyre-Hazor road]. War 4:84-122/v.1-5

Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map

- HL in green the broken subdivisional line along the E side of the Carmel range (from Carmel’s tip through Megiddo, around Mt. Gilboa and S off the map
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Acco, Ramah, Sepphoris, ‘H’ (Hannathon) above Sepphoris, ‘HH’ (Horns of Hattin/Hittim)
- HL in yellow: Mt. Tabor and Hill of Moreh

B. LOWER GALILEE

Find the solid dark line (pp. 2/3) along the W side of the Carmel range, a line which delineates the SW extent of the Complex West in the northern arena. Note the broken subdivisional line along the E side of Mt. Carmel and that no such line divides Lower Galilee and the Jezreel valley. The thin broken line you see around the Jezreel valley only separates the soils of the plain from surrounding rock types. As your study proceeds you will see that southern Lower Galilee blends into this great central plain of the Land Between. Your RSM5 is very useful in our discussion (see RSM comment at the opening of ‘The Complex West’).
Look at the region of Lower Galilee on this map (pp. 2/3) and note its diverse colors and the complexity of its relief. Clearly it lacks unity which makes it as challenging to describe as it is to control. This makes understanding the geobasics of this strategic area very important.

Geobasics

• Lower Galilee’s three subregions are part of a larger area that suffers from deep diagonal faulting off the Rift that has left a complex, fragmented landscape.

• Side faults off the Rift in Eastern Lower Galilee dissect basalt-covered, tilted plateaus and encourage E-W travel while keeping N-S routes to specific paths and passes.

• Chalky ‘lowlands’ and open valleys between E-W ridges in Western Lower Galilee offer little resistance to travel and share the open, threatened character of the Jezreel valley.

• East-West ridges of harder limestone and small, fertile valleys in Northern Lower Galilee provide areas of settlement in a more secluded setting reached by local tracks.

• While Lower Galilee offers challenges, its plains, passes and lower elevations allow imperial N-S highways and E-W trade routes to flow across the Land Between.

• The Hazor Highway faces a particular challenge along the NW shores of Lake Galilee where the Galilean depression has left a deep cavity through which the road must pass.

The entire area between the Carmel range, Upper Galilee and the Rift is a maze of diagonal geological faults reaching NW off the Rift to define the Carmel range, the Jezreel valley and Lower Galilee. Explaining how this complex area emerged is beyond our present study. Indeed, geologists still debate the process that created great subterranean pressures which were released in the form of faults, tilted blocks, hills and raised ridges with intermittent valleys between them. Lower Galilee presents a striking geological drama.

The geobasics above summarize the effects of this drama upon both relief and travel in Lower Galilee. This map (pp. 2/3) clearly shows the basaltic covering (red) in Eastern Lower Galilee. A careful look reveals scarp and tilted plateaus, the result of the NW side faults off the Rift. The western shore of Lake Galilee follows such a NW fault, and immediately N, in the area of the Plain of Gennesaret, a myriad of cross faults creates a complex, 'caved-in' region, which drains a part of Upper Galilee (for a closer view and names see pp. 14/15).

Much of Western Lower Galilee presents an altogether different picture. Its weaker limestones (yellow) and regions of chalk (brown) show far less disturbance. On the other hand, Northern Lower Galilee (not named but in the area covered by the term 'Lower Galilee' on our maps) is a series of hard limestone ridges, oriented almost due E-W. These abrupt, raised ridges offer limited opportunities for terraced farming, but winter rains carry and deposit well-processed terra rosa soil in adjacent valleys. These inviting and fertile valleys offer some of the best agricultural lands in the northern area, though small in comparison with the expanse of the Beqaa and Bashan. The northernmost valley lies at the foot of Upper Galilee’s steep southern scarp, along the subdivional line you HL between Lower and Upper Galilee (pp. 2/3).

A broad, intriguing ridge we call the ‘Nazareth ridge’ (with an ‘N’ for ‘Nazareth’) is different. Topped with weaker limestones and chalks but bounded on the S and N by a thin line of hard limestone (green), the Nazareth ridge and nearby limestone Mt. Tabor leaves much in doubt as to the origin of this southern flank of Lower Galilee. Nazareth itself sits within a basin of infertile chalks (brown) with a meager spring and little promise compared to villages farther N at the edge of limestone ridges and fertile valleys. Nathanael’s contempt is not surprising—that Nazareth would be Jesus’ home ‘of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote.’
A useful exercise you can now do is to compare your work on this map (pp. 2/3) with maps you will soon mark (pp. 10/11, especially the detail 14/15; and RSM5 for those who have it) and note the following features from the four paragraphs above:

- Eastern Lower Galilee’s diagonally oriented scarps and tilted plateaus, plus the ‘caved-in’ area of the Plain of Gennesaret with cross faults and the Ammud canyon;
- Western Lower Galilee’s weaker limestones, chalks and the Nazareth ridge;
- Northern Lower Galilee’s E-W oriented hard limestone ridges and fertile valleys, some of which lie in isolated contexts between surrounding ridges and mounts.

**Turn to pp. 10/11: GALILEE, GOLAN, JEZREEL AND LOWER GILEAD map**

- HL in green: Lower Galilee, Western, Eastern (parts of Lower Galilee), Acco Plain
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Acco, Hannathon, Sepphoris, Chinnereth, Horns of Hattin, Yenoam
- HL in yellow: Naaman Stream (S of Acco), Beth-netofa valley, Mt. Tabor, Plain of Gennesaret, Mt. Arbel
- HL in yellow on red route: 1) from Acco to Yenoam via Hannathon; 2) from Acco to Jokneam via Achshaph; 3) from Acco to Jezeel via Sarid

Sit back and look at the work you have just done on this map (pp. 10/11). Link the highway from Tyre with Acco on the coast and from Acco toward the Yarmuk plain and areas in the Stable East S and N of the Yarmuk river canyon. See how routes in Lower Golan and Lower Gilead make their way S of Lake Galilee on their ways to the port of Acco. Also note difficulties along the coastal route N of Acco as caravans faced the challenge of a promontory plunging into the sea and the perilous Ladder of Tyre beyond in order to reach Tyre itself. In our next marking task we HL routes coming from the Hazor highway, routes which diagonally cross Lower Galilee in a different direction and create naturally significant intersections.

**Turn to pp. 10/11: GALILEE, GOLAN, JEZREEL AND LOWER GILEAD map**

- HL in yellow on red route: 1) from Chinnereth SW to Jokneam via Sepphoris; 2) from Chinnereth to Jezeel via Mt. Tabor; 3) from Chinnereth to Sarid via Mt. Tabor

The Hazor highway, the southern part of the Conquerors’ Corridor, descends from Hazor into the deep Galilean depression. From there it seeks out an ascent to strategic crossroads in the heart of Lower Galilee, today called the ‘Golani Junction’ (not named on the map). On this map (pp. 10/11) these crossroads lie between a prominent volcanic cone called the Horns of Hattin and the name ‘Gath-hepher.’ If northern armies succeeded in reaching these crossroads nothing could stop them from marching across the northern arena to the coastal highway. Open avenues from these crossroads lie on either side of the Nazareth ridge. One proceeds westward to intersections by Sepphoris and Hannathon where highways continue to Acco or to Jokneam. Another route proceeds S from the Golani junction toward Mt. Carmel via roads leading to the site of Jezeel or across the Jezeel valley to Sarid and Megiddo.

The two sets of diagonal routes (SE from Acco and SW from Chinnereth) reflect the special geobasics of southern Lower Galilee and the role they play within the greater northern arena. The region’s network of roads and intersections make it easily overrun, an area of transit which does not foster great power centers but rather lies in the midst of competing dominions.

Nazareth sits atop its broad ridge, not far from Gath-hepher the home of Jonah the prophet, and the ministries of Jesus and the prophet Jonah reflect this setting. This map not only shows the context of Lower Galilee within the Complex West but also its connections to the Soaring North and the Stable East. We now turn to a more detailed map of this same area.
Turn to pp. 14/15: LAKE GALILEE AND THE GALILEAN DEPRESSION map

- HL in green: Upper Galilee, Huleh basin, Lower Galilee, Western, Eastern (parts of Lower Galilee), Acco Plain
- HL in yellow: Selaim, Ladder of Tyre (along coast), Mt. Meron, elevation reading 872m/2862f (by the modern city of Maroun er-Ras), Kesiv canyon, Plain of Gennesaret, nearby Ammud canyon and Mt. Arbel, Rosh Pinna Sill, Plain of Bethsaida, Jordan river (SW of Lake Galilee), Yarmuk plain, Yarmuk river, Mt. Tabor, Mt. Tiran, Beth-netofa valley, Mt. Netofa, Mt. Asamon, Valley of Iphtahel, Naaman stream
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Hazor, Kedesh/Cadasa, Merom, Maroun er-Ras, Acco, Hannathon, Sephoris, Yenoam, Chinnereth, Horns of Hattin
- HL in yellow on red routes: 1) from Yarmuk plain to Hazor via Aphek (by Lake Galilee) and Bethsaida; 2) from Hazor NW to N of Maroun er-Ras (Merom crossroads) and NW off map (either road); 3) from Huleh basin (top of map to Chinnereth via Hazor; 4) from above Hammon (on coast) to Acco via Ladder of Tyre and Achzib
- Black write-in and HL: 1) GOLANI JUNCTION on crossroads between the Horns of Hittim canyon (also spelled ‘Hattin’ as on p. 10) and Gath-hepher. This strategic natural crossroads in the heart of Lower Galilee was named after a special brigade of the modern Israeli army, the ‘Golani.’ It has no known ancient name. 2) JABNEEL VALLEY diagonally in broad valley between Horns of Hittim and Yenoam.

This map (pp. 14/15) is one of the most exciting maps in your entire study. It shows the heart of Galilee in detail and allows you to identify specific features and routes. Take time now to review what you know about the part of Upper Galilee seen on this map. Then take a close look at the broad center of the map with particular attention to the ridges, valleys, sites and network of routes. We turn now to the same two sets of diagonal routes you HL earlier. As you HL them this time contemplate more closely how they navigate complex Lower Galilee, both from the coastal highway in the first marking and from the Hazor highway in the second.

- HL in yellow on red route: 1) from Acco to Yenoam via Hannathon and the Golani junction; 2) from Acco to Jokneam via Achshaph; 3) from Acco to Jezreel via Sarid
- HL in yellow on red route (all via the Golani junction in Lower Galilee): 1) from Chinnereth SW to Jokneam via Sepphoris; 2) from Chinnereth to Jezreel via Mt. Tabor; 3) from Chinnereth to Sarid via Mt. Tabor

The highways you have just HL again reveal the transit area of southern Lower Galilee. Northern Lower Galilee on this map (pp 14/15) appears rather dull. We have already stated that this is a more secluded area of small fertile valleys between raised ridges. Routes and paths, however, do cross the region in various directions, and settlements dot the area (best seen on RSM5 for those who have this map and the interest).

Mt. Tiran rises to the NW of the Golani junction and separates two of Lower Galilee’s main valleys, the Tiran (or Turan) valley to the S and the broad Beth-netofa valley to the N. The Beth-netofa valley is poorly drained, and standing water often appears at its eastern end in spring and early summer. The entire region drains SW between the sites of Hannathon and Sephoris and from there westward via the narrow Iphtahel valley. Sediments carried by its stream have filled the basin N of Achshaph through which it flows to join the Kishon stream.

Roads easily cross the lowlands W of Hannathon but tend to bypass the higher Nazareth ridge. In the E travel is easily navigates the broad Jabneel valley which drains into the Rift near the important site of Yenoam (an identification questioned by some) on the bank of the Jordan river. The significance of the nearby Yarmuk plain is quite clear on this map.
Faults off the Rift penetrate the SE ‘cornerstone’ of Upper Galilee, exploited by the Ammud canyon system clearly seen on this map. The Ammud canyon cuts a deep path through Lower Galilee before turning E to drain into Lake Galilee. Sediments descending from the Ammud system fill the beautiful and fertile Plain of Gennesaret S of Chinnereth. Unlike the Plain of Bethsaida to the NE of Lake Galilee, the Gennesaret plain has no boulders to impede farming. Another large drainage system feeds into the Gennesaret plain, the Zalmon (named only on RSM5). It gathers the waters around Ramah at the foot of Upper Galilee’s southern scarp, cuts a deep canyon below the ‘R’ of Ramah, flows through a fertile plain (green alluvia, p. 14) before making its way through the complexities of eastern Lower Galilee (thin broken blue line) and across the Gennesaret plain (S of the Ammud) to enter Lake Galilee.

This entire region (the Ammud and Zalmon system) is part of the Galilean depression, a complex, collapsed area which stretches from Lake Galilee NW through the Gennesaret plain and into fragmented Lower Galilee. Traders and invaders must contend with this depression and its complexities. They also must navigate two of eastern Lower Galilee’s faulted blocks as they climb from the Gennesaret plain to the Golani junction. The route you HL is both direct and documented. It climbs a deep, faulted canyon just left of ‘Mt. Arbel’ to reach the Arbel plain, N and below the Horns of Hittim (pp. 14/15). From there armies and caravans made a second ascent by the Horns of Hittim to reach the Golani junction. Once there, they had easy access to the entire network of routes discussed above.

This map (pp. 14/15) exposes an extremely vulnerable Lower Galilee whose only defence is the ascent just described above. If that natural bulwark is compromised, the heart of the northern arena falls. We shall see that the historical record demonstrates this stark reality in what the Bible calls ‘the land of Naphtali,’ the territory of this Israelite tribe which extended from Mt. Tabor through the Galilean depression and Hazor to the region of Dan.

... the king of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah ... Hazor, Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; deporting the people captive to Assyria.

Texts: Lower Galilee

As in the case of Upper Galilee, Lower Galilee requires that we determine the meaning of ‘Galilee’ in each text. Specific sites and features may point to all of Galilee, Upper Galilee or Lower Galilee. The term may also point to this region’s distinctive subregions discussed above: 1) Lower Galilee’s secluded and more secure northern valleys, 2) Lower Galilee’s open, exposed and indefensible western corridors, 3) Lower Galilee’s ‘caved-in’ depression around the Gennesaret plain, or 4) Lower Galilee’s eastern tilted blocks with their blend of agricultural plateaus and faulted scarps for grazing herds.

Various subregions emerge within the context of the categories and texts below. Some texts are marked as ‘optional’ but may be useful in capturing the wide range of regional flavors across this fascinating area of Lower Galilee.

• Galilee divides into two subdivisions: Lower Galilee and Upper Galilee—

See Josephus’ description of the two Galilees under Upper Galilee, p. 50 of this Guide.

