

Jordan: The Forgotten Holy Land

By

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Preface

The concept of a “Holy Land” did not always exist. Over many generations that small area in the Middle East came to be known by that name because of the story of one man and his family. That man was Abraham—an upright man of the Hebrew clan who lived in Mesopotamia and worshipped a single God, in contrast to the majority in Mesopotamia. He and his descendants were referred to as Hebrews. He was divinely told to leave Mesopotamia with his family and goods and go to Canaan, a land to the south. He went—not because he knew it was holy, but because God had designated Canaan as the place where he should live, and Abraham was obedient. It was, therefore, the “designated land” for him.

When Abraham arrived in Canaan, he found the land already occupied by the Canaanites—a tribal, pastoral, and beginning-to-be agricultural society who were pagan worshippers and by other groups like the seafaring people who lived along the Mediterranean coast. Abraham, who was a wealthy pastoralist, was able to live peacefully among the Canaanites in spite of his religious differences with them. He did not conquer, nor did he buy land for his flocks. He probably rented the land temporarily and gradually moved from the north of Canaan to the south where there was less population and more land was available. As commanded, Abraham continued to offer sacrifices to God and included his whole family in this ritual. Their sacrifices demonstrated the family’s commitment and devotion to God. This was a different focus than pagan sacrifices offered by the Canaanites that were focused on appeasing an angry god or asking a god for favors. Abraham was then promised, in a covenant with God, that the land of the Canaanites would eventually be given to his descendants as a land of inheritance. Canaan thus became the “Promised Land.”

Abraham had several sons and one of them, Isaac, was designated as the principal heir who would inherit the main part of the designated land. The other sons, and there were at least six, were directed to live to the south, east, and north of Isaac’s inheritance. Abraham sent Isaac’s half-brothers to new lands so that there would not be conflicts between the sons/descendants over the land of inheritance. Abraham’s nephew, Lot, who had traveled from Mesopotamia with him, left Abraham to avoid getting their flocks mixed together and settled east of the Jordan River. Lot’s two sons later settled in areas that were also on the east side of the river. Later, Isaac had two sons—Esau and Jacob—and when Jacob became the designated principal heir, Esau also left Canaan and settled on the east side of the Arabah, a rift containing the Jordan River and the southern valley going to the Red Sea. When Abraham’s wife Sarah died, Abraham wanted to finally own a parcel of land so that his wife, himself, and his descendants would have a permanent burial place. He negotiated for and purchased land near Hebron, not too far from where he had been living. At this time the only descendants of Abraham living in Canaan were Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s sons. Because Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, all these were called Israelites.

Many years after the deaths of Abraham and Isaac, a famine in Canaan forced the Israelites to move to Egypt where they heard that food was available. When they got to Egypt, they encountered their lost brother, Joseph, who had become the assistant to the Pharaoh. The famine in Canaan continued and the Israelites stayed in Egypt. With the passing years there were several changes in pharaohs and eventually a pharaoh arose who did not remember Joseph. He saw the Israelites as foreigners and made them slaves. After many years of captivity, Moses (born an Israelite but raised as an Egyptian) rescued them and led them into the desert where they were free of Egyptian taskmasters. In the desert the people were offered a renewal of the Abrahamic covenants in which each family performed their own sacrifices. The Israelites were reluctant to accept the covenants entirely. Therefore, a more centralized religious organization (called the Levitical priesthood after the tribe given that responsibility) was imposed. Instead of family sacrifices, the new priesthood included a centralized sacrifice in a portable tent called the tabernacle. The worship system also

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included specific rituals in which the people could become free of their sins through sacrifice. It has been said that after the changes imposed by Moses, the religion changed from a “Hebrew religion” to an “Israelite religion.” Moses led the Israelites through lands occupied by descendants of Abraham and Lot (Negev, Arabia, Edom, Moab, and around Ammon) to the eastern side of the Jordan River. They camped at a place where they could cross the Jordan River. From there, Moses took a fighting group northward in the Jordan Valley and hill country. There they conquered some Canaanite tribes (collectively called the Amorites). This conquered territory was assigned to some of the tribes of Israel. Moses then turned the leadership over to Joshua.

From the camp on the eastern side of the river, Joshua led the people across the river and began the occupation of the “Promised Land.” The Israelites conquered some cities, likely because the wickedness of those cities endangered the relationship between God and the Israelites. In most places, however, the Israelites occupied lands (mostly uplands) that the Canaanites were not using. The Israelites gathered by tribe in designated areas. The central holy object of their religion, the Arc of the Covenant, was moved among the tribes so that each tribe had a chance to enjoy its presence. The tribe of priests were also spread throughout the entire area and sacrifices were performed in many different locations, often a woods or a high hill. Over the next decades the Israelites grew in numbers, strength, and political power compared to the Canaanites and also against their neighbors along the Mediterranean coast (the Philistines) and against the kingdoms on the east side of the river (Midianites, Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites). The Israelites felt that they would be even more powerful as a united group with a king, and they asked the prophet Samuel to find a king for them. Samuel reluctantly complied and Saul became the king. He was followed by David who vastly expanded the kingdom to include conquering the city of Jerusalem. David declared Jerusalem to be the capital of the kingdom and further centralized government in the city. David was succeeded by Solomon who built the temple to replace the tabernacle and centralized worship; declaring that the temple was the only place where sacrifices should be done. After Solomon, the kingdom split into two parts—the Kingdom of Israel on the north and the Kingdom of Judah on the south. Each of the kingdoms had its own government and foreign policy. The kingdoms became rivals and occasionally became enemies. The northern kingdom defied the previous mandate to only have sacrifices in Jerusalem and established several alternate sacrificial locations. This step caused further animosity between the kingdoms.

After several generations, the Assyrians conquered the Kingdom of Israel and took most of the population away as slaves and workers for the Assyrian government. These captives never returned to Canaan. The nearly empty land was repopulated by people from surrounding lands who believed that each geographical area had a god who should be worshipped in that area. Therefore, the newcomers adopted the Israelite religion, with some modifications. These new arrivals were called Samaritans after the name of their capital city. The people in the Kingdom of Judah condemned the Samaritans as polluters of the religion.

About 100 years after the disappearance of the northern kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians, including destruction of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, and the elite of Judah were taken into Babylon. The disappearance of the temple caused a religious crisis for the people of Judah, both in Babylon and even those who remained in their land. They could not perform sacrifices by the required method and in the required temple location. The people yearned for the temple and saw it as a place where special ordinances of salvation (forgiveness of sin) could be performed. Without the temple, how would they be made “holy?” Jerusalem and the land around it had become, in the minds and hearts of the Jews, a “Holy Land.”

The Jews developed a new method of achieving remission of their sins. The idea was to avoid sins by keeping the laws and using the laws as a strict guide for living. This radical change has been called the changing of the “Israelite religion” to the “Jewish religion.” This increased emphasis on the law meant that the common people must know the law intimately. Therefore, scribes were developed who wrote the law and

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rabbis were asked to teach and interpret the law. Many separate documents containing the law were gathered and new histories of the Jews were written at this time. Of course, the histories were written by Jews who strongly believed that their view of religion, politics, and good and evil were correct. Therefore, the Hebrew Bible was written with a Jewish perspective and a focus on the Kingdom of Judah. Other areas, like Samaria and the lands east of the Jordan River, were generally ignored.

When Christianity was born, the Hebrew Bible was accepted and became the Old Testament. Hence, Christians retained the same focus and view of history as the Jews. Therefore, most Christians know little of lands outside Judah. Christians throughout the Middle Ages saw Palestine, as it was then called, as a place of pilgrimage and penance that helped to expiate their sins if they visited on a pilgrimage. Therefore, Christians considered the places of pilgrimage, especially Jerusalem and surrounding area, to be the “Holy Land.” Muslims also considered portions of the Hebrew Bible and of the New Testament to be correct. They generally accepted the Jewish point of view but focused also on uniquely Muslim cities as special places. Muslims said that Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem were all “holy” cities.

I feel that a historical deficiency exists. The history of Jordan , the principal land east of the Jordan River, needs to be written from a point of view that includes the history of the eastern side of the Jordan River. I think that this history would be enhanced if written by a believing Christian who also understands Islamic history and viewpoints. I also believe that the general structure of that history should follow both the Bible and secular history together so that people can relate the events on the east of the river with events they are more familiar with in general terms from religious and secular sources.

Several questions about the extent of the Holy Land arose in writing this history. Aren't Abraham's descendants living in other areas besides Palestine and modern Israel? Didn't many of the events of the Bible occur in surrounding areas, especially in Jordan? Isn't Jordan also a “Holy Land?”

From 2012 to 2015 my wife, Margaret, and I lived in Jordan doing volunteer humanitarian service. Because I had just retired from being a professor at Brigham Young University where I taught both engineering and history courses, my principal humanitarian assignment was to assist a new university—the American University of Madaba—prepare for American accreditation. Most weeks I went to the university on Monday and Wednesday, sometimes alone and sometimes with Margaret. There I interacted frequently with other faculty, administration, staff, and students. Margaret also had a primary assignment to assist with the struggling medical system in Jordan, especially focusing on eye clinics and diabetes detection. I also accompanied her on many of her visits with government officials and medical personnel. Because we were in Jordan during the height of the Syrian war, refugees (about 1000 per day) were flooding into Jordan and so we were also involved in helping the refugees. In this work we assisted other humanitarian missionaries of out charity group who were stationed in Jordan. There were three couples working together.

I also assigned myself the task of identifying all the locations mentioned in the Bible that referred to Jordan. I therefore reread both Old Testament and New Testament twice and noted each reference to Jordan. These references often said, “other side of the Jordan River,” or “east of the river,” or something similar. I then tried to find each of the sites on a map and, when time permitted, visit each of them. I was surprised at the large number of sites within Jordan in both the Old and New Testaments. I arranged these sites and a brief explanation of what happened at each site in a Table of Biblical References Booklet. I shared the booklet with the other missionary couples in Jordan. I also began a study of the history of Jordan as a way to put the sites into a historical context and I added some further details to the booklet. My friends and family liked the booklet and encouraged me to publish it as part of an expanded book on Jordan.

After returning from the mission, I have continued my research on Jordan and the Middle East, both religious and secular. I have compared archaeological studies and religious studies. I have consulted with friends and

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scholars who are Christians, Muslims, and Jews. In that process, I have become convinced that Jordan is part of the Holy Land, and I am happy to share my findings with you. I have decided to write the book about Jordan that seemed to be missing. I have included what I have learned as well as the booklet I developed while in Jordan.

I believe that to really appreciate the situation in the Middle East, especially in Jordan, Palestine, and Israel, the overview presented in this Preface, which is generally what people know about the area, needs to be expanded to understand the background for the events and to discuss in greater detail the interplay between the people living on both sides of the Jordan River. That expanded history and the booklet on biblical sites are included in this book. I hope it is useful and interesting to you.

For brevity and simplicity, I have often used the term "Jordan" to refer to locations east of the Jordan River. These references mean the area occupied by the modern Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan unless specifically modified as in Jordan River, etc., even though modern Jordan did not come into existence as an entity until 1948.

Chapter 1: Geography and Climate

Forgotten Land

How can a land that sits astride the principal trade route between two major ancient civilizations be forgotten? But that is largely the case with Jordan. It surrounds much of the King's Highway—the road that has connected Egypt with Mesopotamia for over 6000 years—yet its role in history is largely overlooked. In addition, when people think of the Holy Land, they generally consider only Israel-Palestine and ignore Jordan even though it was an important location for many of the events that are recorded in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Even in modern times Jordan's role in WWI and the ensuing issues within the Middle East seem to be disregarded even though Jordan has been a refuge for many and a model of moderation that many other Arab countries are now embracing.

The land east of the Jordan River was largely unknown to Bible students before a few determined explorers in the 19th century, like Johann Burckhardt and Ulrich Seetzen, traversed this land. There were few urban areas and the population was mostly warring Bedouin tribes. The explorers often donned disguises to protect themselves from the local wars. They rediscovered Jerash, one of the best-preserved ancient cities of the Greco-Roman world and, of course, the incomparable Petra. But no one attempted a systematic look at the land east of Jordan until the American rabbi Nelson Glueck in the 1930s. He discovered scores of ruins hidden beneath mounds of debris.¹ Systematic studies of Jordan afterward were steady but limited in scope and number. Thus, Jordan remains largely a forgotten gem. Perhaps that is because few people realize the importance of Jordan in biblical history, or they simply assume that the stories from the Bible all occurred on the western side of the Jordan River. But there is much biblical history and secular information from Jordan, the forgotten Holy Land.

King's Highway

Since the King's Highway has been so important for Jordan for so long, a brief discussion here about the highway itself is appropriate. It is mentioned repeatedly in the Bible, and the historical aspects of the King's Highway and its economic and cultural impact will be discussed throughout this book. As shown in the accompanying map, the northern end of the King's Highway is in Resafa, a city in upper Mesopotamia that is located on the network of roads running throughout the Mesopotamian area. The King's Highway proceeds southwest through Syria past Damascus and Bostra. (Damascus claims to be one of the oldest continuously occupied cities in the world and its location on the King's Highway adds to the creditability of that claim.) The highway enters Jordan east of the Sea of Galilee at modern Jordan's northernmost boundary. The highway continues south along the eastern edge of the mountains of northern Jordan through Jordan's hill country acting more or less as the spine of the country. The highway parallels the Jordan River but lies about 10 miles to the east of the river. It runs through Jerash, one of the Decapolis cities founded by the Greeks to further trade in the area and then, further south, it skirts along the western edge of the city of Amman (anciently called Philadelphia, another Decapolis city) and continues south through the city of Madaba (where a 5th century mosaic map is located that shows the King's Highway.)

The highway continues south still paralleling the Dead Sea but lying about 10 miles to the east. The road winds through a deep valley called the Wadi Mujib that is about half-way down the length of the Dead Sea. Today the Wadi Mujib is a lovely nature preserve. The road continues south and passes Kerak and its magnificent crusader castle and then passes near to Petra, the marvelous place UNESCO calls a Wonder of

the World. The route then continues south paralleling the great rift, now just a dry wadi (valley), called the Arabah. The road eventually reaches Aqaba at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba, an arm of the Red Sea. At that point the highway turns and crosses the Sinai Desert to Egypt. Near the southern end of the road, it is joined by routes from the south that were used by caravans from Arabia that transported frankincense and myrrh to Egypt and to Mesopotamia.



Figure 1: The King's Highway

Throughout its history, the King's Highway has been the route of the biblical patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). The road was also used by Moses and the Israelites, ancient Arab and Greek traders, Nabateans on their way to the sacred city of Petra, Roman military units and emperors, Jews avoiding Samaria and, later, Christian pilgrims visiting holy sites, Muslims heading to Mecca, crusaders visiting their principal fortress castles, and modern tourists enjoying the wonders and historical sites of modern Jordan. For its entire length in Jordan, the King's Highway is a paved, two-lane road.

Today there are two additional north-south highways in Jordan that run, roughly, parallel to each other and on the east and west of the King's Highway. The road to the east is called the Desert Highway and is a 4-lane freeway (mostly) that is much faster than the King's Highway but is less scenic. It runs from Amman to Aqaba. The desert road is a reminder of the road that Moses took during the exodus on his way to the crossing of the Jordan River.

The other road running parallel to the King's Highway, called the Dead Sea Highway, is situated to the west of the King's Highway traveling from Aqaba north along the edge of Wadi Arabah then continues along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea and still further north through the Jordan River Valley to the Sea of Galilee. It is a 2-lane paved road and interestingly passes the lowest spot on earth, Lot's cave, and the Dead Sea Museum. It continues north of the Dead Sea past the place where Jesus was baptized and then through the heart of the Jordan River valley where most of Jordan's vegetables and fruits are grown. It ends at Jordan's northern boundary near the Sea of Galilee. Along its length, the road passes by the three places where modern travelers cross into Israel/Palestine—at Aqaba, just north of the Dead Sea, and just south of the Sea of Galilee.

Topography

The topography has been one reason that people have overlooked Jordan. The southern part of the country, roughly from the highway connecting the city of Amman to the northern tip of the Dead Sea, is mostly desert. The King's Highway lies in the middle of this region. The Dead Sea highway runs along the Wadi Arabah and this part of the great rift is about five miles wide and forms a boundary between southern Israel and Jordan.

The southeastern part of Jordan is especially dry and, even today, few inhabitants other than some nomadic Bedouins choose to live there. However, some of the most beautiful desert land in the world is located in this portion of Jordan in a region called Wadi Rum. It is a UNESCO protected area. West of this very dry region there are a few scattered towns and some limited agriculture, mostly grains that can be grown in a plateau area just south of the road from Amman to the Dead Sea. This grain is grown using only rain for irrigation.



Figure 2: Wadi Rum (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1377/>)

North of the highway connecting Amman and the Dead Sea the country is more varied. From where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea, the Jordan River valley is very fertile and has a warmer climate than the area to the east. This is because of the low elevation (hot house effect) and the abundance (relatively) of fresh water. This is where most of the vegetables and fruits of the country are grown.

A range of mountains and hills creates the eastern edge of the Jordan River valley and these mountains and hills extend from Amman north to the northern boundary of Jordan. This hilly/mountainous region has higher rainfall than the south and is where most of the olives and other tree crops are grown. The major cities of Jordan are in this region. The hilly and mountainous district is called the Gilead.



Figure 3: View of Gilead

Proceeding to the east of the hilly mountainous region the land becomes flatter and dryer. There are fewer towns and fewer people. Bedouins are the principal inhabitants. This desert area continues to the east and merges with the desert of Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Dead Sea

The story of the formation and changes in the Dead Sea is an important part of Jordanian history. When the Earth itself was still being formed, the tectonic plate containing Arabia and the Levant pulled apart from the plate containing Africa. This movement created the Great Rift Valley that runs through eastern Africa, the Red Sea, and the Jordan River valley. The Red Sea, the Dead Sea, and the Jordan River valley were created by this separation of plates. Even today, those plates are still sliding past each other with the Arabian plate moving north and the African plate moving south. This sliding is the cause of the numerous earthquakes that have occurred in the Middle East and are recorded in the archaeological record. The tectonic sliding has also resulted in the dramatic elevation differences in Jordan despite being such a small territory. The highest elevation in Jordan is 6,083 feet and the lowest place is the shore of the Dead Sea at 1,414 feet below sea level. (Earth's lowest continental depression.)

This extreme negative elevation, in combination with the nearby mountains, promotes an extremely arid environment. The average annual precipitation at the Dead Sea is less than 4 inches. The Dead Sea receives water from the Jordan River, which is fed by rainfall and snow in the mountains in the north of Lebanon and Syria and by a few streams that seasonally flow through the desert area and empty directly into the Dead Sea.

Using sediment and other indicators, geologists have charted fluctuations in the level of the Dead Sea and have found periodic rises and falls over the last two millennia. Today, the level is very low. That has caused problems with the tourist trade but has also permitted the building of a road (the Dead Sea Highway) along the shoreline in Jordan. As late as 1940, the water level was up against the eastern shore cliffs and a road would not have been possible.

There is no outlet for the Dead Sea, so the water is very salty—about 30% concentration, the highest of any body of water in the world. In Hebrew the Dead Sea is called *Yam ha-Melech* (the Sea of Salt). The Romans called the Dead Sea *Lacus Asphaltitis* (Asphalt or Pitch Lake) because of the blocks of solidified asphaltic material that would float from earthquake cracks in the floor of the sea. Some geologists believe that a vast oil reservoir lies under the Dead Sea, but no commercially successful production has resulted yet.²

Natural Resources

Another cause of the world's forgetfulness about Jordan is its near lack of natural resources. Anciently Jordan had a few copper mines and in modern times some potash and phosphate, but all these mines were located in desolate, inhospitable desert locations where few people were willing to live.

Jordan also lacked abundant farmland with only 2.4% of its total area being arable. There has never been enough water for irrigation required for extensive growing of field crops. The meager field crops depended on natural rainfall that occurs mainly during a few days in December and January. Food for the limited population came mostly from fruits and vegetables grown in the Jordan River valley and from grain, mostly for bread, grown in the central plateau. The only major export crop has been olives and olive oil which were grown in the fertile area of the north of Jordan where there was sufficient rainfall for these tree crops.

Water is still a scarce commodity in Jordan. Only three main rivers run through Jordan and empty into the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. The northern-most of these rivers is the Yarmouk and it forms part of the northern boundary of modern Jordan. It flows into the Jordan River just south of the Sea of Galilee. About halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea another river empties into the Jordan River. This tributary is called the Zarqa River and in ancient times it was called the Jabbok River. Many Biblical events took place in the area around the Jabbok River. Farther south, about halfway down the Dead Sea, the Arnon River runs through Wadi Mujib and empties into the Dead Sea.

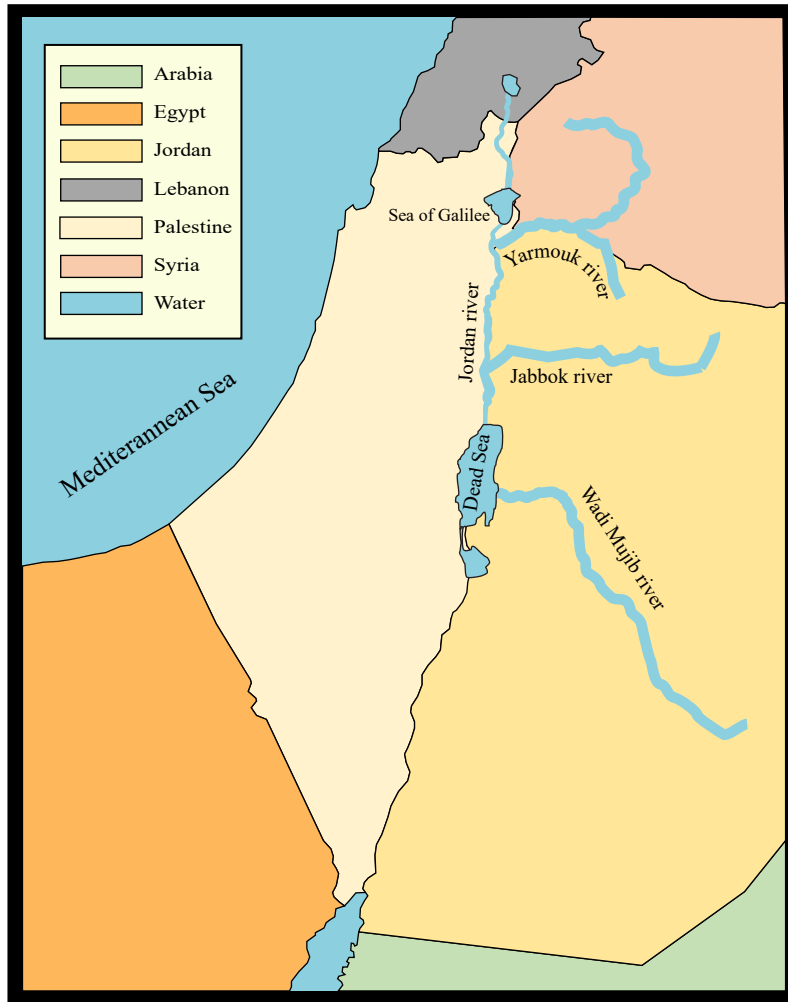


Figure 4: Main rivers in Jordan

Boundaries

Jordan has only one seaport city, Aqaba, located at the southernmost tip of the country on the Red Sea. When the boundaries of Jordan were defined following WWI, the Aqaba port area was quite small but increased in size through an agreement with Saudi Arabia in 1965 in which Jordan ceded some land along its eastern border to Saudi Arabia in exchange for about 13 miles of additional coastline south of Aqaba. This added land allowed Jordan to expand its port facilities. The agreement also provided for protection of pasturage and watering rights of nomadic tribes and for sharing of oil rights, should any oil be discovered in the transferred territory.

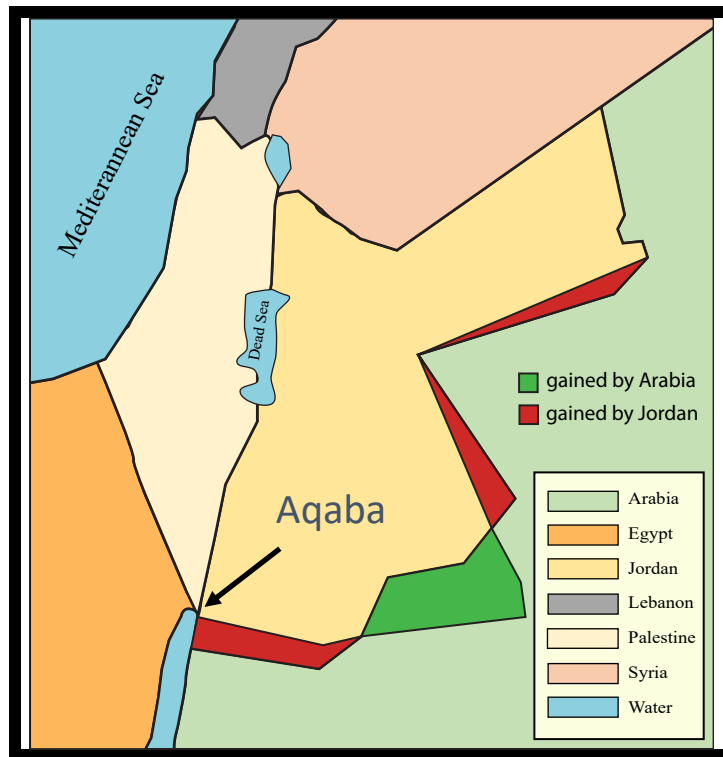


Figure 5: Boundary modifications between Jordan and Saudi Arabia

Other Jordanian boundaries were established following the June 1967 War (Six Day War). These boundaries modify those originally established in 1949 as part of the armistice line agreed upon when Israel was formed. Jordan (called Transjordan at that time) was given authority over what became known as the West Bank. However, with the occupation of this territory by Israel in 1967, the new de facto boundary became the Jordan River and a line in the Golan Heights overlooking the Sea of Galilee. By treaty and political convenience, Jordan works with Israel as the authority over the western bank of the Jordan River for immigration, tourism, etc., but recognizes Palestine as the legitimate authority over the West Bank.

Climate

Jordan has a Mediterranean climate, that is, long summers and short winters with limited rainfall, generally only during December and January. In the higher elevations snow is probable instead of rain. In modern times reservoirs have been built to catch the runoff and snowmelt. Amman, the capital city with about 50% of the country's population, is at an elevation of 2,500 feet and gets one or two snow storms each year. When it snows, the hilly topography and lack of snow removal equipment generally shuts down traffic in the city. (For reference, Jerusalem lies almost directly west of Amman about the same distance from the Jordan River and also in a range of mountains so that the elevation and weather of the two cities is about the same.)

The Levant

Jordan and its immediate neighboring countries to the west and north have traditionally been combined together in a geographical group called the Levant. This area is at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. The term Levant is used by historians and archeologists but is also useful as a descriptor of common foods, lifestyle, and ethnic origins for the area among the Arabic peoples.

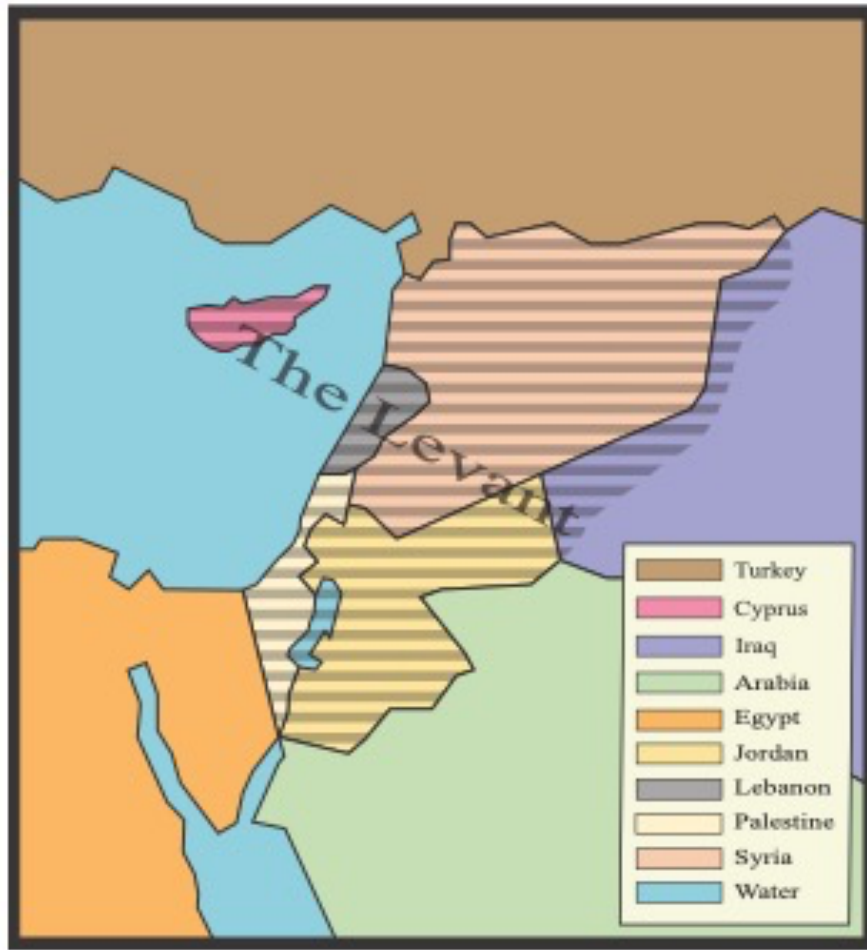


Figure 6: The Levant region

Still another reason that Jordan might be the forgotten Holy Land is that the Bible focuses on the area west of the Jordan River. This is especially true after the northern tribes were captured and removed from the area at the time of the Assyrian conquest. But much of the biblical history occurs before the Assyrian invasion and Jordan was an important part of that early history. Even after the loss of the northern tribes, Jordan played an important role in the times of the Greeks, Romans, Christians, and Muslims. I hope you will agree, especially after reading the details throughout this book, that Jordan should be remembered.

Chapter 2: Pre-History

Where is History Found?

Biblical and Secular Histories

This book will use information from both the Bible (Old and New Testaments) and from secular sources. When the biblical record and archeological/secular evidences conflict, I will compare and contrast them. Both records have their strengths, limitations, and points of view. The Bible was written as a civil/religious document for a particular people—the ancient Israelites/Jews—and only rarely discusses outside histories except as they impacted the people of focus. This means that most dates of events and many historical linkages in the Bible are obtained from secular sources using dates determined by secular historians. The historians used names, like kings of interacting nations, or natural events, or wars as markers that could be compared with historical records. These dates were then compared to similar references in the Bible. There are few internally consistent dating systems in the Bible. The dates of events often cited in discussing the Bible were determined in the 17th century by an Irish bishop, James Ussher. His dates are useful and familiar but should probably not be taken as absolute.