Josephus, the new Jewish General of all Galilee set up town administrators] and proceeded to take measures for [the towns’] security from external attack. Foreseeing that Galilee would bear the brunt of the Romans’ opening assault, he fortified the most suitable places, namely [see RSM5], Jotapata, Bersabe, Selame [in the more secluded and defensible ridges and valleys of northern Lower Galilee], Aphaṙathah [in the westward looking lowlands of western Lower Galilee], Japhia [also in western Lower Galilee over-looking the Jezreel valley], Sogane [again in northern Lower Galilee], Mount Tabor [on an important pass between western Lower Galilee and eastern Lower Galilee], Taricheacae and Tiberias [in Lower Galilee’s ‘caved-in’ depression by the lake]; he further provided with walls the [Arbel] caves in Lower Galilee in the neighbourhood of the lake of Gennesareth, and in Upper Galilee the rock known as Acchabaron, Seph, Jannith and Mero. War 2.572-574/xx.6 (cf. LCL); cf. Life 187-188/37
• Lower Galilee is a strong agricultural region with fertile slopes, valleys, plateaus and plains producing grapes, olives, orchards and grains—

Josephus spoke glowingly of Galilee’s productivity. The land of Galilee is everywhere so rich in soil and pasture and produces such variety of trees, that even the most indolent are tempted by these facilities to devote themselves to agriculture. In fact, every inch of the soil has been cultivated by the inhabitants; there is not a parcel of waste land. The towns, too, are thickly distributed, and even the villages, thanks to the fertility of the soil, are all so densely populated that the smallest of them contains above fifteen thousand inhabitants [no doubt an exaggerated number unless misunderstood]. War 3:41:43/vii.2 (LCL)

Jesus, the master Teacher drew from images of life and nature to accent his message. On the slopes above Lake Galilee, he said: Why do you worry about clothing? Look at how [colorful] the anemones of the field bloom [on the hills of Galilee after the winter rains]. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of these. Matthew 6:28-30 [Many other stories in the Gospels speak of agriculture in this area, such as, Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8.]

• Four tribes—Zebulun, Issachar, Asher and Naphtali—shared Lower Galilee’s lands—

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps; other site identifications appear on RSM5.

Zebulun: [When Israel cast lots for the remaining parts of the land.] the third lot fell to the descendants of Zebulun by their clans. The border of their inheritance extended [S in western Lower Galilee as far as] Sarid and went up west to Mariasah [T. Shor?] and touched Dabbesheth [T. Shem?] and the streambed in front [NE] of Tokekam. It turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrise up to the border of Chisloth-tabor [Chesulloth] and continued out to Daberath before ascending [the ridge] to Jabaph. From there it crossed over [the ridge north-] eastward to Gazath-beth ... and continued [N] to Rimmon ... the border circled around to the north of Hannathon and ended at the valley of Jotapata. ... Joshua 19:10-16 / Zebulun did not dispossess the inhabitants of Kitron or Nahalol, but the Canaanites lived in their midst and became their labor-force. Judges 1:30

Issachar: To Issachar the fourth lot fell, to the descendants of Issachar by their clans. Their territory ... Joshua 19:17-23

Asher: The fifth lot fell to the descendants of Asher by their clans. Their territory ... Joshua 19:24-31 / Asher did not dispossess ... Judges 1:31-32

Naphtali: The sixth lot fell to the descendants of Naphtali by their clans. Their territory ... Joshua 19:32-39 / Naphtali did not dispossess ... Judges 1:33

• Northern Lower Galilee’s secluded valleys and high ridges served as a more defensible area that was somewhat isolated from traffic across the south—

[In a first response to the Jewish revolt, Cestius the Roman legate of Syria arrived at Ptolemais and] marched against a fortified city of Galilee, called Chabulon, on the frontier of Ptolemais and Jewish territory. He found it deserted by its inhabitants, who had fled up into the hills [of northern Lower Galilee. Cestius sent troops against Sephhoris, but the Jewish resistance] fled to the mountain in the heart of Galilee ... called Mt. Asamon [on the ridge separated western Lower Galilee from northern Lower Galilee] War 2:503-512/viii.9-11 (LCL)

Foreseeing that Galilee would bear the brunt of the Romans’ opening assault, [Josephus] fortified the most suitable places, namely [see RSM5], Jotapata, Bersabe, Selame, ... Sogane [in the more secluded and defensible ridges and valleys of northern Lower Galilee] ... War 2:572-574/xvii.6 (cf. LCL); cf. Life 187-188/37 / Jotapata, standing above the Beth-netofa valley, presents a practical division line between the open valleys of western Lower Galilee and the more secluded areas of northern Lower Galilee. Josephus chose Jotapata for his last stand, and Vespasian was impatient to make an end of Jotapata, having heard that it was the refuge to which most of the enemy had retired, and that it was, moreover, their strong base; he accordingly sent a body of infantry and cavalry in advance to level the road leading to it, a stony mountain track, difficult for infantry and quite impracticable for mounted troops. War 3:141-142/viii.3 (LCL) / The town of Jotapata is almost entirely built on precipitous cliffs, being surrounded on three sides by ravines so deep that sight fails in the attempt to fathom the abyss. On the north side alone, where the town has straggled sideways up a descending spur of the mountains, is it accessible. But this quarter, too, Josephus, when he fortified the city, had enclosed within his wall, in order to prevent the enemy from occupying the ridge which commanded it. Concealed by other mountains surrounding it, the town was quite invisible until one came right up to it. Such was the strong position of Jotapata. War 3:158-160/viii.7 (LCL)

• Western Lower Galilee’s open valleys and passes placed it within an international network of routes and constant danger—

At a former time he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, yet in the end he honored Galilee of the Nations [which centers around western Lower Galilee]. Isaiah 9:1

In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maachah ... Hazor, [sites along the Hazor highway, as well as] Gilead [in Transjordan], Galilee [of the land of Zebulun and] all the land of Naphtali, deporting the people captive to Assyria. 2 Kings 15:29 / Tiglath-pileser recorded some of his activities in Zebulun and Naphtali.] I had carried away booty and ... [from Zebulun in western Lower Galilee] prisoners ... of the town of Hannathon, 650 prisoners of the town of Kanah ... of the town of Jotbah, [from Naphtali in Upper Galilee] 650 prisoners of the town of Yiron ... all these people together with their possessions I brought away ... the town of Rumah, the town of Merom. ANET 283
optional—

Sephoris, ‘the ornament of all Galilee.’ [Atop a hill in the vunerable region of western Lower Galilee, Sepphoris represents the pre-curious nature of the region. The city was in the centuries before Jesus and fell to Herod who pushed on to Sepphoris through a heavy snowstorm and took possession of the city without a contest (War 1:304/xvi.2) as he enforced his new title] ‘king of the Jews.’ [After Herod’s death (which was shortly after Jesus’ birth) a revolt in Sepphoris brought a Roman response from Vespasian, whose forces] captured and burnt the city of Sepphoris and exiled its inhabitants to slavery. [War 2:68/x.1] [Sephoris quickly rose again under Herod Antipas who made it into] ‘the ornament of all Galilee.’ [Ant 18:276/x.1] [In the days of Jesus’ ministry the city was a key center in western Lower Galilee and due to its fortifications was called] ‘the strongest city in Galilee.’ [War 2:511/xviii.11] [Gentile influence from nearby Ptolemais no doubt contributed to the city’s pro-Roman stance. Shortly after the close of the book of Acts the First Revolt broke out, and Sepphoris came under the command of Josephus who fortified a lone fortress on a low hill along a road coming from Ptolemais. With the arrival of Roman forces Sepphoris recognized its vunerable position and opened its gates to the Roman general Vespasian, and] he was met by the those who lived in Sepphoris of Galilee, the only people of the province who showed a pacifist attitude … and they admitted a Roman garrison, offered a warm welcome to the commander and promised him their active support in the struggled against their fellow Galileans. [Vespasian invested the city with cavalry and infantry for he knew that] losing Sepphoris would seriously impede his coming campaign, for this large and fortified city held an extremely important position within rebel territory, designed to guard the entire [Galilean] province. [War 3:29-34/x.4] [Vespasian also made the city a springboard for attacking all of Lower Galilee (War 3:59/xv.18), underscoring the importance of this part of western Lower Galilee. Later Sepphoris became a seat of Jewish religious study and the Sanhedrin. The influence and cultural diversity of the city testify again to the open character of this part of Lower Galilee.]

• Lower Eastern Galilee’s faults and tilted plateaus offered an agricultural view on the plateaus and herdman in boulder-strewn drainage systems—

In the first text underlined sites appear on Geobasics maps; other site identifications appear on RSM5.

Issachar: The fourth lot fell to the descendants of Issachar by their clans. Their territory included Jezreel, Chisloth and Shunem [as a western border along the edge of the Jezreel valley] Hapharaim … Anaharath … Kishon … Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah … Tabor … and Beth-shemesh [as interior sites in eastern Lower Galilee] and the Jordan [as an eastern border]. Joshua 19:17-23

[Major routes in Lower Galilee intersect at the Golani junction, including one coming from the Yarmuk plain via the convenient Jabneel Valley (see pp 14/15). Otherwise, only local roads and paths navigated the difficulties of the semi-isolated area of eastern Lower Galilee, a region given to the Israelite tribe of Issachar. Judges 1:30-33 records key Canaanite cities that the three other Israelite tribes in Galilee failed to dispose of, but it does not list any such cities within the tribal territory of Issachar. This may imply that none existed there as major highways avoided the area, and key centers lay only on Issachar’s periphery.]

Heber the Kenite, who had separated from the Kenites [in the Negev far to the south], pitched his tent near the Oak of Zaanannim [on the grazing lands of eastern Lower Galilee, W of Yenoam], not far from Kedesh [on the slopes above Lake Galilee just S of Hamath (see RSM5). Here Heber enjoyed far better pasturage than his clansmen in the Negev, but the move also provided fulfillment for Deborah’s words to Barak (from Kedesh), ‘Into the hands of a woman will the LORD sell Sisera,’ [the Canaanite commander who with a chariot force from Hazor had mobilized near Megiddo.] Judges 4:1-11; cf. 1:16 / [Because of the Canaanite advance] in the days of Jael, highway-travel ceased; travelers used paths, they travelled on crooked byways; farming villages ceased, in Israel they ceased. [Engagement between Barak and Sisera probably took place on the Tabor plain.] And Canaan (fought … but they plundered no spoil) [Sisera fled by foot from his mud-mired chariot into the off-road parts of eastern Lower Galilee. He arrived a seemingly safe hiding place in this secluded area, the tent of Heber the Kenite, [who was no doubt away with his herds. The Canaanite commander discovered, however, that the under-cover hospitality of Heber’s wife Jael was dead and she delivered Israel], Jael … most blessed of tent-dwelling women. Judges 5:6-27]

[The next story in the book of Judges also reflects the agricultural and grazing character of eastern Lower Galilee’s tilted basaltic-covered plateaus and faulted scarps.] When Israel sowed [seed in the fall], Midian, as well as Amalek and people of the east [herdsman from arid Arabia] moved north [onto Israelite fields and grazing areas], set up camp on their lands and pillaged … leaving nothing to live on. Judges 6:1-6 / [The main Midianite camp] was by the hill of Moreh, in the valley [a small side valley at the eastern foot of Moreh and facing Mt. Tabor, which is later mentioned in the story. The valley is sheltered from the daily western winds off the Mediterranean and today hosts a modern Israeli army base. The Midianite position commanded the plain of Tabor and all of eastern Lower Galilee’s fertile plateaus of ripening grain and pastureage. What herdsmen could resist such an invitation?] But the LORD set everyone’s sword against each other in the camp, and they fled toward Abel-meholah [avoiding the secluded parts of eastern Lower Galilee]. Judges 7:1-22

• Lower Galilee’s ‘caved-in’ depression with the lake and the Plain of Gennesaret brought together fresh water, a fishing industry, rich agriculture and an international route—

Lake Galilee: The lake of Gennesar takes its name from the adjacent territory [the Gennesar or Gennesaret plain]. It is [at its widest point approximately seven and half miles] broad and [twelve] long. Notwithstanding
Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the territory of Naphtali, deporting the people captive to Assyria. 1 Kings 15:20 / 2 Kings 15:29. In the decades after Solomon's death Damascus was able to conquer this route.

In the centuries which followed, imperial Assyria appeared in the north, and...
C. Jezreel Valley

In our study of the Complex West we now enter the heart of the northern arena, the enclosed but open Jezreel valley. Hill regions enclose the valley, but various gateways around the valley open it up to carry trade routes between sea and desert as well as the ‘great trunk road from Egypt to Assyria.’ G.A. Smith’s colorful and oft-quoted prose captures the geo-political character of the valley (Esdraelon, as in this quotation, is a Greek representation of Jezreel):

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

The map on pp. 2/3 clearly delineates this valley with a subdivisional line (already HL in green) and a thinner broken line between soils and rocks. When viewed as a whole the valley resembles an arrowhead pointing NW near Jokneam and its shaft extending SE to Beth-shan, but a closer look reveals that the valley comprises three bays—one at each angle or corner of the arrowhead, and each defined by its adjacent hill region. These hill regions represent a variety of rock-types and geological processes. Turn to pp. 12/13 and identify the arrowhead-shaped valley and look at the variety of rock-colors surrounding the valley.

The Jezreel valley is a large, faulted basin within the Complex West, defined by Lower Galilee, the folded and faulted Carmel range and Mt. Gilboa.

The Jezreel valley has three natural ‘bays’: 1) The Tabor plain in the NE below Mt. Tabor, 2) the Gilboa plain in the SE and the Jokneam/Shimron plain in the NW.

The Jezreel valley’s three bays offer rich agricultural lands, but poor drainage inside the valley restricts travel, especially in winter and spring, and keeps roads to higher ground.

Highways from across the Northern Arena enter and cross the Jezreel valley.

NW—Various convenient gateways into the valley from Phoenicia and Acco
NE—Hazor highway traffic enters the valley via corridors around the Nazareth ridge
SE—Access into the valley from Gilead and Arabia via Beth-shan and Harod valley
SW—Carmel passes connect the valley with Sharon, Philistia and Egypt far beyond

The Jezreel valley naturally divides the hill country and serves as a transit area, a classic battlefield and an imperial prize rather than an area where local political entities emerge.

Both ‘rocks and soils’ maps (on pp. 12/13 and 2/3) display a great variety of rock-types surrounding the Jezreel valley, ample evidence of serious disturbance and structural alteration in the area (see ‘Geological Foundations’ on p. 24). Diagonal faults off the Rift leave a well-defined but defenseless basin, situated between the tilted plateaus and raised ridges of Lower Galilee, the folded Carmel range and the elevated, semi-circular block of Mt. Gilboa.

Three bays emerge from this complexity. The Tabor plain is the NE bay of the valley, encompassed by the Hill of Moreh, eastern Lower Galilee’s tilted slopes (both partially covered with basalt in red), Mt. Tabor and the Nazareth ridge (green, brown, yellow). The Gilboa plain in the S lies encircled by Mt. Gilboa (yellow) and the faulted, southern uplift
of the Carmel range (green). The Jokneam/Shimron plain fills the NW depression between chalks of the Carmel range and western Lower Galilee (yellow). The southern summit of Mt. Carmel itself (green) towers above the entire valley. Today a Carmelite monastery stands on this summit and from its lookout one sees the entire Jezreel valley, together with its bays and gateways. Nearby a small and slightly lower plateau may be the stage on which the prophet Elijah met Ahab and the prophets of Baal.

Before turning to our next map, take a good look at the Jezreel Valley on this map (pp. 2/3). Nothing in the Complex West compares to this unique and dramatic display of geobasics:

- the valley bisects the hill country of Cisjordan into N and S and
- provides a crossroads for routes from all directions;
- its three agricultural bays support local populations,
- but their towns lie in the path of any military advance.

Run your eye over the map on pp. 12/13 to observe the valley’s setting within the Northern Arena and the entire country. It provides the only continuous break through the hills from the Rift to the coast. Its open character makes the task of unifying or defending this region all but impossible—except when imperial might held the Northern Arena tightly in its grip. The setting of this great plain matches its apocalyptic name, ‘the valley of Armageddon.’