Another potential difficulty in the Biblical record is language. Even if the writers were inspired in their writing, they still had to use common, imperfect languages and those languages have changed from the time of the translation, thus complicating our modern interpretations and analyses. Moreover, the many translations were done by humans and inevitably concepts were difficult to convey with precision because of the limitations of these languages. In this light, the Catechism has characterized the Bible as the “outward sign of an inward truth.” Many people believe the Bible as far as it is translated correctly. The differences in details in many translations attest to the problems associated with translating. Furthermore, the Bible was recorded many years, even centuries, after the events of record. Unless a person believes that the Bible was given by revelation as a word-for-word manuscript, that means that details are, at best, subject to variation and omission even when originally written. Modern scholarship has shown that the Bible is heavily edited by late redactors or editors who assembled the Hebrew Bible in its present form.³

Secular records also suffer from language difficulties. Not only are scholars translating ancient records found through archaeology that were written in foreign, or at least ancient, languages, but those languages are often dead with no living speakers and no dictionaries available to refer to. That means that scholars must attempt to create their own dictionaries by working out the meaning of symbols or words from the context. This is fraught with difficulties, not the least of which is that scholars are only guessing at the culture and context from scanty evidence and supposition. Even when an interpretation is generally accepted by scholars, that does not mean that the group has interpreted it correctly. There are several historical interpretations that were once accepted generally that have subsequently proven to be incorrect.

Archeology

Archeological evidence also has problems beyond language. The most obvious is that archaeology only examines a very small area in comparison to the area occupied by an ancient people. The assumption generally made is that the location of the dig is representative of the entire culture, but even with that assumption, the places within the dig where dating is done are generally very small and could miss other places, perhaps some moderate distance away, that are different. Hence, archaeology can affirm certain facts,

within reasonable scientific conclusions, but it cannot deny the existence of something simply because evidence of its existence was not found. This difficulty is often called proof of a negative and is recognized as being very difficult to accomplish. Generally, researchers can only state that the expected event was not found in the location examined. Archaeology, by its very nature, cannot be expected to enlighten us much on the question of religion, since archaeology deals largely with material cultural remains, or at best with patterns of behavior, not with ideology *per se*.⁴

Archaeology, combined with written historical evidence, can give some reasonable date approximations. Earthquakes and wars (destruction by fire, etc.) are often evident in the archeological layers and might be linked to dates in written history. The Middle East has the largest and most continuous historical record of earthquakes of any region in the world. About 200 of the 400 archeological sites in the Middle East show evidence of earthquakes. There are over 6000 places of archeological interest in the region, most not yet examined in detail.⁵

A strong advantage of archaeology is its contribution to Bible study by assisting to clarify numerous biblical passages that were previously enigmatic and by establishing historical background for some passages that were not well understood. So, what has archaeological evidence revealed with respect to the Bible? As reported by a foremost expert on archaeology, “Archaeology may not have proven the specific historical existence of certain biblical personalities such as Abraham or Moses, but it has for all time demolished the notion that the Bible is pure mythology. The Bible is about real, flesh-and-blood people, in a particular time and place, whose actual historical experience led them irrevocably to a vision of the human condition and promise that transcended anything conceived in antiquity.”⁶

Ages in Secular History

Secular ancient history has been divided into ages that reflect the most important material readily available during that period. These ages and their approximate dates are summarized in the following table. Some of the ages have been subdivided, for example, Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Age.

Archeological Ages of Importance in the Middle East⁷

Age Name	Approximate Dates	Civilizations
Neolithic	6000 B.C. to 4500 B.C.	Pre-history
Copper or Chalcolithic	4500 B.C. to 3300 B.C.	Early Mesopotamian and Early Egyptian
Bronze	3300 B.C. to 1200 B.C.	Egyptian, Phoenicians, Ur to Hittites
Iron	1200 B.C. to 500 B.C.	Troy, Kingdom of Israel, Babylon
Classical antiquity	500 B.C. to 634 A.D.	Persians to Muslims

Canaan

Early Inhabitants of Jordan

Archeological excavations date human activities in the region of Jordan back into the Neolithic period and maybe even earlier. There is evidence of tools such as stone axes, knives, and spear points which were typical of the new stone age (Neolithic). These tools fit the expected lifestyle of hunter-gathers—people who wandered with the seasons to follow animals and to seek seasonal fruits and vegetables.⁸ This lifestyle may have been similar to the Bedouins of today. These ancient people were likely tribal and, in the Bible, several tribes (Amalekites, Hittites, Horites, Jebusites, Kenites, Perizzites—often collectively called Canaanites) have been mentioned before the arrival of the Hebrews. According to the Bible, the largest and most

powerful groups were the Canaanites and the Amorites—a group of Canaanites that had entered Canaan from Syria many years previously. The land was called Canaan and occupied parts of modern-day Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.⁹ Scholars refer to these people as Semites (speaking semitic languages). Sometimes Canaanite is used to refer to all the people living in the area. Much of what is known of the Canaanites comes from people with whom they interacted such as from descriptions in the Bible and some records found in Syria where the Canaanites are mentioned as being part of disturbances.¹⁰

Another reference to Canaanites is a letter from Egypt concerning diplomatic issues. This diplomatic letter was written by a Babylonian king who said that in his time Canaan was under the control of the Egyptian pharaoh and that the Canaanite king was the pharaoh's servant.¹¹ Additional information about the Canaanites can be learned from the tale of Sinuhe, probably written in the 20th century B.C., assuming that this tale is authentic. It gives some ideas of the lifestyle and conditions of Canaanites in the far ancient past. In the tale Sinuhe, an Egyptian court official, fled Egypt at the time of the assassination of a pharaoh fearing that he might also be a target. He went to Lebanon and then into Canaan, recorded as the land of the pastoralists. He was received by the Canaanite king and was given land, a wife (one of the king's daughters), and an army with which to guard the king's land and to attack neighboring lands. The tale implies the existence of a substantial Canaanite population and some cities that needed to be guarded. Eventually Sinuhe returned to Egypt where a small pyramid was erected in his honor and where he died.¹² Clearly this tale suggests a well-organized society occupying Canaan about the year 2000 B.C.

Religion

Ancient sacred stones found in the deserts of modern Jordan, Sinai, and Negev, are also evidence of the early historical existence of Canaanites and give some clues about their religious and secular beliefs. These stones are mentioned in the Bible and are called, in Hebrew, *masseboth*, (singular, *massebah*) that is usually translated as “pillars” or “standing stones.” The term is similar to the Arabic *mastaba(h)*. The earliest *masseboth* in the Middle East are located in the Negev and the southern Jordan deserts and date to the 11th and 10th millennia B.C. As reported, “*Masseboth* became quite common from the sixth to the third millennia B.C. and continued to be erected all through the biblical period and later.”¹³

One biblical example is the story of Jacob who erected the stone that served as his pillow and declared that “the stone I have set up as a pillar (*massebah*) shall be God's house”. As indicated by inscriptions, some *masseboth* serve as witnesses to treaties and covenants, others remind of oaths and covenants, and still others commemorate special events. Some *masseboth* are grouped in pairs with one stone taller/thinner than the other that is short and broad. Many scholars believe that these represent a god and his consort. This interpretation is reinforced by stones that are carved in which Egyptian and Canaanite gods are clearly represented. One has a Hebrew inscription that mentions “Yahweh¹ of Samaria and his *Asherah*” where *Asherah* is interpreted by some as being “consort” (but others disagree and say it means his “sacred place” or his “symbol.”)¹⁴ Some biblical references condemn these pillars while others, like the case with Jacob (Genesis 28:17-18 and Genesis 35:14), accept them. A typical condemnation is in Deuteronomy 16:22, “You shall not erect a *massebah* that Yahweh your lord hates.” Another is Deuteronomy 12:3-4 that reads, “You shall destroy all the places wherein the nations worship their gods...You shall tear down their altars and smash their *masseboth*.” Moses erected twelve *masseboth* at the foot of Mt. Sinai and Joshua set up a “great stone” in Yahweh's sanctuary at Shechem (Joshua 24:26-27). Later, Mohammed destroyed pillars/idols that were being worshipped by the pagans when he captured Mecca, and these were likely *masseboth*.

¹ I have used Yahweh instead of Jehovah in most of this book because the scholars whom I have cited generally use Yahweh. Both names are equivalent and mean the same thing.



Figure 7: *Masseboth* showing two stones in typical grouping

A Canaanite temple that dates to the Neolithic period has been discovered near the town of Pella in the north of the Jordan River valley. An archeological team from Australia discovered the temple in 1994. The temple had walls about 100 feet high made of stones. The temple was identified by its room arrangement with a traditional Holy of Holies, outer room, and open court. (This is similar to the design of Solomon's temple that was built in Jerusalem and to some parts of Egyptian temples.) The discovery of a mud-brick tower confirmed that the temple at Pella was a Migdol or Fortress temple whose entrance towers were probably modeled on the pylons in contemporary Egyptian temples. Further excavations indicated that the temple was a layered structure built over hundreds of years. The earliest part was Neolithic and on top of that was a Bronze Age structure and on top of that an Iron Age structure.¹⁵



Figure 8: Canaanite temple at Pella

Beginning of Civilization

Fixed-place Agriculture

Eventually some of the people in the Middle East area, likely first in Mesopotamia, discovered that certain grains had large grain heads that stayed intact until and during harvest. This feature meant that these grains could be grown in the same location each year, provided there was sufficient water and sunlight, and would be harvestable as a field (rather than just taking the grains from single plants by hand). Hence, Mesopotamia was where this domestication of grains began and was soon followed by Egypt where similar growing conditions were present.¹⁶ Soon other crops like olives and some fruits were domesticated and grown in areas where cultivation of grains was difficult. Jordan became one of the places where olives were grown in abundance and where some modest areas for grains and fruits were cultivated.

This creative agricultural innovation throughout the Middle East allowed people to live in the same place permanently, forming cities, because they had a reliable food supply that exceeded each family's needs, and this excess could be sold or traded. This abundance of food in one area was the beginning of civilization. (The word civilization derives from the same root word as city and suggests that some features of cities allowed civilization, a more organized method of living than hunter-gathering.) Other factors that were necessary for a civilization soon followed. These factors include labor specialization (farmers, soldiers, craftsmen, merchants, etc.), order and organization of the society (government), and a writing system to enable a continuation of the system with laws and rules (along with history and diplomacy).

Civilization in Jordan

The rise of civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia eventually led to cities in other parts of the Middle East where the conditions of sufficient food were able to support the population. In Jordan's case, the cities

remained relatively small and clustered around the King's Highway so that food not grown in the area could be easily obtained as well as around mining centers where there was sufficient mineral value to permit food to be imported and purchased. As populations grew generally, the traffic along the highways also increased. The desirability of controlling the highways increased, both because of fees that could be charged for its use, to enact trade, and for defense. Control of the roads led to increased trade and money for the society controlling the road.

Before written history, Jordan was, at least as best we can tell, mostly a land of pastoralists and merchants with some agriculture and some small cities (towns). It was not a major civilization center like Egypt and Mesopotamia, but it was important as a linkage location.

Mining in Jordan

About the same time that cities began, the method of smelting copper was developed and the Copper or Chalcolithic Age began. Surely the specialization of labor helped to create a copper industry and Jordan (ancient Edom) was a major contributor. Archeologists have identified Wadi Faynan, a location in southern Jordan, as the location where the largest copper deposits in the southern Levant were located. They were exploited from the Chalcolithic through the Mamluk periods (roughly 4500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.).¹⁷ Today the excavation site is part of the Dana Nature Reserve. Another mining site that has been extensively explored is Khirbat en-Nahas, also in Edom. It has been dated to the 10th century B.C. Activities in southern Jordan began early in history as evidence found in Egypt discussed Edom and was dated to the 13th century B.C.¹⁸

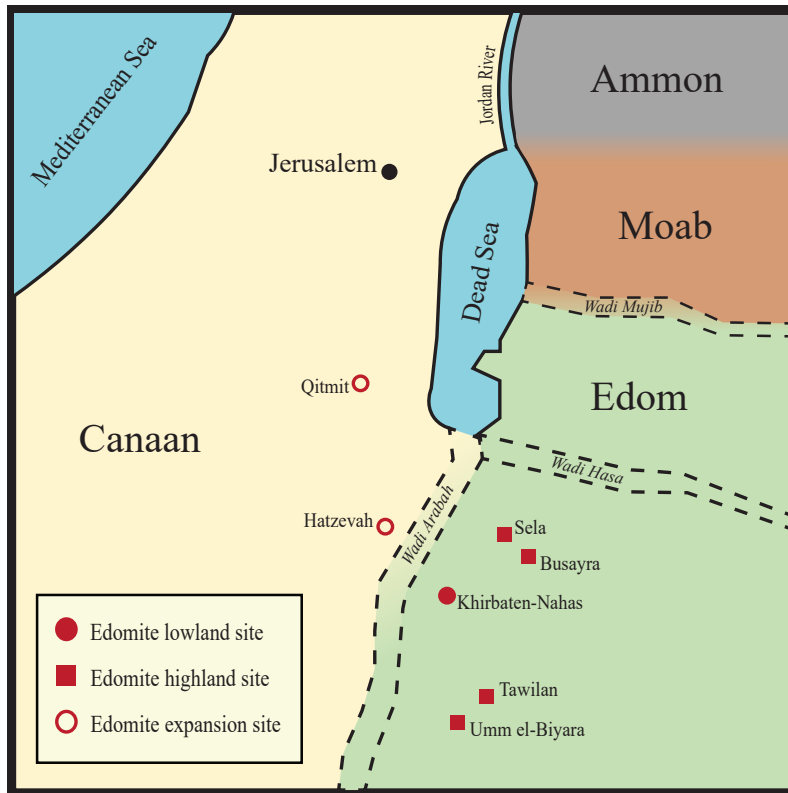


Figure 9: Mining sites in Edom

Chapter 3: Age of the Patriarchs

Who Were the Patriarchs

Covenants with God

The biblical patriarchs are generally thought of as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but other children who are not the birthright sons are also patriarchs because they have fathered great nations. An example is Ishmael, who is considered to be the father of the Arabs. The nations they fathered often include their wives, their immediate descendants, and other close relatives. These people were critically important in the religious history of the Levant, in particular, Canaan (modern Israel, Palestine), and Jordan.

The Patriarchs are revered by all three of the monotheistic religions that originated in the Middle East—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Anciently and in modern times, adherents to these religions believe that God made covenants with the Patriarchs that required loyalty and obedience to God by the Patriarchs and their descendants. Some of God's promises to these patriarchs (or to their mothers) are recorded in the Bible like the promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Ishmael. Other promises are implied such as the one given to the children of Ammon that we learn about when God told Moses to avoid their land because He (God) had given the land to them. These covenant descendants include those in the line of the birthright sons as well as the lines of their brothers, some of whom are not extensively featured in the Bible and other close relatives such as nephews.

God covenanted to give these chosen people blessings of prosperity, children, righteous influence in the world, and land. The Bible is seen as the book in which the covenants are recorded, and some translations of the Bible refer to the Old Testament as the Old Covenant and to the New Testament as the New Covenant. Most Christians believe that the covenant of being a chosen people was expanded to include those who believed in Jesus. Therefore, Christians are also people of the covenant.