Turn to pp. 10/11: GALILEE, GOLAN, JEZREEL AND LOWER GILEAD map

1 Kings 18

1. A triangle of convenient routes between Acco, Hannathon and Jokneam (including Sepphoris and Shimron) ties Jezreel’s NW bay to the coastal and Hazor highways.

2. Jezreel’s open corridor from Beth-shan via the Harod valley attracts routes from Bashan, Lower Golan, Damascus and Lower Gilead via the Yarmuk plain as well as from all of Gilead and the central Rift via Pehel, Abel-meholah, Rehob and Beth-shan itself.

3. Passes and routes across the Carmel range link Jezreel to the Sharon plain and the international coastal highway which reaches far to the S beyond this map to Egypt.

4. Traffic from the Hazor highway conveniently flows through Lower Galilee into Jezreel via the Hannathon/Sepphoris area and the region of Mt. Tabor and the Hill of Moreh.

Within this astounding geographical context the Jezreel valley takes on great commercial and military significance. Imperial armies and local militia made use of natural gateways in and out of this valley. North-south traffic flowed through Jezreel from Egypt, Phoenicia, the Beqaa valley and Damascus while caravans from eastern deserts sought passage through Jezreel to western ports. Like other regions in the Land Between the Jezreel valley reflects divine intentionality for its geobasics create a stage on which human history was played out in a
way that could not have happened elsewhere. We now turn to more subtle features in Jezreel which allow you to take a closer look at the immediate setting of the valley.

**Turn to pp. 14/15:** LAKE GALILEE AND THE GALILEAN DEPRESSION map

- HL in green: Jezreel Valley, Carmel Range
- HL in red/pink (if not already HL): Jokneam, Shimron, Sarid, Megiddo, Taanach, Beth-haggan, Jezreel, Shunem, Beth-shan, Rehob and Pehel/Pella
- HL in yellow (if not already HL): Mt. Tabor, Hill of Moreh, Mt. Gilboa, Mt. Carmel, Kishon stream (E of Mt. Carmel), elevations in valley 35m/115f, 87m/285f, 121m/397f, 0m/0f and in Rift -288m/-945f, -237/-777, -199/-635, Jordan river, Yarmuk plain
- HL in yellow on red route: 1) from Sarid to Megiddo; 2) from Sarid to Pehel via Shunem and Beth-shan; 3) route N of Mt. Tabor to Megiddo via Afula; 4) from Afula to Beth-haggan via Jezreel; 5) from Jokneam to Beth-haggan

No other region in the Land Between compares to the open Jezreel valley with its intersection of routes. Run your eye S from Upper Galilee to the Jezreel valley and observe the land opening up to roads from all directions. Later we will link the roads SW into the Sharon plain.

Specific features on this map help further define areas of difficulty and strategic positions across Jezreel and set the stage for the events that happened here. First, find the **Kishon stream** which empties into the Mediterranean sea near the tip of Mt. Carmel. Drainage from southern Lower Galilee via the Iphtahel valley also flows into the Kishon. Follow the Kishon upstream (SE) through the Kishon pass between Mt. Carmel and Lower Galilee. The Kishon drains Jezreel's bay between Jokneam and Shimron, but its main tributary lies farther S, beyond a line of small basaltic islands. This high ground across the center of the valley forms a natural barrier which facilitates travel but impedes drainage and forces the waters of the Kishon through one 'overflow' channel. Although basalt lies buried beneath much of the Jezreel, this slightly higher exposed basaltic barrier is very important.

The Kishon drainage system reaches S of the central basaltic barrier into the area surrounding the name ‘Jezreel Valley’ and also just N of the Hill of Moreh. The valley floor around Afula lies slightly above sea level and provides the divide between these two branches, but SE of Afula the Harod valley begins to drop past sea level (0/0) and continues its descent to Beth-shan and the Rift (note HL elevations). If the Jezreel valley floor was not slightly above sea level this entire area and much of the Rift (including Lake Galilee and the Dead Sea) would be an inland Mediterranean bay!

Springs S of Jokneam and S of Megiddo (near Taanach), combined with swamps N and S of the largest island of basalt, limit travel when winter rains and spring runoff make central Jezreel impassable. Resulting marshes highlight the importance of sites along the edges of the valley along with their adjacent agricultural lands (see RSM5). Higher watershed regions also take on greater significance for travel and land use, such as the Tabor plain around the 121m/397f elevation mark and the elevated fields around Shunem and nearby modern Afula.

During dry summer months travel commences along direct routes between Megiddo and Shimron, between Jokneam and Sarid, between Megiddo and Shunem or the site of Jezreel, as well as on many secondary routes not shown on this map. In the higher ground of Jezreel’s southern bay (the Gilboa plain) travel is less restricted making the site of Jezreel a key local position. Views from atop this site or nearby summits of Mt. Gilboa are spectacular.

Three specific topics remain to be discussed: the special sites of Megiddo and Beth-shan; the area around Lake Galilee; and the site of Nazareth. Regarding Megiddo and Beth-shan, geobasics and history repeatedly identify these sites as essential to the control of the northern
arena. **Megiddo** stands guard at the mouth of the Megiddo/Aruna pass, and roads radiate from it across the Jezreel valley. Imperial records from Egypt and Assyria, as well as a few potent texts in the Bible make clear that 'taking Megiddo is like taking a thousand cities.'

**Beth-shan** oversees entry to the Jezreel valley from regions beyond the Rift. Its open gateway into Jezreel attracts routes all along the Jordan valley from the Yarmuk plain to Pehel and even beyond to Succoth (not on map 14/15). Beth-shan is hub that gathers roads and funnels them through the Harod valley, and its function as a hub explains its prominence in history. Imperial Egypt made Beth-shan a key control base in Canaan. The Philistines made it a military and economic goal. Solomon used it as an administrative center. A magnificent Greco-roman city called Scythopolis arose on its site as a key city of the Decapolis, the only one built W of the Rift.

This brings us back to the question of Egypt and its policies. When pharaoh controlled Beth-shan, Megiddo and Hazor to the N, Egypt held everything W of the Rift on this map (pp. 14/15). Pharaoh's advisors then had to decide how far E of the Rift Egyptian control should extend. Given the Israelite administrative center at the site of Jezreel, king Ahab faced a similar question. What would your decision be?

The area around **Lake Galilee** lies below sea level and within a maze of geological faults at the heart of the Galilean depression. The lake is a source of fresh water and fish, but its depression is an obstacle to land-based traffic. Nevertheless, other obstacles, such as the Yarmuk canyon and Upper Galilee's rough hill country, force routes through the depression, and the most convenient roads between the region of Hazor and the areas of Lower Galilee and the Jezreel valley or the Yarmuk plain skirt Lake Galilee in the Galilean depression. On the W a single route passes through Chinnereth, 'all the land of Naphtali in the Bible,' while to the E a sole route passes through Aphek and Bethsaida, the land of Geshur in the Bible. With this in mind consider these questions.

1. What paths between the Jezreel valley and Hazor are open to imperial armies of Egypt?
2. What paths between Hazor and Gilead are available to northern invaders?
3. What trade routes link Lower Golan or Gilead with Acco?
4. How would you travel from Lower Gilead to Hazor?
5. What would be your options for reaching Damascus (NE of this map) from Megiddo?

These types of questions faced armies and caravans throughout history. They also are the topic of a humorous debate in ancient Egypt as one scribe mocked another's ignorance of Canaan's road system and the obstacles to overcome when travelling for pharaoh. Even in our day road builders face challenges associated with the Galilean depression. An impressive bypass road from the Golani junction across the Ammud canyon to the high ground S of Hazor was only built after the Yom Kippur war (1973) when the Israeli army faced a northern crisis.

The site of **Nazareth** is our final topic. You may have already asked why we did not have you HL this important Christian site. The reason is that Nazareth was situated above surrounding routes but was not a part of them. A later Roman milestone tells us that a route from the city of Sepphoris made its way over the Nazareth ridge and on to Beth-shan/Scythopolis, but Sepphoris was the political center. In Jesus' youth the strategic but vulnerable site suffered destruction after a revolt against Rome. Splendidly rebuilt, it later served as an important Jewish center but had a pagan temple (recently uncovered). Later in the Byzantine period churches arose at Sepphoris.

Nazareth, on the other hand, has no strategic value humanly speaking. Nathanael expresses it succinctly, 'From Nazareth? What's good there?' This highlights that God chooses 'what is low and despised in the world ... to bring to nought the things which are.'
The southern limestone scarp of the Nazareth ridge offers views of much of the Jezreel valley, bringing to mind past events in the Bible and other sources. A steep climb above the city provides views NW toward Phoenicia and NE to Upper Galilee, Mt. Hermon and Jebel Druze with stirring implications of Israelite lessons and failures. Jesus used this context to provoke those in Nazareth who put their trust in human solutions rather than the promises of the Lord of history. Such lessons remain for us today.

**Texts: Jezreel Valley**

The Jezreel valley as a whole connotes agricultural fertility and warfare, but the valley really consists of various 'bays' where settlement and events took place. Texts illuminating geobasics in the Jezreel valley come from each of these bays rather than the poorly drained and sparsely settled central part of the valley. These somewhat self-contained bays also serve as the gateways for caravans and armies, both local and imperial, approaching the valley along major arteries from every direction. Many events that must have passed through this well-travelled arena do not appear in historical records, but accounts about sites along the edges of these bays help to characterize the valley and its parts.

- Those living in the land take for granted northern rainfall, fertile soils and abundance in the Jezreel valley (Hebrew, 'Emeq Yizra'el' meaning 'valley God sows')—

  [Hosea identified the loss of agricultural production in the Jezreel valley ('valley God sows') and ensuing famine as discipline for Israel's apostasy. ] She [Israel] did not know that I gave her the grain, new wine and oil ...

- Therefore, I will return to take away my grain in its season and my new wine at its appointed time ... Hosea 2:8-9

  [But God will again woo Israel and betroth her to himself, and Israel will live on the bounty of the land:

  > And in that day, 'I will answer'—an utterance of the LORD.

  I will answer the skies, and they will answer the earth, and the earth will answer the grain, the new wine and the oil, and they will answer, 'Jezreel' ['God sows'], then I will sow her for myself in the land. Hosea 2:14-23

  [During the days of Gideon, the fertile Jezreel valley offered the setting for annual agricultural raids by desert invaders from the Transjordan.] Whenever Israel sowed [their fields], the Midianites, Amalekites and people of the east went up ... and camped against them and destroyed the produce of the land ... they gathered together, crossed [the Jordan] and camped in the Jezreel valley ... Judges 6:3-4, 33]

- [The problem of Transjordanian raids into Cisjordan and the Jezreel valley spans the millennia, a native of Kefar Tavor on the edge of the Tabor plain of the Jezreel valley wrote.] 'Whenever there was a drought in Transjordan, the wadi [Sharar/Nahal Tavor] would be teeming with nomads who would spread out and raid the property of the Jewish and Arab farmers on this side of the Jordan.' Yigal Allon, My Father's House (Kibbutz Ginosar, 1985), p. 32

- [Prophets within Israel told the story of Naboth—a vinegrower on the fertile slopes of the Jezreel valley—

to garner support among traditionalists and farmers against Ahab's ruthless rule.] Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel near the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. [When Ahab attempted to buy Naboth's vineyard, Naboth refused to sell his family's inheritance, so Jezebel, Ahab's Phoenician queen, organized Naboth's execution and told Ahab, '... take the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite ... for Naboth is no longer alive, he is dead.'] 1 Kings 21:1-16

- [Heatstroke during the wheat harvest in the Jezreel valley provided the occasion for Elisha to raise the Shunamite's son from death.] The lad ... went out to his father who was with the reapers [in the large wheat fields of the Jezreel valley near Shunem], and he said to his father, 'My head, my head.' His father told a servant, 'Carry him to his mother,' so he carried him and brought him to his mother. The lad sat on her lap until noon, and then he died. 2 Kings 4:18-20 (see Shunem in v. 8; cf. cultivating in Shunama [Shunem], EA 365:8-23)

- **The geographical setting of the Jezreel valley—'the valley God sows'—also makes it fertile for judgment by means of warfare—**

  [Hosea plays off the name of the Jezreel valley, 'the valley God sows,' to speak of impending judgment. God says of Hosea's firstborn] call his name Jezreel [as a sign], because in a little time I will charge the bloodshed of Jezreel [that accompanied Jehu's coup] against the house of Jehu. I will bring the kingdom of Israel to an end, and in that day I will break Israel's bow in the Jezreel valley [the valley where God sows' judgment]. Hosea 1:3-5
The Jezreel valley separates the hill country of Galilee from that of Samaria and serves as a primary crossover in the land for both N-S and E-W travel—

—The Jezreel valley separates the hill country of Galilee from that of Samaria:

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps; other site identifications may appear on RSM5.

[The territory of five Israelite tribes bordered or came near the Jezreel valley, but the center of the valley and the area as a whole remained unclaimed. The Jezreel valley served as an effective, early boundary for hill-dwelling Israelites. Asher’s tribal territory approached the Jezreel valley from the NW as it touched Zebulun along the confined valley of Japhia. Joshua 19:27 / [Zebulun’s tribal territory bordered the Jezreel valley on the north side. The border extended to Shored and went west toward the Carmel range] to Marakah [T. Shored] and touched Dabbesheth [T. Shem] and the streambed in front NE of Lackernam. It turned from Shored eastward toward the sunrise up to the border of Chisloth-tabor [Chesulloth] and continued out to Daberath before ascending [the ridge] to Japhia. Joshua 19:10-12 / [Naphthali’s tribal territory lay to the NE of the Jezreel valley with two cities] Hazor ... and Azmoth-tabor [positioned just N of Mt. Tabor]. Joshua 19:32-34 / [Issachar’s] territory included Jezreel, Chesulloth and Shonen [and lay on the eastern edge of the Jezreel valley] and the border touched Tabor [in the N], Joshua 19:17-23 / [Manasseh’s] territory reached the sea and touched Asher on the north and Issachar on the east [and lay on the southern edge of the Jezreel valley].

Within the territory of Issachar and Asher, Manasseh was assigned:

- Beth-shan and its farming communities,
- Ibleam and its farming communities,
- those living in En-dor and its farming communities,
- those living in Taanach and its farming communities,
- those living in Megiddo and its farming communities,
- those living in Dor and its farming communities,
- those in the region of Jezreel.