Most of the people who live in the Levant today (Jews and Arabs) and many outside the Middle East, see themselves as descendants (literal or spiritual) of the Patriarchs and claim, through that descent, rights to occupy the land and share in the other blessings of the covenant. Between some groups interpretations of these claims conflict and that is one of the causes of the clashes that have been so prevalent in the Middle East throughout history. Therefore, the influence of the Patriarchs has been a major factor impacting secular history both in ancient and in modern times.

Historical Setting

This chapter will generally follow the historical narrative of the Bible. Because the Patriarchs lived and traveled over a wide area, this book will necessarily discuss events throughout the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, but will emphasize events that occurred east of the Jordan River..

In spite of the importance of the Patriarchs in both religious and secular history, these mostly pastoral people left few written or archaeological evidences. However, some events, both natural and human-caused, have been used to give reasonable scientific indications of the dates when the Patriarchs lived. Recent scientific studies have given strong evidence of climatic changes in the Middle East and these may explain social changes that are related to the lives of the Patriarchs as reported in the Bible.¹⁹ The method used to assess

these climatic changes was to make boreholes in numerous locations throughout the Levant and then determine the percentage of tree pollen in each layer. A high percentage of pollen indicates a period of heavy rainfall and, of course, a low percentage indicates drought conditions. These weather conditions can be dated from other archaeological evidence (such as carbon-14 dating). Pollen counts indicated a wet period in the Middle East lasting from 7500 B.C. to around 3500 B.C. (around the end of the Chalcolithic period). That was followed by an extended arid period beginning about the year 2000 B.C. Probably because of the great aridity, most major urban sites in Canaan and Jordan were abandoned for about 300 years as the pastoralists moved to follow the herds and other food sources. In Egypt, historical records attest to serious famines in this same period. The aridity of this period explains some of the shifts in settlement in Canaan and Jordan as well as in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt.²⁰

This drought period correlates with the famine reported at the time of Joseph (Genesis 41-47) and may also explain, in part, the migrations of Abraham. If this evidence is correct, the time of the Patriarchs can be placed sometime in the third millennium B.C. If this is true, the Early Bronze Age sites in places adjacent to the Dead Sea in Jordan were indeed some of the biblical Cities of the Plain (Genesis 14) as suggested by excavators of those sites.²¹

Other scholars believe that the date of the Patriarchal Age should be somewhat later—probably in the 1900 to 1550 B.C. period.²² Some interesting evidence supporting this conjecture is obtained by comparing the wording of the contracts made by the Patriarchs with the people (Amorites/Canaanites) living around them. If these covenants are compared to written contracts from Mesopotamia, the common features between these early second-millennium treaties and the covenants recorded in Genesis are striking. The treaties, alliances, and covenants described in Genesis differ from those of the third millennium B.C., but are very much like the treaties of the early second millennium B.C.—corresponding to the date suggested of 1950-1700 B.C.²³

Geo-political changes in the area can also be used to date the Age of the Patriarchs. In the late third millennium B.C., Mesopotamia was dominated for a time by a single power, Ur. This kingdom was overthrown by a coalition of Akkadians and other tribes and a period followed in which no single king had power and many limited wars were fought. Thus, the early second millennium B.C. corresponds with the period described when Abraham and some cooperating kings fought an alliance of eastern kings as related in Genesis 14.²⁴ Several other known social conditions and ancient narratives are consistent with dating the Age of the Patriarchs to 1900-1600 B.C.

Abraham

Ur of the Chaldees

The life of Abraham, the first of these patriarchs, links the three major areas of the Middle East—Mesopotamia, Levant, and Egypt. The scriptures identify Ur of the Chaldees as the birthplace of Abraham, but the location of Ur of the Chaldees is disputed. For many centuries, the traditional location for Christians, Muslims, and Jews was the city of Urfa (modern Sanliurfa in southern Turkey near the headwaters of the Euphrates River).

In the 1920s, however, the excavations of Sir Leonard Woolley in southern Iraq led him to identify a southern Mesopotamian site near the modern city of Basra as the ancient Ur. The southern site has a ziggurat and much other evidence of a major city with royalty, and these are believed to enhance the stories about human sacrifice that are part of Abraham's early life. Woolley's view has remained popular, and many biblical maps show the southern location as Ur of the Chaldees.

However, other scholars, including a member of Woolley's archeological team, Cyrus Gordon, have strongly challenged Woolley's assertions and have backed a return to the northern Mesopotamian site.²⁵ Gordon's arguments include the straightforward assertion that when the Bible says that "Terah took Abram...and they went out...from Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there," the strong implication is that Haran is on the route from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan. Since the site of Haran is well accepted (the name of the location has remained from ancient times) and is in northern Mesopotamia in the general vicinity of Urfa, the northern location for Ur is much more logical than the southern site that is over 1000 miles distant.²⁶ Gordon also points out that the Chaldees were known to have originated in the northern Mesopotamia area and therefore referring to the northern site as Ur of the Chaldees was logically used to distinguish it from the southern Ur. There are many similar references to other northern cities called of the Chaldees that are similarly distinguished. For clarity, the southern site should be designated Sumerian Ur. In his book entitled *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Gordon further notes that the names of the Patriarchs are of an Amorite type which could reflect the Amorite environment of northern Mesopotamia.²⁷

Abraham's Parental Family

Abraham's father, Terah, had three sons in Ur—Abraham (called Abram at this time), Nahor, and Haran. Haran died while they were in Ur possibly because of a famine that plagued the area as noted in archaeological finds. After Abram and Nahor married, Terah led Abram, his brother Nahor, their wives, and Lot, Haran's son, out of Ur of the Chaldees and journeyed to a city that they called Haran. After some time, Terah died in Haran. The society in Haran, and possibly throughout Mesopotamia, practiced idolatry and human sacrifice. The rites associated with this practice were linked to similar acts performed by Egyptians.²⁸ The influence of Egyptians in northern Mesopotamia in Abraham's time has been confirmed archaeologically. The impetus to sacrifice Abraham was likely his refusal to worship the idols of the community and possibly Abram's destruction of local idols (a Muslim tradition). Just as Abram was to be sacrificed, God's intervention through an angel saved him.²⁹ God then told Abraham to leave Haran and go to Canaan. Abram left accompanied by his wife and nephew, Lot (Genesis 12:1-3).

The Journey to Canaan

The Lord said that he would lead Abram to the promised land. The Lord also told Abram that he would be the father of a great nation, that he would be blessed by God, and that Abram would be a blessing to the whole world. Abram took his nephew Lot, their wives and servants, their property, and a group of people who had become adherents to Abram's teachings.

Both biblical references and secular evidence suggest that Abram was wealthy. It was common at that time for Mesopotamian merchants to trade with the Canaanites and even to journey as far as Egypt. The scriptures indicate that the Patriarchs had gold and silver, thus implying that Abraham's family members may have been merchants in addition to owning large flocks of animals.³⁰



Figure 10: Abraham's Journey from Haran to Canaan and then to Egypt

Abram's routes from Haran to Canaan and then to Egypt are not known but reasonable guesses are shown in the above figure. Note that the probable route follows, in part, the King's Highway as would be expected of people who might have been merchants. (The extension to Amman is merely a possible route if the King's Highway would have been taken further.)

When Abram arrived in Canaan, he built an altar near the city of Shechem in northern Canaan and gave thanks to God for his safe arrival. There God appeared to Abram and promised that he would give the land of Canaan to his descendants. Abram then continued south and built another altar at Bethel in central Canaan. Because of a severe famine in the land, Abram continued on, across the Negev Desert to Egypt where he was greeted by pharaoh's officials.

At this point Abram and his wife, Sarai, deceived the Egyptians. As described in Genesis 12:10-20, Abram said that Sarai was his sister. Because of Sarai's beauty, pharaoh took her into his house as a wife. He also treated Abram well by giving him animals and servants. But pharaoh's house was struck with a curse and pharaoh came to understand that Sarai was actually Abram's wife. He then confronted Abram and sent Sarai back to Abram. This incident was, for many people, confusing and troubling, especially in light of another, similar incident that is related in Genesis 20:1-18. In the second incident Abram again called Sarai his sister and deceived Abimelech, king of Gerar. Again, the house of Abimelech was stricken with a plague. In this case the plague is identified as sealing the wombs of the women. This probably implies that God protected Sarai from having intercourse with the king. This same plague may have protected Sarai in Egypt. Also, the latter story reveals that Abimelech was told by a heavenly being that Sarai was Abram's wife. That may have been the way that Pharaoh also came to his understanding. Abram excused his deception by stating that Sarai

was actually both his sister and his wife. He explained that she was the daughter of his father but not of his mother, thus she was his half-sister. Even with this explanation, the moral question of deception or lying is still present. However, another moral point may supersede the deception. Is it permissible to deceive in order to save an innocent life? In these cases, Abram would have been killed should it be known that Sarai was his wife. Furthermore, since God promised Abram a great posterity, he would help fulfill that promise by protecting himself. This is an interesting moral situation and is more complex than simple lying.³¹

Abram and Lot

After a few years Abram and Lot returned to Canaan with their families and all their possessions. They settled in southern Canaan near Hebron (Mamre). However, the area where they camped could not support the vast number of animals that they possessed, and the herdsmen of Lot and Abram quarreled. Abram said to Lot that there should be no strife between them and so Abram suggested that they separate, and Lot was allowed to choose whether he would stay where they were or move to another place. Lot looked eastward and saw the valley of the Jordan River and said he would go to that place that was clearly very fertile.

Lot moved his family and goods to the cities of the valley and settled near Sodom, a major city in the valley. At least two locations have been suggested by scientists for the location of Sodom. One location, accepted by most scholars, puts Sodom on a plateau overlooking the central part of the Dead Sea. The other location suggested is just north of the Dead Sea within a large flat area directly across the Jordan River from Jericho. This northern area has ash and a stoppage of inhabitation in the time when Lot lived. Also, this northern location would have been well-watered and more fertile than the southern location but is distant from the city of Zoar to which Lot fled after Sodom's destruction.³² A more in-depth discussion of the southern site will be given later when the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is told. I, and most scholars, believe the southern location is correct. With Lot's move, Jordan became a land of refuge for Abraham's relatives and descendants. Over time, as will be shown in this book, Jordan became a refuge for many others too.

After a few years Abram received word that Sodom and its surrounding area had been conquered by some kings from areas north of Canaan and that Lot, his family, and his possessions were taken captive. Abram assembled an army from his servants and went in pursuit along with some friendly kings from the valley cities. He caught up with the raiders north of Damascus, defeated them, and brought Lot, his family, and his possessions back to the Jordan River valley. On their return they met Melchizedek, king of Salem and a priest of God. Melchizedek praised Abram and Abram paid tithing to Melchizedek. It is interesting that believers in the God of Abraham were living in the land of Canaan independently of Abraham and his posterity. Since the Bible was written by people who were strong advocates of Abraham's line as the only acceptable covenant or believing line, we know little of these other righteous people. However, one tradition states that Melchizedek is Shem, son of Noah, thus making a connection to previous righteous families who were worshippers of the God of Abraham.

Abram Has a Son

Since Sarai had been unable to bear children and to fulfill God's promise made to Abram, Sarai asked Abram to go into Hagar, Sarai's servant, so that Abram might have a child. After Hagar became pregnant, Sarai regretted that she had brought Abram and Hagar together and she treated Hagar harshly. Hagar fled into the wilderness to escape Sarai's mistreatment. An angel found Hagar in the wilderness and urged her to return to Abram's home and promised Hagar that her descendants would be so numerous that they could not be counted. The angel also described Hagar's child and said that it would be a son who will be called Ishmael and that his descendants will live east of Abram's other children. Therefore, as will be discussed later, many people descended from Abram through Ishmael and will make their homes in Jordan and Arabia, lands to the east. Hagar followed the promptings of the angel and returned to Abraham's camp.

After returning to his home in Hebron, Abram again received a message from God that renewed the previous covenant and reassured Abram that he would be the father of many children—as numerous as the number of stars. Abram was given a new name, Abraham, which signifies the father of many nations. God then commanded Abraham to be circumcised and to circumcise all his male descendants forever more as a token of this covenant. Sarai was also given a new name, Sarah, meaning she shall be a mother of many nations. God promised Abraham and Sarah that she would be pregnant with a son within a year, and he would be called Isaac. Abraham and Sarah laughed at this promise since Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety. Soon afterwards three men (probably angels) visited Abraham and they were given food, drink, and accommodations. They reaffirmed the promise of a child to Sarah and, when she laughed, said to her that nothing was impossible for God. Within the year, Sarai was pregnant.

The three visitors stood on the heights of the western shore of the Jordan valley and looked down upon Sodom and Gomorrah (and the other cities of the plain) and condemned the cities. They told Abraham that they (the angels) were sent to destroy the cities. In Muslim tradition, the prophet Lot's move to Sodom was directed by God and Lot (*Lut* in Arabic) was to preach to the wicked inhabitants of the cities and convince them to stop their evil practices. However, Lot's preaching was ignored, thus precipitating the mission of the visitors. Abraham pleaded with the visitors to spare the city if any righteous could be found therein. But none were found. Therefore, the angels went to Sodom and found Lot sitting outside the gate. They were taken into Lot's home and accommodated. However, men in the city came to the door seeking the angels for a sexual encounter. The angels struck the men seeking them blind and then they told Lot to flee the city with all his family and not to look back toward the city as they fled. The angels led Lot out of the city as fire rained from heaven to destroy the cities. Lot's wife could not resist the temptation to look back and she was turned into a pillar of salt. (Possibly she was covered with ash as part of the cataclysm).

Lot

Location of Cities of the Plain

As mentioned above, two locations for Sodom and Gomorrah have been proposed. One site is a little north of the Dead Sea on a flat area now called the Plains of Moab. The other location is south about midway along the length of the Dead Sea. The southern sites are also on a flat plain, a plateau about one mile east of Lisan, the tongue-like peninsula that protrudes into the Dead Sea from the eastern shore. The principal city today is called Bab edh-Dhra and it overlooks the Dead Sea from a height of 550 feet. Within the ruins of Bab edh-Dhra the archaeologists found a temple and a cemetery that may have housed as many as 20,000 tombs and over 500,000 people. The earliest archaeological remains in the area were dated to about 3100 B.C., a period consistent with a few cities being large at the time of Abraham and Lot. While excavating Bab edh-Dhra, the researchers found four other cities extending south of Bab edh-Dhra along the plateau and down into the valley. Finding five and only five cities is a confirmation that these are the Five Cities of the Plain that rebelled against their overlord, were suppressed, and captured Lot as related in Genesis 14. The cities were all located in the valley of "Siddim"—that is, the "Salt Sea." Evidences of destruction such as a spongy charcoal can still be scooped from the surface of some of the cities today.³³

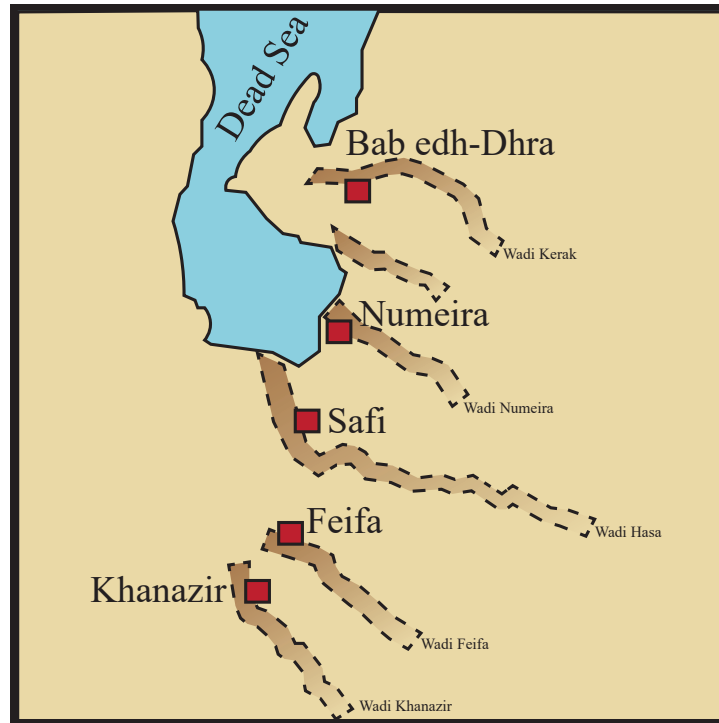


Figure 11: Map of the Five Cities of the Plain (Modern Names) (From BAS Library)

One of the five cities, Safi, has been identified as modern Zoar, the city that the angels agreed to allow Lot to flee to. Lot went up from Zoar into a cave while destruction rained upon the cities of the valley. This cave, or at least one traditionally known as Lot's (*Lut's*) cave, is accessible today in the mountain just to the east of Zoar. Another possible location of the cave is a short distance south of Zoar at Deir 'Ain 'Abata where there is a spring. This latter site was honored as Lot's cave by Byzantines who built a large complex at the site during the Middle Ages.³⁴

In the cave, the daughters of Lot became worried that they might be the only inhabitants left on earth and that they would never bear children. Therefore, they got their father drunk and slept with him. Each daughter became pregnant and had a son. One son, named Ben-ammi, became the father of the Ammonites and they moved to the area of modern-day Ammon. The other daughter's son was named Moab, and he became the head of the Moabites who lived in an area between the Dead Sea and the desert, just southwest of the Ammonites. Again, Jordan was a land of refuge.

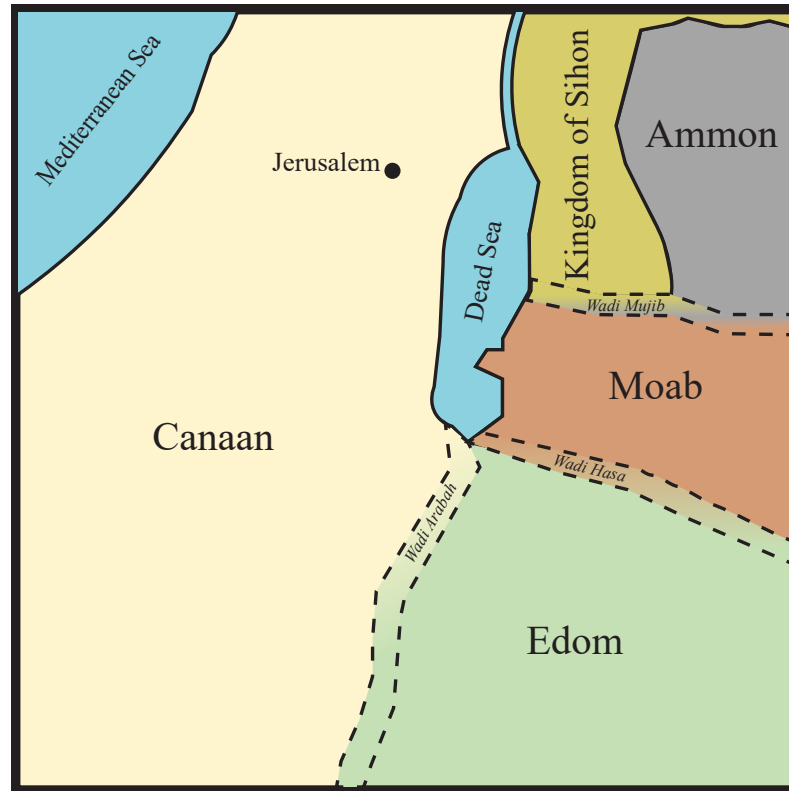


Figure 12: Kingdoms east of the Jordan River

Land of the Ammonites

The land of the children of Ammon or the Ammonites lies in the central part of modern Jordan in the highlands above and east of the Jordan River Valley. The area is bounded on the north by the Jabbok River (modern Zarqa River) and on the south by a diminishing of the hills that distinguish the land of the Ammonites from Moab. The capital and largest city of the Ammonites and modern Jordan is Amman. Its elevation and distance from the valley is similar to Jerusalem and lies about 60 miles directly east of Jerusalem. The climate of Amman is also similar to Jerusalem.

Archaeological digs in Amman reveal many Roman ruins on top of older ruins that appear to be influenced by Assyria. Some carved stones of gods may date to an even earlier period.³⁵ The ancient city is built on seven hills around a citadel, called Rabbath Ammon or Ammonite Heights, built on a high outcropping where evidence shows occupation from the Chalcolithic Period and the Early Bronze Age through the later Bronze Age and into the Greek and Roman Periods. During the Greek Period the city of Ammon, which had grown to occupy many of the hills and valleys surrounding the citadel, was known as Philadelphia of the Decapolis.

Watchtowers dating to at least 1000 B.C. were arranged in a circular pattern around the city and were each located about a mile from the center of Ammon. These towers did little good in the war between King David and the Ammonites which was won by the Israelites and controlled under the authority of David. Following the death of Solomon, Ammon regained its political independence although it was often a vassal state to more powerful kingdoms like the Neo-Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans.³⁶

Land of the Moabites

Moab lies to the southwest of the land of the Ammonites. It is bordered on the east by the desert and on the west by the Dead Sea. The southern border is a deep valley (Wadi Mujib) that is now a nature preserve. Most

of Moab is a high, relatively flat plateau that is the traditional grain-producing territory of Jordan. Few rivers and streams cross the area, so farmers depend mostly on rainfall and some irrigation from springs and a few wells. The major cities in Moab are Madaba and Dibon. Several other sites, now in ruins, suggest that anciently there were many more cities of considerable size.

Dibon (modern Dhiban), the ancient capital, is famous as the site where the Mesha Stele, a stone dating to the 9th century B.C. was found. The stone has the longest epigraphic text surviving in the southern Levant. The stone describes the exploits of King Mesha and his war against the people of Gad (one of the tribes of Israelites). The text on the Mesha Stele has been confirmed through similar references in Egyptian texts and other stele.³⁷

The Bible mostly portrays the Moabites as wicked. It tells of a Moabite king who offered his son as a burnt sacrifice to a god, Kemosh, that means filth. It also describes a Moabite king who was so fat that the dagger of an Israelite judge sank, handle and all, into his belly. However, some good from Moab includes the story of Ruth, a Moabite who stood by her widowed Judahite mother-in-law and became a mother in Israel who had King David as a descendant.³⁸

Isaac and Ishmael

More Problems for Abraham's Family

Returning to the story of Abraham, who was over 100 when Isaac was born, another problem arose. Sarah felt that Ishmael was taunting young Isaac. She complained to Abraham and asked that Hagar be forced to leave the camp. Abraham sought God's advice on the matter and was assured that all would be well with Hagar and Ishmael if they left. Therefore, Abraham reluctantly gave Hagar some water and food and sent her into the wilderness to the east. However, after many days Hagar was out of water and became afraid that she and her son would die. She cried for help to the Lord. An angel came to them and showed them where they could get water from a spring. This saved the mother and son. This miraculous event is commemorated for each Muslim as part of the Hajj. Eventually Hagar secured a wife for Ishmael from Egypt, and they settled east of the Jordan River. Ishmael had twelve sons and became the father of the Arabs. (As time has progressed, the descendants of Abraham through all his children (except those through Jacob), and the descendants of Lot, Esau, and many of the desert nomads not related to Abraham have been grouped under the name of Arabs.)

The Bible tells us that when Isaac was a young man, Abraham was commanded to offer him as a sacrifice. This was certainly a test for Abraham's obedience as he undoubtedly remembered when he was about to be sacrificed himself when a young man. Obediently, Abraham took Isaac and two servants to a place of sacrifice and there prepared Isaac to be killed. Isaac asked where the sacrificial animal was, and Abraham said that God would provide. Just as the sacrifice was about to occur, Abraham was stopped by an angel. Abraham then saw a sheep caught in the thicket and understood that the sheep was to be the sacrificial animal. It is interesting that the Muslims believe that rather than be commanded to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, God instructed Abraham to take Ismael to the sacrificial location.

Abraham had moved from Hebron to Beersheba, the place where the angels visited him. It was there that Sarah died. Abraham asked his Canaanite neighbors where he could bury Sarah and they recommended a special place in Hebron. Abraham agreed, bought the special place of burial, and that is where Sarah and, eventually Abraham and other Patriarchs, were interred.

Abraham Has More Children

After the death of Sarah, Abraham took another wife, Keturah, who bore him six sons. To ensure that Isaac's descendants would have space for their lives, as he did with Ishmael, Abraham also sent Keturah's sons to the east (into Jordan and Saudi Arabia) and these became fathers of tribes that eventually became integrated into the Arabs. They migrated to the north and further east into Syria and Mesopotamia (Iraq). One of the sons, Midian, fathered the Midianites who settled in southern Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia. This was the tribe that Moses fled to when he escaped from Egypt. More will be said about the Midianites in a later chapter in this book.

Isaac Gets Married

Abraham became aware of the birth of many children to his brother, Nahor, who lived in Haran. Abraham thought that one of the women born into Nahor's greater family would be a good wife for Isaac. Therefore, Abraham sent his most trusted servant, Eliezer, to Haran to find an appropriate wife for Isaac. As shown in the figure below showing the routes between Canaan and Haran, the likely route that Eliezer took was eastward into Jordan and then north along the King's Highway to Haran.



Figure 13: Eliezer's and Jacob's Journeys to Haran

When he got to Haran, Eliezer stopped near a well and soon met a young woman who gave him a drink of water. He found out that she was Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor. She watered his camels and, for this, was given a ring and bracelets by Eliezer. She invited Eliezer to lodge at her house and ran to tell the family of the coming of the visitor. Laban, Rebekah's brother, was impressed with the ring and bracelets and, when Eliezer arrived, treated him with great courtesy. After hearing Eliezer's story of his mission, the family and

Rebekah agreed that Rebekah would leave with Eliezer to become Isaac's wife. When she arrived at Abraham's camp and met Isaac, she and Isaac loved each other. Isaac was 40 years old.

When Abraham died, Isaac became the head of the Abrahamic clan. He and Rebekah wanted to have children but it took a long time for her to become pregnant. When she was finally expecting, she said that the baby struggled within her. She became worried and inquired of the Lord if something was wrong with the pregnancy. She was told that she would have twins and that they would be two great nations and that the older would serve the younger. The first born had a red coloring and was hairy while the second was grasping the heel of the older. They named them Esau (the first born) and Jacob (the follower). When they were born, Isaac was 60 years old.

As the boys grew up, Esau showed great skill as a hunter, and he became his father's favorite. Jacob was peaceful and home centered. He was the favorite of Rebekah. The Bible tells the story of Jacob fixing a fine lentil stew and when Esau came in from hunting, he was famished and asked for some of the stew. Jacob said he would give him some if Esau would sell Jacob his birthright. (The birthright entitled the owner to an extra portion of inheritance.) Esau was so hungry that he agreed. Thus, through a legitimate sales transaction, Jacob obtained the birthright. Esau then married two wives—Judith, a Hittite, and Basemath, another Hittite. (Hittites were non-semitic speaking people from Europe via modern-day Turkey who brought the secrets of iron-making to the Middle East and ruled the area briefly.)

Jacob and Esau

Deception and Anger

When Isaac was old, at least a hundred, he had become almost blind. He called Esau to him and asked Esau to go hunting and then prepare a savory dish with the recently obtained meat. Isaac then promised that he would give Esau a special blessing following the meal. Rebekah heard this conversation and informed Jacob that she thought he should receive the blessing. She told him to go out into the pasture and kill two goats so that Rebekah could prepare them into a savory meal. She also gave Jacob some of Esau's clothes and put some goat's hair on his arm and on the back of his neck.

Jacob deceived Isaac into thinking he was Esau and received the blessing which stated that he would rule over his brother. Shortly afterward, Esau returned, fixed another savory meal, and asked Isaac for the promised blessing. Isaac and Esau then realized that the blessing intended for Esau was taken by Jacob. Esau complained that he had lost two things to Jacob—his birthright and his special blessing. Esau was given another blessing, but this did not soothe his anger. He vowed that after the death of Isaac, Esau would kill Jacob. Seemingly to spite his parents, Esau married another wife from the non-Hebrew women in Canaan. Esau then left in anger with his wives and possessions and went to Edom, east of the Jordan River.

Edom is a region within Jordan that lies south of Moab. It is a land of red cliffs and little water. Perhaps it appealed to a young man like Esau who was angry at his family and had just heard his father tell him, in his blessing, that he would go to a land away from the fertility of the earth (Genesis 27:39). Edom was also inviting because it seemed that no one else wanted to go to the place where Sodom and Gomorrah had once stood and was now a blackened wasteland. There were, however, other areas in Edom where judicious water conservation would allow crops to be grown and, of course, there was some pasture fit enough for sheep and goats.

This land stretched from Wadi Mujib (the border with Moab) south to Aqaba/Elath on the Red Sea and is bordered on the west by the Arabah Valley and on the east by the Arabian desert. Along the Arabah are the

Edom lowlands, an area rich in copper that was mined in the Bronze Age. These mines may have been a source for some of the wealth of the region, and, perhaps, for Esau. However, carbon-14 data puts the working of the mines to the time of King David.³⁹ Further to the east the topography radically changes to a high, hilly region. Within this hilly region is the hidden valley of Petra, a natural sanctuary that is easy to defend. The King's Highway also winds through the highlands of Edom.

Edom appears in Egyptian texts with frequent associations to the tent-dwelling pastoralists.⁴⁰ In later years, around the early 8th century B.C., the western border of Edom south of the Dead Sea extended into the Negev Desert and occupied part of southern Judah.⁴¹

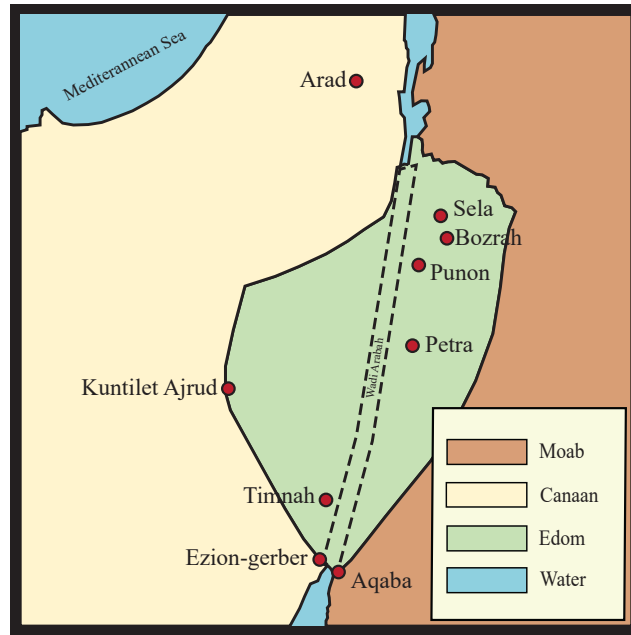


Figure 14: Land of Edom at its greatest extent

Jacob Finds a Wife

Because of Esau's anger and advice from his father about finding a wife among their relatives in Haran, Jacob also fled Canaan. He traveled to northern Mesopotamia. On the way to Haran (also called Paddan-aram) Jacob spent the night at Bethel where he laid down with a rock for a pillow and dreamed that he saw a ladder with angels ascending into heaven. On the top of the ladder was God who blessed him with land and a promise to bring him back to the promised land. After the dream Jacob crossed over the Jordan River and proceeded up the King's Highway to Haran. His path followed a similar path to that taken by Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac as was shown in a previous figure.