[But in spite of it’s extensive assignment] Manasseh did not dispossess [the Canaanite inhabitants]:

- Beth-shan and its farming communities,
- Taanach and its farming communities,
- those living in Ibleam and its farming communities,
- those living in Dor and its farming communities,
- those in the region of Jezreel.

because the Canaanites were determined to live in this land [along the edge of the Jezreel valley]. Judges 1:27

[In Josephus’ discussion of the land, he shows indecision about assigning the Great Plain (Jezreel valley) to a specific region. He lists Galilee and Samaria as adjacent regions but in closer definition excludes the Great Plain from either region.] Galilee, with its two divisions known as Upper and Lower Galilee, is enveloped by Phoenicia and Syria.... On the south the country is bounded by Samaria and the territory of Saphonopolis up to the waters of Jordan.... Lower Galilee extends ... in breadth [S to N], from a village in the Great Plain called Exaolith [or Chesulloth on the northern edge of the Jezreel valley; see RSM5] to Bersabe [in Upper Galilee].... The province of Samaria lies between Galilee and Judaea; beginning at the village of Ginae situated in the Great Plain [on the southern edge of the Jezreel valley], it terminates at the toparchy of Acrabatene. War 3:35-48/jui.1.4

—The Jezreel valley serves as a primary crossover in the land for both N-S and E-W travel:

N-S and E-W. [Hori, an Egyptian scribe, who had traveled Canaan in his role as scout for pharaoh’s army, taunted a scribe who was less familiar with the geography of the land. In the taunt Hori approaches and leaves the Jezreel valley by five of its gateways.] Let me tell you another difficult case—the crossing of [Selaim or the ‘Ladder of Tyre’].... Lead on toward the south and the route to the region of Acco. [When approaching the Jezreel valley via its NW bay] where does the road to Achshaph begin? At what town? Pray, teach me about the mountain of Uzer [Mt. Carmel south of Acco]. What is its promontory like? [When leaving the Jezreel valley via its SE bay] where are the mountains of Shechem found? ... [When leaving the Jezreel valley via its NE bay] in which direction does the royal courier travel to reach Hazor? What is its river [water] like? Put me on the way to Hamath [Tiberius of Jesus’ day by Lake Galilee] .... a thoroughfare known to every royal courier .... [When approaching the Jezreel valley through its eastern faulted corridor] let me know Rehob, explain Beth-Shan and Tirza-El. The stream of the Jordan, how is it crossed? [When leaving the Jezreel valley through it SW gateway] tell me about the way to pass Megiddo. The narrow valley [of the Megiddo–Aruna Pass] is dangerous.

Adapted from ANET 477-478

N-S. Neco, king of Egypt went up to fight at Carmesinich on the Euphrates river, and Josiah went out to meet him [at Megiddo]. Neco sent messengers to him to ask, ‘What is between us, O king of Judah? I have not come out against you today but I am marching [N] against [Babylon] with whom I am at war.’ But Josiah would not withdraw ... and he went out to fight in the valley of Megiddo. 2 Chronicles 35:20-21 / This is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon conscripted to build ... Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer [three sites along the great N-S trunk road that also intersect important E-W routes]. 1 Kings 9:15
guide in brief—

PERSONALITY IN TEXTS

- The importance of the E-W flow between Transjordan and the coast: Joseph's brothers were keeping their flocks in the Dothan valley, a part of the SE gate on the Jezreel valley. They threw Joseph into a cistern, and they sat down to eat and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites which had come from Gilead [via an E-W road that crossed the Jordan and either traversed the Harod valley or Mt. Gilboa to enter the SE bay of the Jezreel valley and the Dothan valley before reaching the coastal highway]. Their camels carried spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way down to Egypt. 

[Seth I of Egypt secured the E-W route by marching E to Beth-shean and back W to Acco. His city lists suggest the following line of march from the Jezreel valley:] Pehel, Hammat, Beth-shean, Yanoam ... Acco. Y. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible, pp. 159-163 / Nahash the Ammonite went up and laid siege to Jabesh-gilead, [a first step toward securing the E-W route to the coast]. 1 Samuel 11:1 / [Saul's battle with the Philistines at Gilboa was a struggle for the E-W corridor.] The Philistines gathered and went out to encamp at Shunem, and Saul gathered all Israel and encamped at Gilboa ... the Israelites fled before the Philistines, and the slain fell on Mt. Gilboa ... the Philistines found Saul and three of his sons who had fallen on Mt. Gilboa ... and they hung [Saul's] body on the wall of Beth-shean. 1 Samuel 28:4 with 31:1-10 / [Ahab and his son Joram both fought at Ramoth-gilead to secure the E-W routes. Ahad died in his battle (1 Kings 22). Joram was wounded, and Elisha sent a prophet to anoint Jezu as king.] The young prophet went [E] to Ramoth-gilead ... and he poured the oil on [Jehu's] head and said, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel says, "I have anointed you as king over the LORD's people, over Israel."' ... So Jehu took his chariot and went (W) to Jezreel. 2 Kings 9:1-16

- The Jezreel valley comprises various sub-regions—three bays, an eastern faulted corridor and a gateway through the Carmel range—each with its own character and story—

—'On the frontier of Galilee'—the Jezreel valley's NW bay gives direct access to Acco and the international influences of the coastal highway from Phoenicia. It also serves as gateway to the northern Sharon plain via the Jokneam pass or to western Lower Galilee and on N via the Golani junction.

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps; other site identifications may appear on RSM5.

[Cities associated with the NW bay of the Jezreel valley participated in Hazor’s coalition against Joshua.] Jabin king of Hazor ... sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph [or ‘A’ nearest Shimron], to the kings ... in the lowlands [Shephelah of Carmel], and in the Dor district in the west. Joshua 11:1-2 / [By overcoming Hazor’s coalition, in effect Joshua overcame kings in the vicinity of the NW bay] Madon’s king—one; Hazor’s king—one; Shimron-meron’s king—one; Achshaph’s king—one ... Jokneam’s king in [the lowlands of] Carmel—one; Dor’s king in the Dor district—one. Joshua 12:19-23

Tribal borders. [Within the NW bay Zebulun’s tribal] border extended to Sariq and went west [toward the Carmel range] to Marath (T. Shor!) and touched Dabesheth (T. Shem!) and the streambed in front [NE] of Jokneam, ... [while to the north of this Zebulun’s] border circled around north of Hannathon and ended along the confined valley of Iptahel. [Zebulun’s territory included a major part of the NW bay of the Jezreel valley while the narrow valley (‘Ge’ in Hebrew) of Iptahel served as the tribe’s western limit (see p. 14).] Joshua 19:10-16 / [Part of Asher’s eastern tribal border came into contact with the NW bay as it] touched Zebulun along the north side of the confined valley of Iptahel [and from there stretched north along the coastal plain and parts of Upper Galilee, an area allotted to Asher but which Asher effectively did not control.] Joshua 19:27

Tactical events. [Commerce flowed along routes connected to the NW bay, such as in the Amarna Age (c. -1350) when rogues from other cities] sent their men, killed my merchants and stole their money ... in your region [where the king of Hannathon/Hinnatuna should have provided safe passage. If the king of Hannathon did nothing about this it would happen again,] either to a caravan of mine or to your own carriers .... EA 8 / [Labayu, the maverick king of Shechem, was held in Megiddo and from there was to be sent] to the king [pharaoh] by boat [from Acco via Hannathon/Hinnatuna, but the one responsible in Acco] sent him from Hannathon back to his home. EA 245 / [In this NW bay,] in proximity to Carmel is Gaba, ‘city of cavalry,’ so-called because king Herod settled his choice veterans cavalrymen there, [thereby showing Herod’s recognition of the area’s importance] War 3:36/vii.1; Ant 15:294/viii.5

[At the outbreak of the First Revolt against Rome, shortly after the close of the book of Acts, Jewish forces under Josephus ventured to Simonias, a village [in the NW bay] on the frontier of Galilee. [A Roman decurion] who had been entrusted with the charge of the Great Plain [Jezreel valley] ... set off with a 100 horse he had, about 200 infantry and those [retired calvary] living in the town of Gaba as auxiliaries and by a night march reached the village where I had set up camp. [The Romans tried to coax the Jewish forces out onto the Shimron plain but Josephus kept his men in the hills around Simonias where they had a strategic advantage. After skirmishes the Romans retired to the west. Josephus’ forces then moved west,] kept careful watch on the roads ... removing large quantities of grain belonging to queen Berenice [the same Berenice as in Acts 25], grain which had been brought from the area’s villages [royal estates in this fertile NW bay] and stored in Betham [N of Jokneam; see RSM5] ... camels and donkeys loaded with grain were sent back into Galilee. Life 114-121/24

—‘A net spread upon Tabor’—the Jezreel valley’s NE bay lies at the foot of Mt. Tabor, a strong guard on the gateway to the Golani junction/Hazor highway and to the route descending to the Yarmuk plain.

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps; other site identifications may appear on RSM5.

Tribal meeting point. [Four tribal territories or possessions surrounded the NE bay of the Jezreel valley.] Zebulon’s border ... turned from Sariq eastward toward the sunrise up to the border of Chisloth-tabor [Chesulloth]
and continued out to Dabaritt [two cities bounding the NE bay]. Joshua 19:12 / [Naphtali’s tribal territory included] Helceth ... and Atnosh-tabor [two cities positioned just N of this NE bay]. Joshua 19:33-34 / [Issachar’s] territory included ... Chesaluoth and Shunem ... and the border touched Tabor [on the NE bay]. Joshua 19:17-22 / In Issachar ... Manasseh had ... those living in En-dor and its farming communities [on the NE bay] ... Joshua 17:11 / [Deborah directed] Barak, the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali ... to march to Mt. Tabor [in the NE bay of the Jezreel valley] and take with him ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. Judges 4:6 / [The tribes descended from their camp around Tabor in the NE bay.] So he, [Barak] swept down toward Sarid against the mighty ones. The LORD’s people swept down against me, [Deborah] against the fearsome ones. From Ephraim, whose root was in Amlah; behind you was Benjamin with your people. From Makir [that is, Manasseh] commands came down; from Zebulun those who bear a staff of authority. The princes of Issachar were with Deborah; Issachar, indeed, was with Barak in the valley, rushing at his heels ... Zebulun acted as a people who thought lightly of their lives, willing to die; and Naphtali was on the heights of the field. Judges 5:14-18

Tactical events. [Hosea’s enigmatic charge, ‘You, O priests, Israelites and royal court, have become a bird-nest at Mizpeh, a net spread upon Tabor,’ [communications by double entendre that, whereas these cultic high places (Mizpeh, Judg 11:11; Tabor, cf. Deut 33:19) are an abomination (Hos 4:4-15), they have also served as military encampments (Mizpeh, Judg 10:17; Tabor, Judg 4:6, 12, 14) and are strategic sites for ambush, warfare and loss.] Hosea 5:1 / [Sisera’s superior chariot force fell into the miry ‘net’ of the Kishon in this NE bay.] When Sisera learned that Barak, the son of Abinoam had ascended Mt. Tabor, Sisera gathered his chariots—nine hundred iron chariots!—and the full force which was with him from Harosheh Hagoyyim to the Kishon river.... From the heavens the stars fought; from their courses they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away, the ancient river, the river Kishon. March on, O my soul, with strength! Judges 4:12-13 with 5:20-21 / [A superior Midianite force fell into a confusing ‘net’ of self-destruction near Tabor.] Gideon and all the men who were with him camped at the Harod spring, and the camp of Midian was north of them on [the N side of] the Hill of Moreh in a valley [on the NE bay],... The LORD turned [the Midianites’] swords against each other throughout the whole camp, and they fled .... [Gideon’s question of two captured Midianite kings tells us that the engagement took place in the NE bay.] ‘What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?’ Judges 7:1, 22; 8:18

Josephus records events that further illumine the enigmatic ‘net spread upon Tabor.’ The following two events happened at Dabaritata, a village lying below Mt. Tabor and through which a main road passes (see RSM5). Some adventurous young men of Dabaritata lay in wait for the wife of Poselem, the king’s overseer. She was travelling in great state, protected by an escort of cavalry ... as she was crossing the Great Plain [the NE bay of the Jezreel valley], they suddenly fell upon the cavalcade, compelled the lady to fly, and plundered all her baggage. Life 1:26-12-26 (LCL) / cf. War 2:595-597 (xxi.3) / [Jonathan’s party [an emissary sent to Jerusalem by the citizens of Tiberias who opposed Josephus] had left Tiberias and reached the village of Dabaritata, situated on the confines of Galilee in the Great Plain [the NE bay of the Jezreel valley]. Here, about midnight, they fell into the hands of my guards, who ordered them to lay down their arms and kept them, in chains, on the spot in accordance with my instructions. Life 318/62 (LCL) / Vespasian undertook ... the reduction of the occupants of Mt. Tabor. This lies midway between the Great Plain and Sceythopolis, and rises to a height of [588m(1929)], being almost inaccessible on its northern face; the summit is a table-land ... entirely surrounded by a wall. [Vespasian’s commander, Placidus] finding the ascent of the mountain impracticable [coaxed the defenders down with talk of peace but intent of capture—‘a net spread upon Tabor.’ They descended with their own ruse of surrender but intent to attack.]. The craft of Placidus, however, won the day; for when the Jews opened hostilities he feigned flight and, having drawn his pursuers far into the plain, suddenly wheeled his cavalry around and routed them. War 4:54/60-8 (LCL)

—‘Doesn’t Ramoth-gilead belong to us?’—the Jezreel valley’s eastern faulted corridor, the Harod valley is an all-important gateway that looks E to Golan, Gilead, the central Rift valley and Arabia beyond. Mt. Gilboa. [The faulted northern face of Mt. Gilboa creates the Harod valley, the Jezreel valley’s eastern corridor. Mt. Gilboa’s heights rake rain from passing storms and produce springs at its base. David alludes to this in his lament for Jonathan and Saul who both died on Gilboa.] The glorious ones, O Israel, lie slain on your heights ... O peaks of Gilboa, let no dew or rain be upon you, nor fields of offerings. 2 Samuel 1:19, 21 / Saul had gathered all Israel and encamped at Gilboa, ... [that is,] at the spring which is in Jezreel [one of Gilboa’s many springs, but at the Philistine victory] the men of Israel fled before the Philistines [to the presumed safety of Gilboa’s heights] but the slain fell on Mt. Gilboa.... The next day the Philistines ... found Saul and his three sons who had fallen on Mt. Gilboa. 1 Samuel 28:4; 29:1; 31:1-8 / [Another one of Gilboa’s springs served Gideon’s encampment and God’s selection of his army.] Gideon and all the men who were with him camped at the Harod spring ... The LORD said to Gideon, ‘You still have too many men. Make them go down to the water [flowing from the spring], and I will sort them for you there.’ Judges 7:1-4

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps; other site identifications may appear on RSM5.