There Jacob saw a well with some sheep and shepherds nearby. He asked the shepherds if they knew Laban, Jacob's uncle, and they did. They then pointed to a young woman who was just arriving with another flock of sheep and said that she was Rachel, daughter of Laban. Jacob and Rachel introduced themselves and Rachel ran to inform her father who rushed to greet Jacob. They struck a bargain that Jacob would serve Laban for seven years to earn the hand of Rachel in marriage. After the seven years, Laban deceptively took his oldest daughter, Leah, into Jacob and they were married. Laban said that the oldest daughter must be married first. Then, after Jacob's complaint, Laban agreed that Rachel would also be married to Jacob, but another seven years of labor must be served. Jacob agreed and after a week, Jacob and Rachel were also married.

More Years in Haran and Jacob's Departure

Over the years Leah was blessed with many sons and a daughter, but Rachel had no children. Both Leah and Rachel also gave their handmaids to Jacob as wives and they both bore sons. Therefore, after 10 sons and a daughter were born and about 20 years had passed, Rachel finally conceived and bore a son who they named Joseph. The Lord then commanded Jacob to return to Canaan.

Jacob and Laban then worked out an agreement on how to divide the flocks so that Jacob would be compensated for the many years of work. This agreement required that Jacob manage Laban's herds for several years. At the end of the time, flocks of Laban and of Jacob were separated. However, after the separation of the flocks, Laban was still distressed. To avoid further problems with his in-laws and remembering God's command to return to Canaan, Jacob gathered his flocks, wives, children, and other possessions and left without saying goodbye to Laban. Strangely, Rachel also took Laban's idols and hid them among her things.

When Laban realized that Jacob had left, Laban gathered a band of followers and pursued Jacob, finally overtaking him in the hill country of Gilead, a region in northern Jordan. Laban confronted Jacob but Jacob said that he left in order to avoid problems with Laban and his sons. Laban was also angry about the idols, but Jacob said that no one in his party had taken them and if anyone had them secretly, they would die. Laban searched for the idols but did not find them. Laban and Jacob then reconciled and built a stone marker to attest to their covenant. The place was called Galeed (or Ramoth-gilead), meaning "heap of stones" and this name may have been the origin of the surrounding region being called Gilead.

Reconciliation with Esau

Soon after Jacob had moved further south with his group, he was met by angels, and he named the place Mahanaim or God's camp. It was on the banks of the Jabbok River (called the Zarqa River today). From there he sent messengers south along the King's Highway to Edom (previously called Seir) to tell Esau that Jacob would like to reconcile with him. After their journey the servants returned and told Jacob that his brother was coming with a band of 400 men. Jacob was afraid and decided to send a large flock of sheep and other animals over the Jabbok River to be a peace offering to Esau. Jacob sent his wives and children over the river and then spent the night alone. During the night Jacob wrestled with an angel who, after the wrestle, gave Jacob a new name—Israel—and said that Jacob had striven with men and God, and prevailed. Jacob then saw that Esau was coming and went to the front of his family and bowed down to Esau. Esau ran to Jacob and embraced him. When Jacob offered the flocks and cattle, Esau refused but Jacob insisted. They departed friends and loving brothers. Jacob then traveled along the Jabbok to the west and came to the city of Succoth where he built a house for his family and booths for his livestock. Succoth is also on the Jabbok River in Jordan.

Jacob Returns to Canaan

Eventually, Jacob was commanded by the Lord to return to Bethel on the western side of the Jordan River. However, before entering this place that had been sacred to Jacob, he called all his family and servants together and instructed them to bring any idol or other pagan item to him so that they could be buried. This is probably when Jacob realized that Rachel had stolen her father's idols. Soon after their arrival in Bethel, Rachel gave birth to another son who was named Benjamin. Shortly after, Rachel died. Jacob was heartbroken that his beloved wife had died, perhaps, in his or her mind, as a result of the curse that Jacob himself put upon any person who had stolen Laban's idols. Some experts believe that this sorrow led to Jacob's almost fanatical devotion and honoring of Joseph and Benjamin, the two sons of Rachel.⁴²

The remainder of Jacob's life is mostly about his favoring of Joseph and Benjamin and the consequences of those actions. Joseph was hated by his older brothers who sold him into slavery. He was taken by the slavery caravan to Egypt where he served in a nobleman's house and then was falsely imprisoned only to be redeemed from prison when he correctly interpreted the pharaoh's dream depicting seven years of plenty and then seven of famine. Pharaoh installed Joseph as his second-in-command and gave Joseph power to manage the storage of food during the years of plenty and the distribution of the food during the famine years.

Eventually Jacob's family were struck by the famine and the brothers, except Benjamin, traveled to Egypt to obtain food. They met but did not recognize Joseph, who eventually revealed himself to them and forgave them. Jacob also came to Egypt, and they lived there in comfort. After blessing his sons and Joseph's two sons, Jacob died in Egypt.

Based upon the time it took to prepare his body for transport, Jacob was probably mummified. Then, his body was carried by his family back along the King's Highway to Abel-misraim, a location in southern Jordan. After great mourning at that location, they crossed over the Wadi Arabah into Canaan and buried him in the family tomb at Mamre (Hebron). Thus ended the Book of Genesis in the Bible and the Age of the Patriarchs. The children of Jacob returned to Egypt where, eventually, they became slave laborers for the Egyptians.

Similar People

Before leaving the Patriarchs, we should briefly discuss a group of documents found in northeastern Mesopotamia at the town of Nuzu that give some intriguing corollaries to the lives of the Patriarchs as told in the Bible. The Nuzu tablets date from the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries, B.C. and give great insight into the daily life of the people who lived not too far from Haran at about the same time as Abraham.

There are some records that discuss a lawsuit against the mayor of the town for corruption but most of the archives are about personal and family affairs like adoption, servitude, inheritance, land ownership, and marriage. The purpose of marriage in Nuzu was not companionship or love but securing an heir. Therefore, clauses in many marriage contracts state that if a wife was not able to supply her husband with a male heir, the wife had the obligation to give her husband another woman. The wife's position was protected by stating that the gifted woman would remain a servant of the first wife and that if the first wife later was able to bear a son, that son would become the principal heir. The servant wife was also protected because the first wife was prohibited from dismissing her. Only the husband could do that.⁴³ The Bible stories of the Patriarchs clearly follow these legal rules.

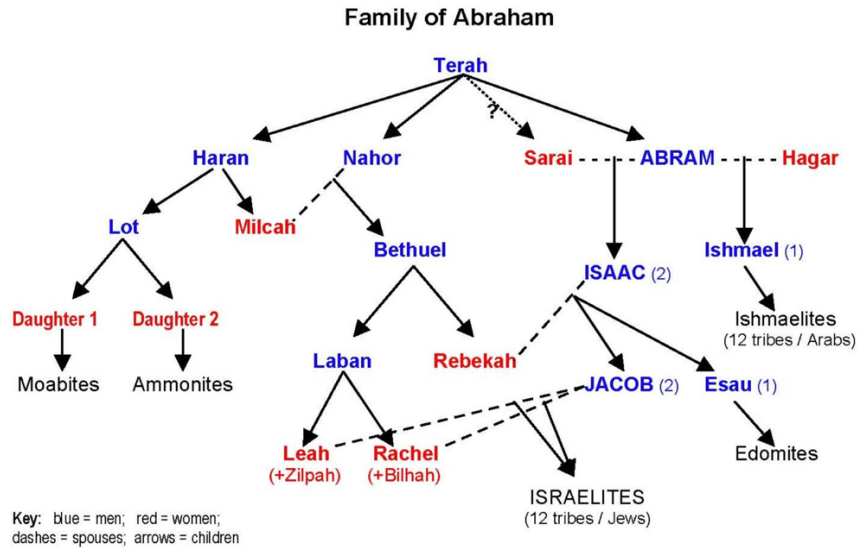


Figure 15: Family tree for Abraham (<https://catholic-resources.org/Images/Abraham.jpg>)

Chapter 4: Moses and the Exodus

The Date of the Exodus

Adjusting Generally Accepted Dates

A controversy has arisen among biblical scholars and archaeologists concerning the dating of the Israelite exodus from Egypt to the promised land. For many years the generally accepted date (GAD) has been about 1200–1150 B.C. But there are problems reconciling those dates with archaeological evidence of the destruction of Canaanite cities that would have occurred when Joshua and the Israelites entered and conquered Canaan/Palestine (as related in the Bible) at the end of the exodus. Few evidences of destruction have been found in layers dating from this GAD time frame in archaeological digs at the cities named in the Bible as being conquered. Therefore, two scholars, John Bimson and David Livingston, have proposed two date adjustments that, in their opinion, solve this and other problems in dating the exodus.⁴⁴

First, Bimson and Livingston propose moving the date of the exodus back about 200 years, to shortly before 1400 B.C. They note that this date is better coordinated with the Bible (1 Kings 6:1) where it says that Solomon began building the temple in the fourth year of his reign and that this was 480 years after the exodus. Using this reference gives a date for the exodus of about 1450 B.C. Another biblical text says that the Israelites had settled in Transjordan for 300 years at the time of Jephthah, one of the judges, who is dated about 1100 B.C. Again, the Israelite crossing would be about 1440 B.C. Other scholars (William Shea and Hans Goedicke) have also proposed 15th century B.C. as dates for the exodus.⁴⁵

Looking more closely at the generally accepted dates, that time span was derived from Egyptian dates that, in general, are well known. However, correlating these dates with the Bible often requires some assumptions and these might be wrong. Bimson and Livingston believe that is the problem in this case. In Exodus 1:11 we

are told that the enslaved Israelites built store-cities Pithom and Raamses for the pharaoh. The assumptions are that this refers to Ramses II and that the cities were built during his reign. However, the Bible uses the word Raamses (note the spelling) to describe the region in the Delta in which the patriarch Jacob and his family settled (Genesis 47:11). The term Ramses or Raamses or Rameses, all of which are used, could be applied to a region just as, for example, the state of Illinois is called the Land of Lincoln. Hence, the reference does not necessarily mean that the building was done during the reign of Raamses II but could refer to construction in the region of Raamses.⁴⁶

Although scientists would like the numbers to be precise, in reality, all of the dates of ancient events are based on uncertainty and the dates of almost any event in the ancient past must be assumed to be approximate.

This fact is reinforced by the proposal of Emmanuel Anati and the rebuttal by William Stiebing, Jr where Professor Anati suggests that the generally accepted dates be moved by even more—750 years. Stiebing believes that the arguments of Anati are not compelling and should, therefore, be dismissed. New dates seem to be introduced every few years. We should probably not worry too much about the exact date.

In Hebrew and some other ancient languages, numbers are written using the same characters as the letters of the alphabet. Furthermore, very large numbers were especially difficult as the languages did not have words for these very large numbers. These language and writing features have caused much confusion and may be some of the reasons that numbers given in the Old Testament are often suspect.

Moses

Early Years in Egypt

Moses was born of Israelite parents during a time when the pharaoh was worried about the number of Israelite slaves and, therefore, all the newborn males were ordered to be killed. Moses was hidden to avoid the pharaoh's decree but, when his mother felt she could hide him no longer, she set him adrift in the Nile in a reed basket asking that her daughter watch over the infant. Pharaoh's daughter came to the river to bathe, and her servants saw the basket and brought it to the princess. The baby was crying, and pharaoh's daughter had pity on the baby even though she recognized that the baby was an Israelite. The baby's sister then asked pharaoh's daughter if she should go and find a wet-nurse for the baby. The answer was yes, and the sister took the baby to Moses' birth mother who nursed him. After the baby had grown (we are not sure for how long), the baby was taken to pharaoh's daughter and Moses was raised in pharaoh's court. The daughter named the baby Moses because she drew him out of the water, but it could also be a shortened version of Ramose, meaning the child of Rameses.⁴⁷

Later, when Moses was grown, he saw an Egyptian taskmaster treating an Israelite poorly. Moses was incensed and slew the taskmaster. The next day when Moses again went among the people, he saw two Hebrews fighting and asked one why he was striking his brother. The Hebrew responded that Moses was not a judge over them and asked Moses if he intended to kill him as he killed the Egyptian. This informed Moses that his killing deed was known, thus endangering him under Egyptian law. The pharaoh soon heard of the killing and sought to kill Moses.⁴⁸

Moses in Midian

Moses fled from Egypt to the land of the Midianites—an Arab land located in present day southwest Jordan, extending from Wadi Rum into northwest Saudi Arabia. Midian is bordered in the west by the Gulf of Aqaba

and the Red Sea and on the east by the Arabian desert/wilderness. As shown in the figure below, Midian was outside Egyptian-controlled territory and, therefore, was a safe refuge site for Moses.⁴⁹

Some scholars have questioned the presence or control of Egypt over the Sinai and into Canaan (as shown in the map) during the time when the exodus occurred. However, considerable evidence to support an Egyptian presence even in Jerusalem toward the end of the Late Bronze Age (13th century B.C.) has been found. Even earlier evidence is reported in the Amarna letters that Canaan was in effect an Egyptian province during the 14th century B.C.⁵⁰

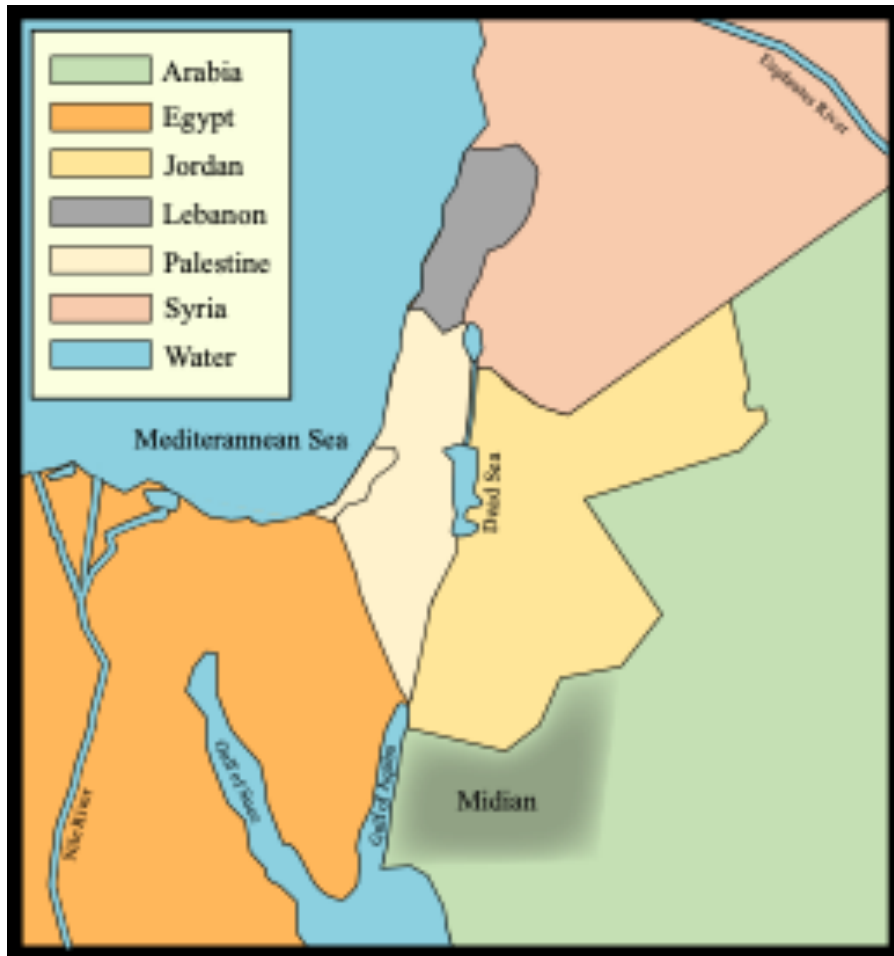


Figure 16: Location of Midian

The Midianites are descended from Abraham through Keturah, his wife after Sarah's death. These people, part of the Arab race, were pastoralists and traders who sold goods like spices throughout the Middle East. They were mentioned as fighting the Edomites, a kingdom immediately to the north of Midian (Genesis 36:35). A group of Midianite traders pulled Joseph, son of Jacob, out of the pit where he was placed by his brothers. The Midianites sold Joseph to a traveling caravan of Ishmaelites who then sold him in Egypt (Genesis 37:28).

When Moses reached Midian, he stopped beside a well and while resting there saw several young Midianite women who were being pestered by some shepherds. Moses drove the shepherds away and then watered the sheep for the women. The women rushed off to tell their father, Reuel, about the stranger. The father then

told them to return and invite the Egyptian (Moses) to eat with the family. Moses accepted and agreed to stay in the area. Later, Reuel gave one of the daughters, Zipporah, to Moses as a wife.

Though initially seen by the Midianites as an Egyptian, over time Moses seemed to be integrated into Midianite society and accepted the role of a shepherd. We are told he tended the sheep of Jethro who is called his father-in-law, an obvious example of being part of the family. There is some disagreement among biblical scholars on the identities of Jethro and Reuel, who is also called Moses' father-in-law. Some scholars assert that they refer to the same person, with one name possibly a title. Another view is that the word translated as father-in-law (*hoten*) can also be translated as, simply, "in-law" and could refer to any relative in the family. By this latter reasoning, Reuel, who was the father of Zipporah, was Moses' father-in-law, but Jethro was the head of the clan and a priest, perhaps an uncle or a brother to Zipporah. The term *hoten* is used at least 16 times to refer to Jethro, not to identify who he is as a specific relative but, more likely, to confirm that Moses had become Midian kinfolk in the broad sense.⁵¹ This is a good example of the difficulties in understanding and translating an ancient text.

Mountain of God

Location

One day when Moses was pasturing the flocks of Jethro, he brought them to the backside of the desert (Exodus 3:1). Because the desert is to the east of Midian (see figure above), the backside of the wilderness would be the western border of the desert along the eastern boundary of the more fertile part of Midian. Some translations even say that Moses led his flock to "the western side of the wilderness." There he was near a mountain that was called Horeb, also called the Mountain of God.

Scholars have suggested at least 16 locations for the Mountain of God. The most widely accepted are shown in the figure below. The traditional (historically identified) site is in the south-central part of the Sinai Peninsula at a place called Mt. Musa or Mt. Sinai. In the 4th century A.D. the site was designated by Constantine (or his mother) as the Mountain of God and the monastery of St. Catherine was built there. (It may have been that the monastery was there first, and she simply believed the monks' claim that it was the Mountain of God.)

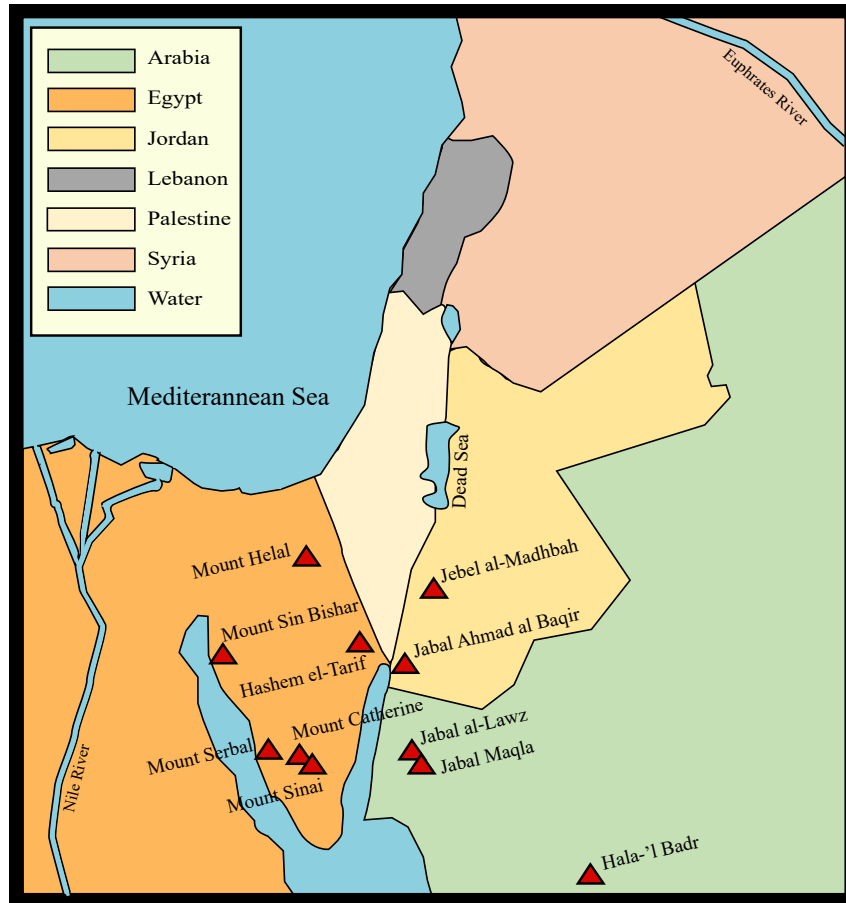


Figure 17: The most widely accepted proposed locations for the Mountain of God

However, as described in the text and shown in a previous figure, Midian lies to the southeast of the Gulf of Aqaba and crossing or going around the Gulf with a flock of sheep to get to southern Sinai seems highly improbable. The travel distance from Midian is even greater for the sites proposed to be in the central and northern parts of Sinai or in the Negev. Those suggesting these northern sites might propose that Moses had accepted the role of a Bedouin and extensive wandering would not be a hardship. However, the great distances are still relevant. Many people believe that these Sinai sites should be considered because of clues from the Bible and, in some cases, archaeology. However, in reviewing papers from a conference on the location of the Mountain of God, one scholar noted that archaeological evidence in the Sinai during the time when the exodus is thought to occur is essentially non-existent or “empty” whereas Midianite territory in Saudi Arabia was thriving, full of Bedouin settlements.⁵²

Others believe that the site for the Mountain of God lies in or near the land of Midian. This latter choice is criticized by some scholars for a variety of reasons including different interpretations of biblical passages, probable over-reaching of some claims supporting the Midian site, and lack of scholarly training by those making the claim. The preferred mountain for most of those supporting a Midian site is Jebel Al-Lawz, located in modern northwest Saudi Arabia. This is a proposed site that does not require extensive migration of a flock of sheep.

In contrasting the traditional site in Sinai to one in Saudi, a scholar noted that “The notion that the ‘Mountain of God’ called Sinai and Horeb was located in what we now call the Sinai Peninsula has no older tradition supporting it than Byzantine times.” When asked if he would place Sinai [Mountain of God] in Saudi Arabia, the scholar replied, “Yes, in the northwestern corner of Saudi Arabia, ancient Midian.”⁵³ Yet another evidence for the Saudi location is the repeated inference that the Mountain of God is a volcano. Shimon

Ilani, an expert on volcanos, noted that the mountain is described in Exodus as having fire and smoke and trembling (Exodus 19:18 and also in Deuteronomy 5:22-24). Even when the mountain was visited by the prophet Elijah, he described a great wind followed by an earthquake, followed by fire (1 Kings 19:11-12). All these are characteristics of a volcano. There are no volcanos in the Sinai Peninsula, but in Midian volcanism has been active even in ancient times.⁵⁴

Another suggested site that seems to fit the requirements is in Jordan. Later in the Bible, in the song of Deborah, the location of Mount Sinai is inferred to be in Seir and Edom (Judges 5:4-5), a poetic statement that is similar to the Song of Moses where he also says that the mountain is from Seir (Deuteronomy 33:2). If the meaning is Mount Seir, the modern Arabic equivalent is thought to be Jibal ash-Sharah (Arabic: *Jibāl ash-Sharāh*) or more simply Jebel Baghir (Baqr) that is located just northeast of Aqaba in Jordan. Mount Seir is the ancient and biblical name for a mountainous region stretching between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba in the northwestern region of Edom.⁵⁵

Divine Calling of Moses

At the mountain Moses saw a bush burning that was not being consumed with the fire and he heard the voice of the Lord calling to him from within the bush. After being told to remove his sandals because he was on holy ground, Moses spoke with God who identified himself as the God of Moses' fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This statement must have reignited many memories in Moses' mind, recalling his early youth, especially after 40 years in Midian and many years in the Egyptian court. God obviously wanted Moses to remember his origins. God told Moses that He had seen the afflictions of the Israelites and that He was calling Moses to go to Egypt and free the people from their bondage and take them to the promised land of Canaan.

Moses must have been terrified as he thought about the death warrant that was placed on him in Egypt. However, God assured Moses of His divine power and support on this task. Moses was told that after he had brought the people out of Egypt, he was to return to worship God at this mountain (Genesis 3:12). It is obvious that Moses had never thought of himself as the liberator of the Israelites. He doubted that they would accept him as their leader. Perhaps to verify that Moses actually came from God, Moses said that the people of Israel would ask him, "What is the name of God?" The Lord replied "I AM that I AM." (This is often spoken as *Yahweh* or Jehovah.) Moses further objected saying that pharaoh would not respond to his request to free the people, but God then showed Moses two signs he could use to show pharaoh his authority and God's power. These signs were turning a staff to a snake and making his hand leprous and restoring it. God also explained that if another sign was needed, Moses could take Nile water and turn it into blood. Finally, Moses objected that he was a poor speaker and God responded that He would give Moses a spokesman, Aaron his brother. Moses then accepted the calling and returned to Jethro and explained what had happened. Jethro agreed that Moses should go as God commanded and bade him a fond farewell.

Egypt and the Desert

On the Way and Meeting the Pharaoh

Moses left Midian with his wife and children and traveled toward Egypt. While at a camping spot, the Lord met them. They came to understand that Moses' son should be circumcised. This was done by Zipporah who then proclaimed that she was now linked to Moses by blood, thus implying a stronger relationship between them than merely the marriage vows and tacitly recognizing that Moses was now an Israelite and she was part of that clan also. Moses sent Zipporah and their son back to Midian, perhaps for safety, to await his arrival following the Egyptian experience that was to come.

The Lord had told Aaron that he should go to meet Moses and together Moses and Aaron traveled to Egypt. They spoke to the elders of the Israelite people and told them about the message from God and performed the signs so that the people believed.

Moses and Aaron then went into pharaoh and demanded that he let the people go and performed the signs. Pharaoh's magicians also performed signs and so pharaoh was unconvinced, even though the signs given by Moses were stronger. Pharaoh was angry at Moses and made the tasks imposed on the Israelite slaves even more severe.

God told Moses to return again to pharaoh and cause the 10 plagues, one at a time, to fall upon the land. Even after nine plagues had occurred, pharaoh still refused to let the people go. The Lord then told Moses that one last plague would occur. In this plague, the first born of every family, human and cattle, would die. However, if the Israelites properly observed the Lord's commands to eat a special meal in a particular way and to mark their doorposts with blood from the lamb used in the meal, they would be passed over by the plague. The Israelites were commanded to eat this Passover meal every year on the same date as a remembrance of the miracle that would free them from bondage. All occurred as the Lord said and, finally, the voice of the Egyptian people cried out to pharaoh in great anguish at the loss of loved ones and pharaoh finally gave permission for the Israelites to leave with Moses.

The Beginning of the Exodus

The number of Israelites noted in the census lists of Numbers in the Bible is generally recognized as impossibly high. It is assumed that the original figures were misunderstood either by their transmitters or translators. Other ancient records such as the writings of Plato also have problems with very large numbers. This same problem exists with the figures in Exodus 12 where the number of adult men is listed as 600,000. If dependents are included, the total would be about 2 million. However, in other biblical places, the number of Israelites is quite small, especially compared to nearby Canaanite tribes. To date, no consensus of a more accurate number has been worked out, but scholarly suggestions range between 2,000 and 16,000.⁵⁶

The route taken by the Israelites from Egypt to the Mount of God, where Moses was commanded to bring them, is a matter of controversy. Some facts about the route seem straightforward such as the starting point of Goshen/Rameses which seems to be accepted by all scholars as being in the eastern Nile delta. The final destination of the exodus is also certain—the crossing of the Jordan River opposite Jericho. We will look at the phases of the trip to present the most common alternatives and to give some arguments for each. At the end of this chapter, I will summarize and give my opinions.

At the time of Moses there were three main routes from Egypt to the east—the **Way to the Land of the Philistines** (along the northern coast), the **Way to Shur** (across middle of the Sinai straight to Canaan), and the **Way to Seir** (the main trade route between Egypt and Arabia). These are shown in the following figure. Another route, a more **southerly one**, has also been proposed because it goes to Jebel Musa (Sinai), the place identified in the 4th century A.D. where the St. Catherine Monastery was built. Because of the rugged nature of the Sinai desert, most scholars assume that one of the ancient trade routes would have to be followed.



Figure 18: Possible routes out of Egypt

The Bible specifically states that the Lord did not lead them along the Way to the Land of the Philistines because the people might turn back if involved in warfare with the Egyptians (Exodus 13:17-18). This is undoubtedly because along that path Egypt had built several defensive forts and the troops stationed there could attempt to stop the Israelites. The Way to Shur leads directly to Canaan across the center of the Sinai Peninsula. However, it does not lead toward Midian and would result in much additional travel to get to Jordan where the trek northward at the end of the exodus to the place of crossing occurred. The Way to Seir (Arabia) is a direct route to Jordan and Midian and, therefore, would have the least amount of travel. Finally, the southern (traditional) route was developed as a way to include the traditional site of Mt. Sinai (Jebel Musa), a place where monks in the 4th century A.D. built the Monastery of St. Catherine. It does not follow a trade route and is the longest pathway to Jordan and the trek northward.

Crossing of the Red Sea

The place of crossing of the Red Sea where the Israelites were saved, and the Egyptian army was drowned is also a matter of controversy. The Bible says that the Lord led the Israelites around by the way of the “wilderness to the Red Sea.” To confuse the Egyptians, the Lord told Moses to go eastward and then double-back to the west going near Migdol, thus giving the impression that the Israelites were wandering aimlessly in the wilderness (Exodus 14:1-3). The Lord then had the Israelites camp on the “edge of the sea,” probably because He knew that pharaoh had changed his mind about letting the Israelites leave and the Egyptian army was following and would challenge them there. Then, in the Lord’s plan, he would drown the army and relieve the Israelites of the immediate threat of being chased by the Egyptians. This would give the Lord time to accomplish what he wanted to do at the Mountain of God.