Tribal issues. [The origin of the Harod valley fell in Issachar’s territory, but Manasseh claimed its outlet at Beth-shan.] Issachar’s territory included Jezreel ... and Shunem [sites just S and N of the junction between the Harod valley and the Jezreel valley]. Joshua 19:18 / Manasseh’s territory ... touched ... Issachar on the east.... Within [the territory of] Issachar ... Manasseh held Beth-shan and its farming communities [through which the Harod valley joins the Jordan valley] ... and those living in En-dor and its farming communities. Joshua 17:10-11 / [When eastern invaders camped in the Jezreel valley ... [in Issachar’s territory near En-dor on the N side] of the Hill of Moreh [Gideon of Manasseh’s Abiezerite clan] sounded the shofar and assembled the Abiezerite clan to himself. He also sent messengers throughout Manasseh and gathered them as well, and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them [with Issachar obviously uncalled]. Judges 6:33-35, 7:1
Tactical events. The Midianites, the Amalekites and people of the east gathered together. They crossed [the Jordan valley, passed through the Harod valley] and camped in the Jezreel valley.... [After Gideon’s surprise attack, the eastern invaders fled by way of the outlet of the Harod valley as far as the edge of Abel-meholah (p. 10). Judges 6:33; 7:22 / The Philistines gathered and went out to encamp at Shunem [on the N side of the Harod valley], and Saul gathered all Israel and encamped at Gilboa [on the S side of the Harod valley]. ... When the Israelites lived [on the fertile basaltic slopes] across the [Harod valley] from Mt. Gilboa and those living across the Jordan [beyond the Rift] saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled, and the Philistines came and lived in them.... The Philistines cut off Saul’s head ... and they hung his body on the wall of Beth-Shan. [The victory at Gilboa gave the Philistines control of the Harod valley and unhindered access to Israelite territory E of the Jordan]. 1 Samuel 28:4; 31:7-10 / [Ahab, the king of Israel in Samaria, defeated Damascus for two successive years (1 Kings 20). After that a story from Jezreel reveals that he began building a base in the Jezreel valley with a view down the Harod valley to Transjordan.] Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel near the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. 1 Kings 21:1 / [Ahab’s territorial goals were Bashar and Lower Gilead, and with this look E, he asked his advisors.] Doesn’t Ramoth-gilead belong to us? ... So Ahab, king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah went out against Ramoth-gilead.... Now a certain man drew his bow without aim, and he hit the king of Israel between the scales of his armor.... The king died and was brought back to Samaria. 1 Kings 22:1-37 / [Ahab’s son, Joram continued his father’s program, and Ahaziah, king of Judah] went with Joram, king of Israel to war against Hazael, king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram, so king Joram returned [via the Harod valley] to recover in Jezreel. [The war at Ramoth-gilead involved numerous journeys through the Harod valley to reach Transjordan.] 2 Kings 6:25-29 / [A prophet anointed Jehu parking on the road to Ramoth-gilead, so] Jehu took his chariot and went [through the Harod valley] to Jezreel, because Joram was lying there, and Ahaziah, king of Judah had returned to see Joram. A watchman was standing on the watchtower in Jezreel, and he saw Jehu’s entourage while he was coming, so he reported, ‘I see a group.’ Joram said, ‘Get a rider and send him to meet them.’ ... The watchman reported, ‘The messenger reached them, but he is not returning.’ So he sent a second horseman.... The watchman reported, ‘He reached them, but he is not returning. The driving is like Jehu’s driving, because he drives furiously. [This took place along the natural approach from the Transjordan, the eastern faulted corridor of the Jezreel valley.]’ 2 Kings 9:16-20

Beth-shan/Scythopolis. [The Harod valley requires mention of Beth-shan/Scythopolis, the large site that guards the junction of the Harod valley and the Jordan valley. Beth-shan] was a Manassite city (Joshua 17:11) that the Canaanites continued to occupy (Joshua 17:16; Judges 1:27). The Philistines reached the city and hung Saul’s body on its wall (1 Samuel 31:10-12, 2 Samuel 21:12). Solomon used it in his administrative system (1 Kings 4:12). Judas Macabaeus arrived at Beth-shan with his evacuees from Bashan and Lower Gilead (1 Maccabees 5:52), and his brother Jonathan met Trypho there and fell for the ruse of accompanying Trypho to Ptolemais (1 Maccabees 12:39-48). John Hyrcanus’ sons overran the district of Beth-shan (War 1:64-65/vii.7). Josephus measured Pompey’s march down the Rift valley by the site of Scythopolis and its sister, Pella on the E side of the Rift (War 1:134/vi.5), and Pompey liberated both cities and others from Jewish rule and placed them under a Roman governor (War 1:156/vii.7). At the outbreak of the first revolt, Jewish bands attacked a number of Greco-Roman cities including Scythopolis (War 2:458-459/viii.1; cf. 2:466-476/viii.3). Vespasian used Scythopolis, an agriculturally productive area as winter quarters and a place of refreshment for some of his legions (War 3:412/ix.1; 3:47/ix.11).

—On the border between Samaria and Galilee—the Jezreel valley’s SE bay below Mt. Gilboa is a gateway to the Sharon plain via the Dothan pass, as well as Samaria’s gateway to the valley.

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps.

Tribal boundaries. [Issachar’s] territory included Jezreel [on the edge of the Jezreel valley’s SE bay]. Joshua 19:17 / [Manasseh’s] territory touched Issachar on the east. Within [the territory of] Issachar ..., Manasseh held ... IIbleam and its farming communities..., those living in Tamach and its farming communities. [The SE bay between IIbleam and Tamach provided access to the heartland of Manasseh and to the three capitals of the northern kingdom of Israel: Shechem, Tirzah and Samaria (p. 16.)] Joshua 17:10-11 / Manasseh did not drive out ... Tamach and its farming communities..., those living in IIbleam and its farming communities..., because the Canaanites were determined to live in this land [along the edge of the Jezreel valley]. Judges 1:27

[Where is En-gannim located within Issachar (Joshua 19:21)? Perhaps at Beit Jann in the Jabneel valley, or perhaps it is a parallel term to Beth-haggan/Ginae, modern Jenin.] The Leontine clans of Gerhson received ... from the tribe of Issachar ... En-gannim [that may be, Ginae on the border between the Jezreel valley and Samaria]. Joshua 21:27-29 / [In Jesus’ day, Ginae—located on the edge of the SE bay—marked the border between the Jezreel valley and the hill country of Samaria.] The province of Samaria lies between Galilee and Judea; beginning at the village of Ginae situated in the Great Plain. War 3:48/vii.4 (LCL)

Tactical and other events.

IIbleam/Beth-haggan/Ginae: [Labayu, a Canaanite king of Shechem, had seized cities and towns around the SE bay of the Jezreel valley.] He attacked Shunama [Shunem], Bircua [4 km/2.5 mi W of Ginea; see RMS5] and Harabu. [When he was killed in Ginea, however, Labayu’s two sons appealed to the Egyptian overseer,] ‘Wage war against the people of Ginae [Ginae] for having killed our father.’ EA 250:43-44, 15-17 / [When Jehu killed Joram, king of Israel, Joram’s cousin,] Ahaziah, king of Judah saw what was happening, and he fled [S] along the road to Beth-haggan. Jehu pursued him and ordered, ‘Strike him, too!’ They stroke him in his chariot on
Dothan: Joseph went after his brothers and found them [with their flocks] near Dothan [in the Dothan valley], a part of the SE gate on the Jezreel valley. After throwing Joseph into a cistern, his brothers sat down to eat and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites which had come from Gilead. Their camels carried spices, balm and myrrh, and [by using the SE bay of the Jezreel valley and the Dothan valley to reach the coastal highway] they were on their way down to Egypt. Genesis 37:17, 25 / [The advisors to the king of Aram told him, 'Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bed room.' ... 'Where is he?' asked the king of Aram], and they told him, 'He is in Dothan.' So he sent horses, chariots and a strong army there. They came by night and surrounded the city. 2 Kings 6:12-14

Naaman [the leprous commander of the Aramean army] went with his horses and chariots and stood at the entrance of Elisha’s house [presumably, in Dothan, near the border between Samaria and Galilee]. Elisha sent a messenger to him to say, ‘Go, wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored, and you will be clean.’ [Naaman’s servants convinced him to perform the simple deed], and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean. Then Naaman and his entourage returned to the man of God. He came and stood before him and said, ‘Now I know that no God exists in all the land except in Israel.’ 2 Kings 5:9-15 / Jesus was traveling on the border between Samaria and Galilee, and as he entered a certain village, ten leprous men met him. They stood at a distance and raised their voice, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ When he had looked at them, he said, ‘Go, show yourself to the priests.’ As they were going [on the road from Gia nae to Shechem to Jerusalem], they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned while glorifying God with a great voice, and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. Luke 17:11-16 / On the border between Samaria and Galilee where the confined hill country intersects the exposed world of the Jezreel valley, God healed two lepers: both non-Israelites; both praised the God of Israel.

—‘Taking Megiddo is like taking a thousand cities’—the Jezreel valley’s SW gateway, the narrow but convenient Aruna/Megiddo pass, makes the sites of Megiddo and Taanach strategically important.

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps.

Tribal boundaries. Manasseh held ... those living in Dor and its farming communities,... those living in Taanach and its farming communities and those living in Megiddo and its farming communities. Joshua 17:10-11 / [Manasseh’s territory fell across the Jezreel valley’s SW gateway, the strategic Megiddo pass, and as a foreshadowing of Israel’s later problems in holding the pass.] Manasseh did not drive out ... Taanach and its farming communities, those living in Dor and its farming communities,... or those living in Megiddo and its farming communities, because the Canaanites were determined to live in this land [along the edge of the Jezreel valley]. Judges 1:27

Tactical events. [Hori, an Egyptian scribe, who had traveled Canaan in his role as scout for pharaoh’s army, taunted a scribe less familiar with the geography of the land. In the taunt Hori describes the Megiddo pass.]
Tell me about the way to pass Megiddo. The narrow valley [the Megiddo-Aruna Pass] is dangerous ... you’re alone; there’s no messenger with you, no army host behind you. You find no scout, who might show you a way of crossing. You come to a decision by going forward, although you know not the road. You’re seized by fear, (the hair of) your head stands up, your soul lies in your hand. Your path is filled with boulders and pebbles, without a toe hold for passing by, overgrown with reeds, thorns, brambles, and ‘wolf’s-paw.’ The ravine is on one side of you, and the mountain rises on the other. You go on jolting, with your chariot on its side, afraid to press your horse (too) hard,... You start to trot. You come to a clearing and think that the foe is behind you. Trembling seizes you. If only you had a hedge of shrubs to separate you (from your enemies)! Adapted from ANET 477-478 / [Canaanites from as far away as Ke desh on the Orontes had determined that Megiddo, which guarded the northern end of the Megiddo pass, offered the best point at which to stop the advance of Pharaoh Thutmose III. His majesty [Thutmose III] conducted a war council with his conquering army [at the southern end of the pass at Yaham], and he said, ‘That miserable rebel from Kesed has taken Megiddo and enlisted princes from all of Egypt’s formerly loyal subjects ... he says, ‘I will wait here in Megiddo ...’ What is your counsel?’ The commanders responded to his majesty, ‘Think of the difficulties on this road [the Aruna/Megiddo Pass] as it becomes so narrow. The report is that the enemy is there waiting and becoming more numerous. The horses will have to go single-file as well the army and all the support staff. Our vanguard will engage in battle while the rear guard is still waiting in Aruna, unable to fight. There are two other roads. One to the east of us and it comes out near Taanach. The other is to the north ... and comes out to the north of Megiddo. May our victorious lord choose to use one of them, so we do not have to use this difficult road.’ ... His majesty challenged the army, ‘Keep pace with your victorious lord’s march on this narrow road. His majesty has sworn, ‘I will not let my victorious army go ahead of my majesty on this road.’ ...’ His majesty marched forth at the head of his army ... he did not meet the enemy. Their southern wing was at Taanach and their northern wing on the south side of the Qina Valley,... His majesty commanded his army, ‘Take the city, my victorious army! The god Re has brought all foreign countries into this city on this day, in so much as every prince of every country is shut up within it, so that taking Megiddo is like taking a thousand cities.’ Cf. ANET 235-237 / [Later pharaohs list Megiddo (Seti I; Shishak I) and Taanach (Shishak I) as conquered cities.] ANET 243

Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps.
This is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon conscripted to build ... Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer [three sites along the great N-S trunk road with Megiddo also overseeing E-W trade through the Jezreel valley]. 1 Kings 9:15 / [Neco, king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates river, and Josiah went out to meet him.... and he went out to fight in the valley of Megiddo (bîq‘at megiddô).... Archers shot king Josiah ... so his officials brought him to Jerusalem where he died.... All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah, and Jeremiah wrote laments for Josiah, and all the singers, men and women, recite the laments for Josiah until this day, and [the laments] have become an observance for Israel. 2 Chronicles 35:20-25] / [The house of David and ... the inhabitants of Jerusalem ... will look to whom they pierced, and they will mourn for him as though mourning an only son [a special one, like Josiah who modeled messianic qualities]; they will grieve bitterly as one shows bitter grief for the firstborn [prince]. In that day, lamentation will increase in Jerusalem like the lamentation of Hadad-rimmon [cf. Gaith-rimmon in Joshua 21:25; identified with modern Rimnane between Megiddo and Taanach] in the valley of Megiddo (bîq‘at megiddôn) [that is, the lamentation for Josiah], and the land will mourn, each clan by itself .... Zechariah 12:10-11] / [John the apostle used the event of Josiah's death to prefigure the appearance and victory of the ultimate Messiah on the classic battleground of history.] See! He is coming with the clouds! Every eye shall see him; indeed, those who pierced him, and they shall mourn for him, all the clans of the land. Revelation 1:7 quoting Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10, 12, 14 / [John adds: the evil spirits went out to the kings of the whole world to gather them for the battle of the great day of God, the Almighty ... and they gathered them to the place that is called Armageddon in Hebrew [that is, har Megiddo, 'the hill of Megiddo']. Revelation 16:14, 16 using 2 Chronicles 35:20-25 and Zechariah 12:11 / [In reversal, John says:] I saw heaven opened, and look, a white horse: He who sits on it is called, 'Faithful and True.' With righteousness He judges and makes war ... the armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses ... Revelation 19:11ff.; cf. 2 Kings 6:15-17 in the nearby Dothan valley: The hills were filled with horses and chariots of fire.

[After his campaigns in the Land Between (-734 to -732), the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III organized conquered Israelite territories into three Assyrian provinces, each of which he named after a principal city in the region: Megiddo, Dor and (Ramoth-)Gilead; Megiddo ... Du‘ru ... Gaulat; Y. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible, pp. 576; cf. 2 Kings 15:29 / [Isaiah held out future hope for these humbled Israelite territories:] Yet in the end he honored ... Galilee of the Nations [that is, the province of Megiddo] ... The people who are walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has shone. Isaiah 9:1-2]

While local forces struggle to control the entire Jezreel Valley, imperial forces quickly overtake and unify it—

Local forces. [Without adequate support from pharaoh, local governors/mayors in the Jezreel valley—and throughout Canaan—struggled to hold Egypt's territories, cultivate its lands and guard its trade interests. See letters either from or about cities around the Jezreel Valley that report on intercity conflicts, problems with Labaya of Shechem or the threat of the Apiru:] Binâdiya, mayor of Megiddo, EA 234, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 248, 365; Surata [and later his son] Satatna, mayor of Acco, EA 8, 85, 111, 232, 233, 234, 238, 245, 246, 248, 366; Endaruta, mayor of Achshaph, EA 223, 266, 367; Hanathon, EA 8, 245; Shimen, EA 250, 365 / [Joshua conquered control points around the Jezreel valley:] the king of Shimon-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; the king of Dor in the heights of Dor, one, ... (Joshua 12:20-22); [but the tribal units did not take control of these sites:] Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shan ... Taanach ... Dor ... Ibileam ... Megiddo ... because the Canaanites were determined to live in this land.... Judges 1:27 / The Philistines pushed through the Jezreel valley to Beth-shan (1 Samuel 31:10); [biblical text and the archaeology of Megiddo, however, suggest that David and Solomon brought the valley under their administration.] Solomon built ... Megiddo (1 Kings 9:15); Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel ... Benaia the son of Ahileah was over ... Manasseh's territories around] Tamaach and Megiddo all and [the territory of] Beth-shan, which extends toward Zarethan below Jezreel from Beth-shan as far as Abel-meholah [to the SE] and as far as the Jokneam pass [understanding Jokneam(?), along Manasseh's western border] 1 Kings 4:12. Jeroboam's rebellion (1 Kings 12) followed by Pharaoh Shishak's conquests destroyed this administrative structure. / [See below under 'imperial forces':] / [Archaeology at Megiddo and Jezreel as well as text suggest that Ahab governed the Jezreel Valley.] Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel near the palace of Ahab, [which he had built at Jezreel after he had secured the valley] 1 Kings 21:1, [but Jehu's rebellion (2 Kings 9:10); a campaign of Shalmaneser III that reached as far [west] as Ba'al Ra'si [probably Mount Carmel] at the side of sea (ANET 280); and Hazael of Damascus (2 Kings 13:3) broke Israel's control.] / Jeroboam III ... was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel [including the province of Megiddo] 2 Kings 14:25, [but in the time of Pekah, Tiglath-pileser took too ... Galilee [and created the province of Megiddo].] 2 Kings 15:29

Imperial forces. [Thutmose III established Egyptian control throughout the Jezreel valley by taking key cities around it:] Megiddo ... Dothan ... Aruna ... Kishion, Shunem ... Taanach, Ibileam ... Anaharath ... Rehob ... Beth-shan ... ANET 242-243 / [Shishak I also took key cities around the Jezreel Valley] Taanach, Shunem, Beth-shan, Rehob, Hapharaim ... Megiddo ... Aruna ... ANET 242-243 / [Assyria's control of the valley.] See above. / [The message that the LORD spoke to Jeremiah the prophet about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon to attack the land of Egypt, ... 'As I live,' an utterance of the King, the LORD of hosts is His name, 'As Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel is by the sea, he shall come.' [The cryptic comparisons convey a double meaning: Nebuchadnezzar march is as sure as these two landmarks along the road to Egypt; the two landmarks span the Jezreel valley from E to W and imply Nebuchadnezzar's control of the road to Egypt.]
D. Carmel Range

Two lines delineate the Carmel range on pp. 2/3: a solid, dark divisional line on the W and a broken, subdivisional line on the E. The term ‘Carmel’ means ‘Vineyard of God,’ and in the Bible it refers to ‘Mt. Carmel’ on our maps, unless the context indicates a town by the same name in Judah’s southern hill country. Mt. Carmel itself is the large, limestone uplift (green area on p. 2, named ‘Mt. Carmel’), the NW promontory or tip of what we call the Carmel range. The mount is actually a small range in itself, rising from a narrow coastal plain and quickly ascending in a northeasterly direction before abruptly falling along the diagonally faulted and broken, subdivisional line (earlier HL in green).

**Turn to pp. 2/3:** Northern Arena map

- HL in green (if not already): Sharon Plain, Carmel range and the broken, subdivisional line from the tip of Mt. Carmel SE and around Mt. Gilboa
- HL in red/pink (if not already): Jokneam, Megiddo, Aruna, Dor and Caesarea
- HL in yellow: Mt. Carmel and its one reading of 474/1555f; elevation readings 134/440f and 400/1312f in Carmel’s Shephelah/Lowland (map’s yellow area); the summit elevation reading 527f/1729f in the ‘Iskandar Uplift’ (green, not named)
- Optional black write-in: Although space is limited, those which a fine pen and careful hand may want to write in Shephelah of Carmel in the central area (yellow) as well as Iskandar Uplift in the limestone area (green) in the lower Carmel range.

**Geobasics**

- The Carmel range creates a natural barrier to traffic between the Sharon plain and the Jezreel valley, SE from the tip of Mt. Carmel and off this map into the region of Samaria.
- Most regions of the Carmel range have lower elevations in the W and rise to the E.
- The Carmel range consists of uplifts (broken yellow lines) of hard limestone (green), a chalky limestone depression (yellow) and narrow, intervening bands of chalk (brown).
- Proximity to the sea produces abundant dew and rain on Mt. Carmel’s rugged limestone slopes, ideal conditions for thick scrub-forest (Hebrew ya’ar), a secluded, off-road retreat.
- The limestone Iskandar uplift (not named) rises in the SE creating another barrier but also forming a large, natural amphitheater around Taanach (the ‘T’ on its lower E side).
- The Shephelah of Carmel (yellow) is a syncline (geological depression) between uplifts and offers easier travel, together with adjacent eroded passes of chalk (brown).
- The blend of rugged Mt. Carmel with summits overlooking the land’s spreading plains, lowland passes and imperial highways is the unique personality of the Carmel range.

The long Carmel range challenges passage from the Sharon plain to the Jezreel Valley, a fact that Egypt’s pharaohs knew all too well. Summits in uplifted limestones areas (green) reach over 520m/1700f while lower chalky hills (yellow) average some 200m/650f. Narrow chalk corridors (brown) between other rock types (green and yellow) formed passes that aid travel. Some of Jezreel’s famous sites defended the mouths of these passes into the Jezreel valley. Pockets of basaltic rock (not shown on this map) appear among Mt. Carmel’s limestones, evidence of the same subterranean volcanic activity which exists across the Northern Arena.

**Turn to pp. 10/11:** Galilee, Golan, Jezreel and Lower Gilead map

- HL in green (if not already): Sharon Plain, Samaria
- HL in red/pink (if not already): Jokneam, Megiddo, Aruna, Dor, Caesarea and Gath
Find the three areas in bold in Geobasics (above) by comparing this map with that on pp. 2/3. The elevation in each of these areas are lower in the W and ascend to heights in the E. Compare these readings with surrounding elevations in coastal regions and in the Jezreel Valley. Finally, explore the (red) routes which gather in the northern Sharon plain and then make their way across the Carmel range via lower passes or over less elevated parts of the Shephelah (Lowland) of Carmel. Other routes (not shown) make their way to the site of Geba between Megiddo and Jokneam. No convenient routes between northern Sharon and the Jezreel valley cross Mt. Carmel itself nor the Iskandar uplift. Your observations echo those of Egypt’s pharaohs as they contemplated their next move from the edge of northern Sharon. Should they use the short but dangerous Aruna/Megiddo pass to reach ‘Armageddon,’ har (hill of) Megiddo, the valley beyond and highways across the entire Northern Arena? Over four thousand years ago, centuries before later pharaohs marched across the Carmel range, Egyptians looking from the sea realized that Mt. Carmel had the shape of an antelope’s head with a promontory forming a nose. This had been a landmark along the shores of the eastern Mediterranean, and to overcome adversaries Egyptian troops wisely landed behind this ‘nose’ (NE), just east of Mt. Carmel in the area of the modern port of Haifa.

This map (pp. 10/11) provides good context for the entire Carmel range from the tip of Mt. Carmel’s promontory SE to the central hill country of Samaria. It places the range within its strategic setting in the Northern Arena just north of the central hill country. Before proceeding to a more detailed look of the Carmel range, survey this map by reviewing the three routes that carry traffic N out of the Northern Arena: 1) the coastal route via Tyre; 2) the Hazor highway via the Rift; and 3) the various tracks across Golan and Bashan to the hub of Damascus. The Carmel range stands between the Sharon plain with its great trunk highway and all three northern gateways on the land.

Turn to pp. 14/15: Lake Galilee and the Galilean Depression map

Guide in brief—
Marking on closer view map pp. 10/11

HL in yellow: Mt. Carmel, elevation readings 167m/548f, 474/1555f, 546m/1791f; readings 134/440f, 274m/899f, 400/1312f in Carmel’s Shephelah/Lowland (yellow area on p. 2); Mt. Sheikh Iskandar, readings 139m/456f and 527f/1729f; Dothan valley

Optional black write-in: Although space is limited, those which a fine pen and careful hand may want to write in SHEPHELAH OF CARMEL as suggested on the map above (p. 2)

HL in yellow on red route: 1) from Megiddo to Gath [-padalla] via Aruna; 2) from Jokneam to Gath [-padalla] passing near Zephath; 3) from Jokneam to Dor; 4) from the site of Jezreel to Gath [-padalla] via the Dothan valley

Guide in brief—
Marking on closer view map pp. 14/15

HL in green: Sharon Plain, Iskandar Uplift, Mt. Carmel (over previous yellow HL)

HL in red/pink (if not already): Jokneam, Megiddo, Aruna, Dor, Caesarea, Gath (of Gath [-padalla]), Dothan and Ibleam

HL in yellow: elevation readings 167m/548f, 474/1555f, 546m/1791f on Mt. Carmel; readings 134/440f, 274m/899f, 400/1312f in Carmel’s Shephelah/Lowland (yellow area on p. 2); Mt. Sheikh Iskandar, readings 139m/456f and 527f/1729f; Dothan Valley

Black write-in (small) and HL: SHEPHELAH OF CARMEL between elevation readings 134/440f and 400/1312f (area in yellow on the map on p. 2); the name Ophrah with its dot at the top left edge of the ‘T’ of Taanach (see in Iskandar uplift on RSM5).

HL in yellow on red route: 1) from Megiddo to Gath [-padalla] via Aruna; 2) from Jokneam to Gath [-padalla] passing near Zephath; 3) from Jokneam to Dor; 4) from the site of Jezreel to Gath [-padalla] via the Dothan valley

Cf. ANET 228

Cf. Thutmose III First Campaign, ANET 235
This detailed map (pp. 14/15) allows us to explore each area along the Carmel range. When the discussion refers to geological issues in the range, you may want to consult the geology maps on p. 2 or pp. 12/13. The map on pp. 12/13 provides an unhindered view and context.

Your HL elevations contrast with elevation reading 19m/62f on the plain of Dor and illustrate that the narrow plain ends abruptly at Mt. Carmel’s limestone hills, which then ascend to eastern summits. These summits fall sharply to the Kishon stream along steep scarps. The rugged interior has deep, V-shaped canyons draining westward to the plain through gaps in coastal ridges of solidified sand (called ‘kurkar’). Two large canyon systems are particularly impressive: one draining the central region and another farther north, which locals fondly call ‘Little Switzerland.’ Today a local ‘Druze’ population tills Mt. Carmel’s small pockets of fertile agricultural land. The Druze are members of a vibrant religious entity (distantly related to Islam) who have populated mountainous regions across the Northern Arena in Israel, Lebanon and Syria. Clans of this industrious population live in two villages on Mt. Carmel, unashamedly dedicated to modern Israel or the authority under which they find themselves.

One of the most characteristic images of Mt. Carmel is its thick scrub-forest of small trees, wild bush and thickets across Carmel’s uplifted and deeply eroded limestone. Abundant summer dew and winter rains off the nearby Mediterranean sea nourish this type of thick scrub-forest across Carmel’s broad western slopes as well as on its eastern scarps, which plummet to the plain from slightly above sea level. Like Mt. Lebanon, Mt. Carmel rises abruptly from a narrow coastal plain and thus enjoys Mediterranean moisture, but unlike high Mt. Lebanon, neither Mt. Carmel nor any other part of the land S of Lebanon hosts the great cedar forests desired by Solomon for building the Temple. Thus, Solomon was forced to negotiate with Hiram of Tyre to procure this type of lumber. When found in the context of the Land Between, the word commonly translated ‘forest’ (the Hebrew word ya’ar or plural ye’arim) refers to smaller trees and the type of scrub-forest vegetation found today in areas of uplifted, deeply eroded limestone on Mt. Carmel and throughout Galilee, Gilead and the central hill country. We shall meet such ‘forests’ in our later discussions.

Although Mt. Carmel is a fraction of Lebanon’s size, it nevertheless attracted the attention of biblical writers, who parallel Carmel with Lebanon in poetic and prophetic passages. Its particular setting (described above) benefits daily from moisture coming off the Mediterranean, and it produces well-watered meadows of summer grass and shaded vegetation, high, off the road and safely tucked away in scrub-forest and thickets. This is the context that the prophet Micah uses for his striking allusion to Judah’s provision of sustenance and safety after his traumatic description of Judah’s fate. The prophet can think of no better constrast than the nourishment and security of Mt. Carmel.

We turn now to the Iskandar uplift on this map (p. 14). Note its shape as it rises between the Aruna/Megiddo pass and the Dothan valley, culminating in Mt. Sheikh Iskandar, a limestone summit which offers a splendid view of the entire Jezreel valley. The large Arab village and suburbs of Umm el-Fahm (‘Mother of Charcoal’) today fill this summit and nearby slopes with homes and businesses. The summit descends in ridges and canyons to the narrows of the Aruna/Megiddo pass and to low hills between Taanach and Megiddo. The Iskandar uplift lacks Mt. Carmel’s long crest, sudden eastern scarp and certainly its overall mystic, but its eastern slopes and valleys form an interesting feature, a great natural theater around the region of Taanach. Winter rains, abundant runoff carrying fertile soils onto the nearby valley floor and a naturally fortified mound create an ideal setting for this famous ancient city.
In the geological drama that formed the Carmel range, water deposited harder limestones and covered these with a layer of chalk. Then folding uplifted two anticlinal regions that became Mt. Carmel and the Iskandar uplift with a downfold/syncline between them. Water again deposited softer chalky limestones in the syncline that became the Shephelah of Carmel.

Erosion removed the chalk layer from the top of the uplifts and began to shape the chalks between the harder and softer limestones into a narrow corridor. This process produced the Jokneam and Aruna/Megiddo passes. So the geology of the Carmel range explains the range’s unique role in the Land Between. A middle layer of chalk (brown areas on pp. 2 or 12) lies between harder limestones (green areas on pp. 2 or 12) and softer chalky limestones (yellow area on pp. 2 or 12) and offers two relatively easy crossings from the northern Sharon plain into the Jezreel valley. The map on p. 14 provides a closer view of these passes.

The Jokneam pass links the port-cities of Dor and Caesarea via Jokneam to the NW bay of the Jezreel valley and all the options that it affords. Other routes run across the western, lower elevations of the Shephelah of Carmel around Zephath to reach this NW bay. As Thutmose III received counsel before his march on Megiddo, some among his advisors encouraged him to consider the road ‘to the north of Djefti [Zephath] ... to arrive north of Megiddo.’ Israel’s new super highway 6 will follow a similar route through the Shephelah of Carmel.

The Megiddo pass begins W of Aruna. Its wide mouth receives roads from various directions, but it narrows, tightening considerably between the higher elevations of Carmel’s Shephelah and the heights of Mt. Sheikh Iskandar before it emerges in the Jezreel valley near the site of Megiddo. Again, the account of Thutmose’ war council illustrates this pass. His advisors ask, ‘What is it like to travel this road which narrows?’ These two critical passes through the Carmel range accent the position of king Herod’s massive port-city of Caesarea on the nearby coastal site of ‘Strato’s Tower,’ a site which served as Rome’s gateway to the land. The site controls this important area like a large hand: the palm on Caesarea, the thumb covering the coastal highway from the S and the other fingers stretching through the passes of the Carmel range to grasp the trade passing through the Jezreel valley.
A third pass, the Dothan pass (part of a later study) begins E of Gath and runs along a ridge before dropping into the broad Dothan valley and reaching the SE bay of the Jezreel valley. Thutmose’ advisors also offered the Dothan pass as an alternative route: ‘One of the roads is right in front of us, and it leads to Tanaach.’

The absence of roads over Mt. Carmel and the Iskandar uplift is striking. Indeed, had the Carmel range been one continuous uplifted limestone block these passes linking the coastal Sharon plain with the interior Jezreel valley would not have existed, and the region’s history would have been considerably different.

Texts: Carmel Range

As stated in the ‘Geobasics’ above, the Carmel range consists of three areas which either impede or encourage travel. Texts below reflect this division. They begin by the uplifted obstacle of Mt. Carmel and proceed to other parts of the range.

- The rain, dew, scrub forest, bush and bud of uplifted Mt. Carmel near the sea parallels other luxuriant regions and makes a dramatic object lesson for the Hebrew prophets—

  Beauty or blessing: Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple: a king is held captive in the tresses. Song of Songs 7:5 / It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Isaiah 35:2 / I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead. Jeremiah 50:19

  Judgement or curse: The land mourns and languishes; Lebanon is confounded and withers away; Sharon is like a desert; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves. Isaiah 35:9 / The LORD roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers. Amos 1:2 / He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither, the bloom of Lebanon fades. Nahum 1:4

- Mt. Carmel, a sentinel near the sea and above passing international highways, defined a landmark or a border and served as a retreat for the prophets Elijah and Elisha—

  Landmark, border or sentinel. ... the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one ... Joshua 12:22 / The fifth lot came out for the tribe of Asher according to its families ... on the west it touches Carmel and Shihor-libnath. Joshua 19:24-26 / Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search out and take them; and though they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them. Amos 9:3 / ‘As I live,’ an utterance of the King, the LORD of hosts is His name, ‘As Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel is by the sea, he shall come.’ Jeremiah 46:18

  The prophet Elijah. [As king Ahab led Israel astray, prompted by his wife Jezebel, Elijah the prophet dramatically declared.] Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mt. Carmel, and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.... So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mt. Carmel. 1 Kings 18:19-20 / [The place of the contest was no doubt on a small plateau high on the southern scarf of Carmel, just below the high southern summit of the mount. As the contest drew to an end an interesting comparison emerges in the story as king] Ahab went up to eat and to drink, and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees [to pray for rain—which soon came.] 1 Kings 18:42

  The prophet Elisha. [Secluded Mt. Carmel served as a retreat for Elisha in his many travels throughout the land for we read that from Bethel in the central hill country the prophet] went on to Mt. Carmel, and thence he returned to Samaria. 2 Kings 2:25 / [On his travels Elisha often passed Shunem at the foot of the Hill of Moreh where a ‘wealthy woman’ kept a prophet’s chamber for his convenience. Details of the story tell us how the woman gained and lost her son, and how] she set out and came to the man of God at Mt. Carmel. 2 Kings 4:25 within vv. 8-37 / [The Shunamite woman’s trip can be traced on pp. 14/15 and was no doubt visually reviewed often from an overview near Nazareth. The miracle of Elisha’s raising the woman’s son would have climaxd the telling of the story, and this is the background of Jesus’ raising the widow’s son at Nain, on the other side of the Hill of Moreh from Shunem (Luke 7:11-17). Both stories have the same themes and terminology, and Luke appropriately climaxes the account by saying.] The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God has come to help his people.’ This news about Jesus spread throughout Jewish territory and the areas around it. Luke 7:15-17 / [The stories of Elijah and Elisha, with Mt. Carmel visible in the background, were part and parcel of the everyday life of Jewish Galileans in Jesus’ day.]

- Routes easily cross the Shephelah of Carmel (pp. 14/15), but three natural passes offer inviting ways across the Carmel range, frequently used by traders and invaders—
optional—

The Jokneam pass. [Various roads lead from the port-cities of Dor and Caesarea to what the Bible calls] Jokneam in Carmel. Joshua 12:22 / [Pharaoh Thutmose’s advisors discussed the roads that link the northern Sharon plain to the Jezreel valley and spoke about the roads around Zephath;] See! The other (road) is to the north side of Diefa [Zephath], and if we follow it we arrive to the north of Megiddo. Karnak Annals, ANET 235

The Aruna/Megiddo pass. [Hori, an Egyptian scribe, who had traveled Canaan in his role as scout for pharaoh’s army, taunted a scribe less familiar with the geography of the land. In the taunt Hori describes the Megiddo pass.] Tell me about the way to pass Megiddo. The narrow valley [the Megiddo-Aruna Pass] is dangerous ... you’re alone; there’s no messenger with you, no army host behind you. You find no scout, who might show you a way of crossing. You come to a decision by going forward, although you know not the road. You’re seized by fear, (the hair of) your head stands up, your soul lies in your hand. Your path is filled with boulders and pebbles, without a toe hold for passing by, overgrown with reeds, thorns, brambles, and wolf’s-paw. The ravine is on one side of you, and the mountain rises on the other. You go on jolting, with your chariot on its side, afraid to press your horse (too) hard,... You start to trot. You come to a clearing and think that the foe is behind you. Trembling seizes you. If only you had a hedge of shrubs to separate you (from your enemies)! Adapted from ANET 477-478 / [The advisors to Thutmose III spelled out the dangers on the narrow Aruna/Megiddo pass.] The commanders responded to his majesty, ‘Think of the difficulties on this road’ [the Aruna/Megiddo Pass] as it becomes so narrow. The report is that the enemy is there waiting and becoming more numerous. The horses will have to go single-file as well the army and all the support staff. Our vanguard will engage in battle while the rear guard is still waiting in Aruna, unable to fight. Karnak Annals, ANET 235 / [Some eight centuries later king Josiah of Judah attempted to halt Egypt’s advance north at Megiddo.] Neco, king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates river, and Josiah went out to meet him,... and he went out to fight in the valley of Megiddo.... Archers shot king Josiah ... so his officials brought him to Jerusalem where he died. 2Chronicles 35:20-25

The Dothan pass. [The Dothan pass uses the broad Dothan valley where Joseph’s brothers had brought their flocks to graze. Here, along an international trade route,] they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, on their way to take them down to Egypt. [They ultimately sold Joseph to the caravan drivers] who took him down to Egypt. Genesis 37:122-25 / [In their war council on the northern Sharon plain, Thutmose’ advisors wanted to use of the Dothan pass.] See! One of the roads [across the Carmel range] is right in front of us, and it leads to Taanach. Karnak Annals, ANET 215

- The limestone Iskandar uplift empties fertile soil into small plateaus along its slopes and onto plains below that sustain villages and the impressive site of Taanach—

Ophrah of Gideon. [The village of Ophrah (pp. 14/15, written in) in the Gideon story is on a small plateau on the eastern slope of the Iskandar uplift above Tanaach. Here] the angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. [Gideon is later told,] Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper altar to the LORD your God upon the peak of this high refuge [no doubt the summit of Mt. Sheikh Iskandar, the 527m/1729f elevation reading. Towering over the entire area, it is a logical place to build such structures and overlooks many of the key events in this story. Sadly, in the end Gideon] made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family. Judges 6:11, 25-26; 8:27; cf. the language of Isaiah 9:2-7

E. ACHZIB-ACCO COAST

From Berytus/Beirut to Selaim/Ladder of Tyre, the Lebanon range allows only narrow, discontinuous coastal plains, but S of Selaim the Achzib-acco coast broadens out with dunes, brown-red sands and alluvia. Previous studies called attention to the division between rocks and soils, but on the coast soils become an important factor in determining coastal features.

guide in brief—

IN TEXTS

continued

Turn to pp. 2/3: NORTHERN ARENA map

Since we earlier completed most coastal marking, simply review these features on pp. 2/3.

Note the thin broken line between soils and rocks around Berytus in the N. The line reappears N of Sidon but stops N of Selaim. It begins again S of Selaim and runs around the Jezreel valley to the Rift. On its way back W it disappears under the broken subdivisional line (HL in green) along the E side of the Carmel range and Mt. Gilboa.

Find the three types of soils S of Acco (dunes, brown-red sands, alluvia; see pp. 12/13).

Find the Ladder of Tyre and its elevation reading; compare it to other coastal readings.

Note differences in the width of the coastal plain N and S of the Ladder of Tyre.

Compare coastal drainage systems from Upper Galilee with those from Lower Galilee and note any blockage of sands diverting this flow.
Geobasics

- The coastal plain S of the Selaim/Ladder of Tyre promontory is part of a large structural depression within the complex west between uplifted Mt. Carmel and Upper Galilee.
- Upper Galilee’s streams flow westward in shallow valleys and cut through a narrow ridge of brown-red sand before reaching the coastline, mostly free of dunes except by Achzib.
- Mediterranean currents carry lighter, fine sand north around the tip of Mt. Carmel and deposit it along the larger Acco bay. Such sand was important in early glass production.
- The accumulation and subsequent solidification of sands along Acco bay create a natural obstacle which diverts drainage from Lower Galilee north to an exit by Acco.
- Waters from Lower Galilee and a spring-fed river by 19m/62f produce a marshy and poorly drained inland, but the Kishon stream reaches the sea near Mt. Carmel’s tip.
- The combination of the above features creates a striking difference between the coastal plain S of Acco and that to the N, which is better drained and invites more settlement.

The promontory of Selaim, also called the ‘Ladder of Tyre,’ marks the border between the modern states of Lebanon and Israel. The southern end of this small promontory, Rosh ha-Niqra, a high, white chalk cliff above the sea, is in Israel. In addition to serving as a modern border, the promontory of Selaim marks a sudden change in the coastal regions of the Complex West. To the N Upper Galilee’s limestone hills drop perilously into the Mediterranean sea along the Ladder of Tyre and restrict traffic to a high, slippery scarp. Further N the narrow coastal plains around Tyre and Sidon offer minimal agricultural potential.

To the S the broader plain of Achzib-Acco offers more agriculture, but it is still limited compared to the rich valleys and plains of Lower Galilee and Jezeel. It was for good reason that Hiram of Tyre was disappointed when he negotiated with Solomon to receive the lands extending to Kabul SE of Acco (‘K,’ but also spelled ‘Cabul’) but evidently did not receive any of the richer valleys of Lower Galilee. Acco and its plain, however, remained an economic interest to Tyre as Acco gathers together the trade route crossing Lower Galilee and Jezeel.

This study of the Achzib-Acco coast first introduces us to the coastal pedology of dunes, brown-red sandy hills and underlying ‘kurkar’ ridges. Kurkar is a type of solidified coastal dune-rock, which formed as coastal dunes mixed with alluvia flowing from the hills. Brown-red sands accumulated atop these low kurkar ridges while newly arrived sands from the Mediterranean created new coastal dunes. The combination of coastal sand and inland alluvia resulted in ridges all along the country’s coast: on this map note the ridges that run parallel to the coast S of Mt. Carmel, along the plain of Dor and into the Sharon plain; on p. 4, these parallel ridge stand out very clearly the full length of the coast.

Turn to pp. 10/11: GALILEE, GOLAN, JEZREEL AND LOWER GILEAD map

1. The context of this map allows you to compare coastal features (width, soils, drainage) between the Tyre plain, the Achzib-Acco plain and the much broader Sharon plain.
2. Be sure to note the size of brown-red sands south of Acco with those along the Sharon plain and the areas of alluvia which have flowed out from the adjacent hills.
3. The two capes of the Carmel range and the Ladder of Tyre separate the coastal plain into three parts: Tyre coast, Achzib-Acco and Sharon-Dor.
4. The tip of Mt. Carmel, swamps by the outlet of the Kishon stream and sands south of Acco all discourage travel. How would you go from northern Sharon to Acco?
5. Note the flow of roads to and from the port-city of Acco. Compare this flow with routes linking the Jezeel valley with northern Sharon.
This map allows you to study the context of the Achzib-Acco plain as it lies between the Ladder of Tyre and the Carmel range. The Ladder of Tyre divides the plain from the smaller Tyre plain to the N, while a far more complex set of geobasics separates it from the northern Sharon plain to the S. These two capes or natural road blocks, along with specific features on the plain—rough coast with ‘tableland’ islands, sands, rolling hills with intervening lower drainage and narrow kurkar ridge, all contribute to the character of Achzib-Acco plain.

The obstacle created by the Ladder of Tyre made the Hazor-Tyre route via Upper Galilee more attractive for caravan traffic from coming from Arabia. The Phoenicians inhabiting the coastlands of Tyre looked both S and E beyond Upper Galilee for trade and for sustenance. Indeed, the sparse agricultural plains of Phoenicia limited their potential for maritime expansion, so these sea-faring peoples looked southward with a covetous gaze on Israel’s fields of grain to supply the needs of its population and the sailors who manned their fleets. Again, the map on p. 10 shows the alluvial valleys of Galilee and the fertile plains around the Jezreel valley, all available to Tyre and Sidon, but at a price that a king like Solomon could ask.

Phoenicia’s dependence upon the Land Between was true in the days of the kings of Israel such as Ahab and is stated explicitly later in the book of Acts when a Gentile delegation from Tyre and Sidon travelled to Caesarea to appeal to king Agrippa of Jewish Jerusalem ‘for peace—because their country (Phoenicia) depended upon the king’s country for food.’ King Agrippa’s leverage of grain exports may have encouraged his folly in accepting the praises of men.

Features along the Achzib-Acco coast clearly stand out on this map, including its line of kurkar ridges in the N and the dunes and brown-red sands S of Acco which divert the waters of the Naaman stream issuing from springs near Aphek. The path of the Kishon stream draining much of the Jezreel valley passes south of these sands, and some call the adjoining, poorly drained lands ‘the plain of Zebulun’ (today S of the modern Israeli port-city of Haifa and home to a major oil refinery). Better drained, fertile plains and small valleys line the eastern side of this entire area SW of Acco, from Achshaph to Kabul. Portions of the low, rolling countryside N of Acco also offer agricultural potential at the western foot of Upper Galilee but less so than at the foot of Lower Galilee in the S.

This map, more than any other in this book, reveals the alluvial valleys and plains of the Northern Arena, and whoever controlled these fertile soils could not only exploit major trade routes but also effectively hold Tyre and Sidon hostage with their abundant supply of grain. When Phoenician leaders and Israelite kings cooperated, both benefited economically. This occurred when Omri of Israel arranged a marriage alliance between his son Ahab and the Phoenician princess Jezebel. In the process Ahab sold his Israelite soul, which engendered the preaching of the prophet Elijah and the subsequent bloody rebellion of Jehu. This devastated the economic infrastructure of the northern kingdom of Israel and allowed Hazael of Damascus to take over the north and thereby benefit from the same Phoenician connection that Ahab had so fiercely fought to control in his many trade wars with Damascus.
The port-city of Acco plays a particularly interesting role within the setting of the Achzib-Acco coastal plain. The map on pp. 14/15 clearly shows its strategic position north of Mt. Carmel and the sandy obstacle along the coast. Acco was Galilee’s main port until modern Haifa emerged near the mouth of the Kishon, an estuary which hosted a small ancient site (T. Abu Huwam, not named on this map). The ancient Tell Akko also arose near the mouth of a river, the Naaman stream which flows N from Aphek before turning abruptly to the sea. This estuary acted as a small port and allowed those in the city on Tell Akko to exploit their position commercially. Later Acco used the natural half-moon bay as a port, and the nearby rocky promontory developed into the Greek city of Ptolemais until it fell to Islam, which together with the Crusaders left impressive remains visible today in the modern city.

Acco appears to have remained outside the control of the Israelites, even during the period of Solomon’s mini-empire. Like other coastal cities it fell time and time again to invaders such as Assyria and Babylon. Persia later transformed the Phoenician fleets into a Persian navy effectively used in Persia’s wars in the Aegean against Athens. Acco always lay in the shadow of the greater island-fortress of Tyre. Alexander dramatically linked maritime Tyre to the mainland and when it fell, Acco also became part of the Hellenistic world. From that point forward its checkered history becomes too complex to relate here, but again, the Jewish Hasmonian attempt to overtake Acco failed in the century prior to Jesus’ birth. Acco served as the port of Galilee, but always remained separate from Lower Galilee and firmly attached to the maritime world of the Mediterranean. In the days of Jesus and the apostles, Acco/Ptolemais was Tyrian territory while Lower Galilee remained a local Jewish territory.

**Texts: Achzib-Acco Coast**

The **Achzib-Acco coast** carries a portion of the international coastal highway and, although promised to Zebulun but taken by Asher, did not for the most part come under Israelite control. It served as an Egyptian maritime approach to the land, came under the influence of Phoenicia and fell before every empire that approached the land from the N. Perhaps this international character explains why few biblical texts actually address the Aczib-Acco coast, while many references to it, under the names Acco or Ptolemais, appear in extra-biblical documents from the time of Egyptian domination to Rome’s supremacy.

- **The Achzib-Acco coast** lies between three mountainous regions and, apart from its port and highway, offered the ancient world three products: sand, fish and dye—

  Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out ... for they shall suckle on the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand. Deuteronomy 33:19 / Zebulun complained to the Holy One, blessed be he, saying, ‘Sovereign of the Universe, to my brothers You have given fields and vineyards and to me You have given hills and mountains; to my brothers You have given lands, and to me You have given lakes and rivers.’ [God] replied, ‘They will all need you for the hilazon’ [a mollusk from which dye is extracted for the blue thread in the tassel; cf. Numbers 15:38-39], as it says, ‘and the hidden treasures of the sand,’ and R. Joseph learned: ‘Hidden’ indicates the hilazon; ‘treasures’ indicates the tunny fish [a fish used for pickling/salting and export]; ‘sand’ indicates white glass.

  Ptolemais [on the Achzib-Acco coast] is a maritime town in Galilee, built at the entrance of the Great Plain, and encompassed with mountains. To the east, at a distance of [5 km/3 mi] is the Galilean range; to the south, [12 km/7.5 mi] off, lies Carmel; to the north, [18 km/11 mi] away, is the highest chain of all, called by the natives the ‘Ladder of the Tyrians.’ At a distance of about [2 km/1.25 mi] from the town [of Ptolemais] runs the diminutive river Belus [Naaman].... close by a very remarkable region [a little S of Ptolemais] ... it consists of a circular basin which produces vitreous sand. Numerous boats put in to this spot and empty the basin of its sand, whereupon it is filled up again by the action of the winds [or more correctly by waves washing fine sands around the promontory of Carmel]. War 2.168-191 x.2 (LCL) / Between Acco and Tyre is a beach of dunes that produces the sand used for glass-making. The account is that the sand is not melted here but is transported to Sidon to undergo the process of melting and casting. Sebaio, Geography 16.2.25 / The part of Syria called Phoenicia ... contains a swamp ... at the foot of Mt. Carmel. It is believed to be the source of the river Belus [Naaman], which flows for [9 km/5 mi] into the sea at the [Roman] colony of Ptolemais.... It is muddy and deep, revealing its sands only when the sea throws them up; for they shine when the dirt has been washed off them through the tossing of the waves. They are not considered suitable for industrial use until after they have been stripped clean by the sea’s action. The beach is no
more than [1 km/5 mi] long, but for many centuries it has provided the raw materials for glass-making. The story goes that a ship of dealers in nitre once put ashore here [and used blocks of nitre to support their cooking pots over the fire.] When these became hot and mixed with the sand, out flowed transparent streams of a new liquid. This, it is said, was the origin of glass. Pliny, Natural History 36.190-191 (see Brown, The Lebanon and Phoenicia, pp. 104-108)

- Although the blessings of Jacob and Moses gave the southern Achzib-Acco coast to Zebulun, Asher received most of the region by lot but could not possess it—

 Underlined sites are on Geobasics maps.

Zebulun: Zebulun shall dwell by the sea coast; he shall become a coastal refuge for ships, and his utmost limit shall reach [greater] Sidon [or Phoenicia]. Genesis 49:13 / [Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out ... for they shall seek on the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand. Deuteronomy 33:19

Asher: The fifth lot fell to the descendants of Asher by their clans. Their territory [in Upper Galilee went] as far as greater Sidon. The boundary then turned back to Ramah and as far as the fortified city of Tyre; then the border turned toward Hosah [Usa] and its limits on the west were the region of Achzib. Ummnah [read Acco with the Greek catenae], Aphek. ... These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the descendants of Asher by their clans. Joshua 19:24-31 / Asher did not dispossess ... those living in Acco ... or Achzib ... or Aphek ..., but the Asherites lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land. Judges 1:31-32

- The Achzib-Acco coast remained Gentile territory whereas the adjacent portions of Lower and Upper Galilee were Israelite or Jewish—

Asher did not dispossess ... those living in Acco ... or Achzib ... or Aphek ... Judges 1:31

Hiram, king of Tyre supplied Solomon with all the cedar logs, pine logs and gold that he desired, so King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee [presumably on or adjacent to the northern Acco-Achzib coast and stretching as far S as Kabul]. When Hiram journeyed from Tyre to see the cities that Solomon had given him, they displeased him. He said, 'What are these cities that you have given to me, my brother?' They are called land of Kabul until this day. 1 Kings 9:11-13

[The Achzib-Acco coast often fell under the control of either Sidon or Tyre.] In my third campaign I [Sennacherib of Assyria] marched against Hatti. Luli, king of Sidon, whom the terror-inspiring glamor of my lordship had overwhelmed, fled far overseas and perished. The awe-inspiring splendor of the 'Weapon' of Ashur, my lord, overwhelmed his strong cities: Great Sidon, Little Sidon, Bit-Zitti, Zaribtu [Zarephath], Mahalliba [Ahlab], Usu, Achzib, Acco, all his fortress cities, walled and well-provided with food and water for his garrisons, and they bowed in submission to my feet. ANET 287 / These are the ports of trade and the trade roads which Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, [granted] to his servant Baal [king of Tyre]: toward Acco, Dor ... ANET 534

[Israelite literature describes the Achzib-Acco/Ptolemais coast as Gentile.] When the Gentiles round about heard that the altar had been built and the sanctuary dedicated [they began to destroy the Jewish population near them]. ...[a report came from Galilee] that against them had gathered men of Ptolemais and Tyre and Sidon and all Galilee of the Nations, 'to annihilate us.' ... So Simon went to Galilee and fought many battles against the Gentiles. He pursued them to the gate of Ptolemais. 1 Maccabees 5:1-23 / [After Antiochus Eupator failed to quell the forces of Judas Maccabaeus, he offered Maccabaeus a treaty and] left Hegemones as governor from Ptolemais to Gerar and went to Ptolemais. The people of Ptolemais were indignant over the treaty. 2 Maccabees 13:24-25 / The Jews assembled with their wives and children in the plain of Ptolemais and implored Petronius [the general sent by emperor Gaius] to have regard first for the laws of their fathers. ...[Petronius] left the statues and his troops at Ptolemais and advanced into Galilee [to reason with the people]. War 2.192-194a-3 (LCL) / Cestius marched [from Ptolemais] against a fortified city of Galilee, called Chabalon [Kabul, which lay] on the frontier of [Gentile/Roman] Ptolemais and Jewish territory. War 2.503/xviii.9 (LCL) / When one travels [N on the road] from Acco to Achzib, [he may assume that the land on] the right hand side or east of the road is [ritually] clean with regard [to the ruling that] the land of the nations [is unclean], and it is subject to tithes and the law of the seventh [or sabbatical] year ... [and he may assume that the land on] the left hand side or west of the road is [ritually] unclean with regard [to the ruling that] the land of the nations [is unclean], and it is not subject to tithes and the law of the seventh year ... this applies until he reaches Achzib. y.Sheviit 43b in Artscroll edition

- The Achzib-Acco coast provides a major port (Acco/Ptolemais) and hosts a section of the great coastal highway; these factors enhance its international character—

The port in the Hebrew scriptures—Zebulun shall dwell by the sea coast; he shall become a coastal refuge for ships. Genesis 49:13

The port in the book of Acts—[As Paul journeyed from Ephesus to Jerusalem, Luke records:] When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea. Acts 21:7-8

The port in ancient history—

Egyptian period: [The Amarna letters reveal that Acco offered a significant sea link between Canaan and Egypt.] Look, members of the army have en[ter]ed Acco [in order to transport provisions] [need]ed by the king. EA 111:22 / Surata [the ruler of Acco] took Lab'ayu from Megiddo and said to me, 'I will send him to the king [of]
Egypt] by boat. EA 245:24-35; [Rib-hadda, the ruler of Gubla/Byblos argued that his port-city is as important to Egypt, if not more so, than Acco. His contention reveals Acco's importance.] Gubla is a loyal city of the king,... Still, the messenger of Acco is honored more than [my] messenger. EA 88:46; [Rib-hadda again argued:] May the king ... send grain in ships in order to keep his servant and his city alive. May he grant 400 men and 30 pairs of horses, as were given to Sa'ad[(al)] [the ruler of Acco]. EA 85:16-22 [The ruler of Acco, on the other hand, argued that Acco, presumably with its port, opened up the world of Canaan's interior and, hence, was like Migdol on the Sinai road between Egypt and Canaan, both a gateway to another world and a sentinal for Egypt.] Message of Satatna, the ruler of Acco ... May the king, my lord, heed the word of his servant.... Acco is like Migdol in Egypt. EA 234; cf. references to Migdol as a border city Exodus 14:2; Numbers 33:7; on Egypt's northern frontier Ezekiel 29:10; 30:6

Greco-Roman period: Ptolemais is a maritime town in Galilee, built at the entrance of the Great Plain [and, hence, the maritime gateway to the interior]. War 2.188/x.2 (LCL) / Alexander Epiphanes [Balas] ... landed and occupied Ptolemais. 1 Maccabees 10:1; cf. Ant 13:35/xi.1 / Cleopatra III commanded her son Alexander to sail to Phoenicia [as part of her move against her son Ptolemy who had captured Ptolemais]. Ant 13:248-350/xiii.1 / Herod [the Great] ... sailed from Italy to Ptolemais and collected a considerable army and began marching through Galilee [to establish his rule]. War 1.290/xv.3; Ant 14:394/xv.1 / Agrippa went to Ptolemais, and lacking the means to live anywhere else, he resolved to set sail to Italy. Ant 18.155/vi.3

The road in ancient history—

Egyptian period: [Excavation texts on two figurines from the Middle Kingdom name rulers along the road:] the ruler of Achshaph, Y'apanu; the ruler of Acco, Tur-[i]-Ammu. ANET 329 / [Hatshepsut III of the Eighteenth Dynasty names conquered sites along the highway:] ... Achshaph ... Acco ... ANET 242 / [Acco, on the coastal route and with easy access to the interior, played a role in land movements during the Amarna period.] Bur-rar-huriyas, the king of Kar-[a]huniyas [a ruler in Babylonia complains that Acco and another city in Canaan have made the roads unsafe.]. Sum-Adda ... and Satatna, the son of Saratum of Acco, having sent their men, killed my merchants and took away their money.... Canaan is your country. ... In your country I have been despoiled.... Put to death the men who put my servants to death, they are going to kill again, be it a caravan of mine men, killed my merchants and took away their money and so messengers between us will thereby be cut off. And if they try to deny this to you, Sum-Adda, having blocked the passage of one man of mine, retained him in his company, and another man, having been forced into service by Satatna of Acco, is still serving him. EA 8 / [Surata and Satatna, consecutive rulers of Acco, however, pledged their loyalty to pharaoh.] Message of Satatna, the ruler of Acco ... He is obeying what the king, my lord, has written to his servant. EA 235; so too, 232, 234, 235; see cooperation 366 and obstruction 238 / [Seti I of the Nineteenth Dynasty names a conquered site along the highway:] ... Acco ... ANET 242 / [In a scene at Karnak, Ramses II of the Nineteenth Dynasty depicts an attack upon the] town which his majesty desolated, Acco ... ANET 256 / [Horí, an Egyptian scribe, who had traveled Canaan in his role as scout speaks about the road.] Please instruct me about Berytus, about Sidon and Zaphethah. Where is the stream of the Litani? What is Usu like? They say another town in the sea, named Tyre the Port.... Let me tell you another difficult case—the crossing of Seram [Selaim or the 'Ladder of Tyre']. You will say, 'It burns more than a sting!' ... Lead on toward the south and the route to the region of Acco. Where does the road to Achshaph begin? At what town? Pray, teach me about the mountain of User [Mt. Carmel south of Acco]. What is its promontory like? [Would you go around it or look for a pass through it?]} ANET 477

Assyrian period: [Acco lay along the route of Asshurbanapal's homeward march.] On my return march,... I killed those inhabitants of Acco who were not submissive, hanging their corpses on poles which I placed around the city. ANET 302 / See the records of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon above under 'The Achzib-Acco coast remained Gentile territory.'

F. Looking at the Big Picture: The Complex West

Markings on pp. 2/3, 10/11 and 14/15 introduced the great variety of the Complex West. With these maps in hand we now consider the position and importance of the Complex West within the framework of the entire country. Consider these questions as you do this:

- Although varying greatly in rock types and structure, can you identify some outstanding geographical features or processes which dominate the Complex West?
- From what you know about the geobasics of its different areas where would you want to live in the Complex West to balance the need for water, food and security?
- Given uplifted Upper Galilee and the deep Galilean depression around Lake Galilee, is it correct to see Lower Galilee as a separate region from the Hazor-Dan area? Explain.
- What would you propose as ultimate destinations in or beyond the Complex West as well as the main obstacles to travel and commerce between these destinations?
- Which routes would provide the easiest S-N passage through the Complex West? Which routes provide the easiest E-W passage through the Complex West to coastal ports?
- As an imperial invader which sites would you take and hold in order to control the Complex West. Which of these are most important for invaders from the N or from the S?
- As the leader of Israel in the central hill country what are your priorities in the Complex West in order to establish a secure northern border and how difficult is this to achieve?
- As the leader of Damascus what are your priorities in the Complex West in order to establish a secure southern border and how difficult is this to achieve?
- As the leader of Tyre (who depends upon goods coming from Arabia) what would be your approach to any local power which controlled all of the Complex West except the coast?
- What part of the Complex West do you think plays the greatest role in terms of relations between Tyre, Damascus and Israel?
- Summarize three main insights you have gained in studying the Complex West.

Turn to pp. 12/13: Rocks and Soils map

On this map (pp. 12/13) consider the following. The Stable East was a large open area which allowed commerce to flow N from Arabia. The Soaring North presented major obstacles to travel. How would you fit the Complex West into this three-part division of the Northern Arena and what larger geobasics of the north emerge?

✧ Black write-in: Names of the five divisions of the Complex West listed under Complex West in the text on p. 2. You may want to abbreviate these (UG, LG, JV, etc.).

✧ See how many city initials you recognize in the Complex West; remember that regular type represents sites from Bronze-Iron periods (e.g., 'S' = Shunem), italic type represents sites from Greco-Roman periods (e.g., ‘N’ = Nazareth) and initials in parentheses represent a later or modern name, such as, (HH) = Horns of Hittim (which should be in parentheses on p. 3). The object of this exercise is not to learn all of these names but rather to see how these initials reflect maps on pp. 2/3, 10/11 and 14/15.

✧ On this map (pp.12/13) review the three major divisions of the Northern Arena (the Stable East, the Soaring North and the Complex West) and compare these with areas farther S, noting differences which you find interesting. What do you see developing E and W of the Rift? How do you see the Rift and the coastal plain changing as each of them extends S? Given what you know of life and travel in the Northern Arena what do you see as the geobasics of life and travel in the center and south of the land.