Identifying the location of the crossing depends, to some extent, on the translation of “Red Sea” from the ancient Hebrew. What is called the “Red Sea” in English is, in Hebrew, called *yam súp*. *Yam súp* appears many times in the Bible. In many of these instances, it clearly refers to the body of water we know as the Red Sea (including its two northern fingers, the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba). Based on these clear references, it is easy to see why the traditional translation of *yam súp* was Red Sea. The problem is that *yam súp* has a strong connection with the Egyptian word for reed or papyrus and therefore actually means “Reed Sea” and could therefore refer to a marsh overgrown with reeds. Many Egyptian texts refer to a Papyrus or Reed Sea. However, there are no papyrus plants or reeds along the Red Sea and so referring to the Red Sea as *yam súp* is not logical, at least in light of today’s vegetation situation, nevertheless, it was done several times in the Bible. Another suggestion is that *súp* actually links to the semitic word *sóp* which means “end” as in “end of what is known.” Therefore, to an ancient Egyptian, the Red Sea would be seen as a vast body of water whose end was unknown. The term *yam súp* was used to designate other large bodies of water such as in 1 Kings 9:26 where it definitely refers to the Gulf of Aqaba,⁵⁷ and also to other large bodies of water by the Egyptians and the Greeks (in translation) and by the Hebrews in some other ancient texts.⁵⁸

Another clue to the location of the Red Sea crossing location states that when the Egyptians followed the Israelites into the sea, the chariot wheels began to swerve, and movement became difficult. Clearly, they were in mud. This could have been a marsh or, of course, a wet seabed (Exodus 14:25). Some have suggested that it might be on the northern Egyptian shore and the water would be the Mediterranean Sea. Others have said that it could be the Bitter Lakes on the eastern border of Egypt. Others see the crossing at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez and still others see it across the Gulf of Aqaba. With regards to the northern part of the Gulf of Suez, there are islands that, during the dry season, especially when the tide is out, are near the surface and people who know the area can wade across. For example, when Napoleon crossed the gulf at this point during his invasion of Egypt in 1798-1801, he made good progress until the tide came in and was almost swallowed up by the water.⁵⁹ When thinking about the crossing of the sea, we might ask why cross a body of water if the trade routes all avoided water crossings? I believe that the Lord wanted to ensure the safety of the Israelites and so He led them slightly off the trade route to the edge of the sea and then saved them by a miracle and destroyed the Egyptian army so that the Israelites would remember the power of God and to ensure that the Egyptians could not follow, at least immediately.

Wilderness Travel

After the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites were led into the wilderness. They encountered a body of water that was bitter and complained. The Lord told Moses to cast a tree branch into the water and the water was made sweet. Later on, the people complained about insufficient food and the Lord gave them manna. After that they complained about not having meat; quail came that they could catch and eat.

While in the wilderness they fought against the Amalekites, a Canaanite group living in the Negev, and were victorious because Moses was able to hold his staff aloft (with help). Clearly the Israelites had a negative mentality, perhaps a reflection of being in captivity for many years.

Return to the Mountain of God

They reached the Mountain of God, and the people were told to make a camp while Moses ascended the mountain to speak with God. While the Israelites camped at the base of the Mountain of God, Moses received the 10 commandments and other rules and regulations for their religious practices and daily life. The people were invited to move up the mountain to make a new covenant with God, but they became afraid of being near God’s presence. Obviously, they had little faith in either Moses or in God. Moses reascended the mountain and when Moses stayed on the mountain for a long time, the people became even more worried

and worshipped a golden calf, perhaps a reflection of their familiarity with Egyptian religion. Moses came down during the worship and saw their idolatry, got angry, and broke the tablets on which the 10 commandments were written. The people were reprimanded, and Moses returned to speak with God. Eventually another set of commandments was received and new, different, covenants made.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, arrived with Moses' family at the mountain. Jethro gave Moses advice about organizing the people to hear complaints and solve problems. The arrival of Jethro probably meant that the Israelites were drawing close to Midian. After helping Moses, Jethro left to his own land (probably to his personal lands, although some people cite this statement (Exodus 18:27) as showing that the Mountain of God was not within Midian.)⁶⁰

In order to help understand the locations and the sequence of the next events of the exodus, I have compared the accounts of the exodus as given in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The details of the initial part of the journey up to and including the events at the Mountain of God are given in the Book of Exodus. The Book of Numbers discusses events at the Mountain of God and afterward. There is some repeating of events that occurred in the wilderness (manna and quail). Those might be out of order or they may have occurred repeatedly over time. The Book of Deuteronomy begins when the Israelites leave the Mountain of God and relates events after that.

Note that these books may have been recorded (written) at different times and by different groups, each with their own biases and prejudices, where they wanted to emphasize different parts of the story. This may explain some of the apparent disagreements between the accounts.

Kadesh-Barnea

Sending the Spies

Numbers tells of the arrival of the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea which occurs after the events at the Mountain of God/Horeb (Deuteronomy 1:19). From that location spies were sent into the promised land and later returned and reported. The spies described a land of milk and honey but 10 of the spies said the inhabitants of the land were fierce and too powerful for the Israelites. Two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, objected to that report and said that with God's help, the Israelites could conquer the land. The people sided with the 10 spies and that angered God. He declared that the entire generation of adults would be prevented from entering the promised land.

Most people are surprised to learn that the Israelites did not wander all around the desert for the entire 40 years. While it is true that they were in the desert for 40 years, the Bible records that the people remained in Kadesh-Barnea for 38 years (Deuteronomy 2:14) until the generation that left Egypt were dead.

Encampment Location

The location of Kadesh-Barnea is contested by scholars and is quite confusing because the site widely recognized as Kadesh-Barnea is at the southern edge of Canaan (later identified as the southern boundary of Judah), but that site is far from Midian and Jordan—the most logical places for the Mountain of God. After the return of the spies, the people said to Moses that they were near the promised land and should proceed directly into it (Numbers 14:40-45). This assertion is certainly true if Kadesh-Barnea is in southern Judah but can also be true for a site in southern Jordan where the people would simply cross the Arabah, the valley south of the Dead Sea, and enter the hill country of southern Canaan near Hebron. As reported in Numbers, the people initially tried to enter the promised land but were repulsed at the edge of the hill country. Another

clue to identifying the location of Kadesh-Barnea is found in Judges 11:16 where it says that the Israelites went through the wilderness to the Red Sea and then to Kadesh. This sequence does not seem likely for the southern Judah site but fits nicely with a Jordanian site as the reference to the Red Sea could be the Gulf of Aqaba that is clearly on the way from Egypt to a place in southern Jordan.

Kadesh-Barnea means “holy place of desert wandering.” Hence, several locations throughout the Levant have been called either Kadesh or Kadesh-Barnea. One, in Syria, was the location of a major battle between the Egyptians and the Hittites. Another is located in northern Canaan and, of course, the location at the southern edge of Canaan is well accepted as Kadesh-Barnea and is shown on many maps.

Because of the objections mentioned above and other issues, another location for Kadesh-Barnea for the exodus has been proposed by several experts. The alternate location is near Petra in modern Jordan. The Bible states that Kadesh-Barnea is on the edge of Edom (Numbers 20:14), as is Petra. Part of the journey to Kadesh-Barnea is under the guidance of Hobab, an in-law of Moses who knew the way to water and good camping sites. Therefore, the path from the Mountain of God to Kadesh-Barnea is logically near to Midian (Numbers 10:29-32). The proposed Jordanian camping site is outside Egyptian control, and many scholars note that the site in southern Judah is within the area controlled by Egypt in those days and would not have been a safe location for extended camping.

On the other hand, the Jordanian location is a place that can be easily defended and is clearly the location from which the next phase of the exodus, the northward trek through Edom and beyond, began following the 38-year encampment. Local tradition in the Petra area asserts that the narrow valley leading into the Petra archaeology site is the place where the Israelites camped. The valley is called *wadi musa* (Valley of Moses) and the spring at the top of the valley is called the Spring of Moses. This Jordanian location is a few miles from the King’s Highway, thus providing some seclusion and also a path for movement northward when the time was right. There are, today, waterworks that supply the area and these, or some approximation of them, may have been there in Moses’ time. This new site is probably the spot where Moses gave the talk outlined in Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 1:1-2) that was near to the Arabah, the valley south of the Dead Sea. This talk seemed to be given at the place where the Israelites camped prior to their final northward trek.

The Trek Through Jordan

Beginning the Last Trek

The route and events of the exodus from Kadesh-Barnea to the Plains of Moab, the place near the Jordan River where the Israelites waited until the crossing could be accomplished, are documented in Numbers 20:14-22, 21:4, 10-20, 33:35-49; Deuteronomy 2:1-26; and Judges 11:14-26. There is some conflict among the accounts, but I believe that the most logical stops have been presented in the following chart and map. They are drawn from several authoritative sources and represent a combined picture of the journey as best as I could work it out. The complexity of this task is well known. One expert calls the Bible text dealing with the final migration through Jordan as “a geographical hodgepodge totally incomprehensible in terms of the geographical realities of southern Transjordan.”⁶¹ Nevertheless, some conclusions are clear, among the following:

- the events all take place in southern Jordan
- the path is generally northward but is not along the King’s Highway
- some of the trek is east of the main population centers
- the population centers of both Edom and Moab are bypassed (mostly)
- the Land of the Children of Ammon (modern Amman and vicinity) is avoided
- the kingdom of King Sihon at Hesbon is conquered
- the ending of the unified journey is the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan River from Jericho

The first event when leaving Kadesh-Barnea is the death of Aaron (Numbers 20:22-29). The Bible relates that the people began their northward journey and came to Mount Hor. Moses ascended the mountain with Aaron and Aaron’s son, Eleazar. On the mountain Moses removed the ceremonial/priestly clothes from Aaron and gave them to Eleazar. Aaron died on the mountain and, according to Muslim tradition, was buried there. Today, a mountain just outside Petra is called Mount Hor and a tomb, called the tomb of Aaron, is located on its summit.

Camping Locations

From Mount Hor the accounts list the stopping places along with some commentaries on events that took place at or between the stops.⁶²

Station	Biblical Reference	Description	Possible location
Kadesh	Nu. 20:1,16, 22, 33:36–37	Located in the Wilderness of Zin, Miriam’s burial place	At or near Petra. Said to be on the edge of Edom
Mount Hor	Nu. 20:22, 23, 21:4, 33:37–41	Aaron’s burial place according to Numbers	Immediately north of Petra
Zalmonah	Nu. 33:41–42	The site later became a trading center for the Spice Route	In south-central Edom probably to the east
Punon	Nu. 33:42–43	A Bronze Age mining city that continued to be important through the Roman period. Moses made	Khirbat Faynan is in Wadi Faynan, in the mountains

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		the serpent of bronze here	north of Petra
Oboth	Nu. 21:10–11, 33:43–44	The name may mean “water skins” or “ghosts” and could refer to a place in the desert mountains of northern Edom. It is possibly in the border of Edom where there are numerous dolmen which could lend to the ghost translation	Some scholars place Oboth in northern Edom
Ije Abarim	Nu. 21:11, 33:44–45	On the border of Moab	The first stopping place in Moab
Wadi Zered	Nu. 21:12, Deut 2:13-14	A tributary of the Arnon River	This is a valley with steep sides and a river.
Dibon Gad	Nu. 33:45–46	A city in Moab that was conquered by the Amorites	In northern Moab
Arnon	Nu. 21:13,	The main river forming the boundary of Moab and the land of the Amorites	Wadi Mujib
Almon Diblathaim	Nu. 33:46–47	Also referred to by Jeremiah as Beth-diblathaim	In the land of the Amorites
Abarim Mountains	Nu. 33:47–48	The Israelites encamped on the Madaba plain	Near Mount Nebo
Plains of Moab	Nu. 22:1, 33:48–50	The Israelites encamped along the Jordan River from Beth-jeshimoth to Abel-shittim	Lower Jordan Valley, between Sweimeh and Tell el-Mamman, Jordan

Figure 19: Sites listed in Numbers for the northward trek in Jordan, modified (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stations_of_the_Exodus)

Detractors of the exodus story in the Bible have criticized the specificity of the Biblical account and have pointed out that non-Israelite inscriptions from the Late Bronze Age do not contain any evidence confirming these events. They also note that archaeological evidence, at some sites, specifically at Dibon, modern Dhiban as an example where a non-biblical text has been found. Archaeologists have studied the site and have found no evidence of a city at that location at the time of Moses.

However, recent archaeological evidence from an Egyptian source has confirmed the presence of Dibon during the time of Moses. In the Late Bronze Age, Egypt ruled Palestine and, in the course of its 300-year jurisdiction (1560-1200 B.C.), Egypt mapped the region thoroughly. Included in these maps were all the main roads of Palestine, among them an important fixed route through Jordan that linked the Arabah and the Plains of Moab. This road was in continuous use throughout the Late Bronze Age (that includes the time of Moses). This is a different road than the King’s Highway. These ancient Egyptian maps have survived in list form. Three such maps have been found and even though none is complete, a comparison gives a good picture of the route. When the three lists are combined, the comparison with the list from Numbers is amazingly similar. For convenience, the modern name of each location is also listed in the chart below.

Arabah-Plains of Moab Road		
Late Bronze Age Egyptian Name	Biblical Name	Modern Name
(Yamm) ha-Melach	Melah (“Salt”)	Yam ha-Melach
Iyyin	Iyyim	Ay
Heres/Hareseth	Heres/Hareseth	Kerak
Aqrabat		’al-Aqraba
Dibon/Qarho	Dibon	Dhiban
Iktanu		Tell Iktanu
Abel	Abel-shittim	Tell Hammam
Jordan	Jordan	Jordan River

Figure 20: Chart showing sites along exodus path in Jordan (Krahmalkov, Charles R. “Exodus Itinerary Confirmed by Egyptian Evidence,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20.5 (1994): 54–62)

Moses was told to march northward through the land of Edom. He asked the king of Edom to allow him to travel along the King’s Highway, a route through the middle of Edom’s population centers. The king refused the request and Moses then took the Israelites into the desert on the east of Edom and traveled northward.

Many of the locations mentioned in Numbers are known today, including some of the river crossings as well as some camping sites. In the eastern desert they encountered the fiery serpents, and many were saved by looking at the brass serpent raised on a pole.

Moses led the people into Moab and asked the king of Moab for permission to travel along the King’s Highway. Again, permission was denied. The Israelites resumed their trek along the eastern side of Moab.

As they moved farther north, they approached the land of the children of Ammon. Moses was told to not interfere with the Ammonites and to turn to the west. That took the Israelites into the land of the Amorites, also called Sihon after the name of the king. This people were a semitic-speaking people with origins similar to the Canaanites who had conquered a sizable portion of Moab and some of the lands to the north and some territory west of the Jordan River.

A few miles after turning west, the Israelites encountered the city of Heshbon (Numbers 21:21-32). They asked the king of Heshbon (Sihon) to let them pass through. The king not only refused but brought an army out against the Israelites. A battle ensued and the Israelites were successful in destroying the people of Heshbon.

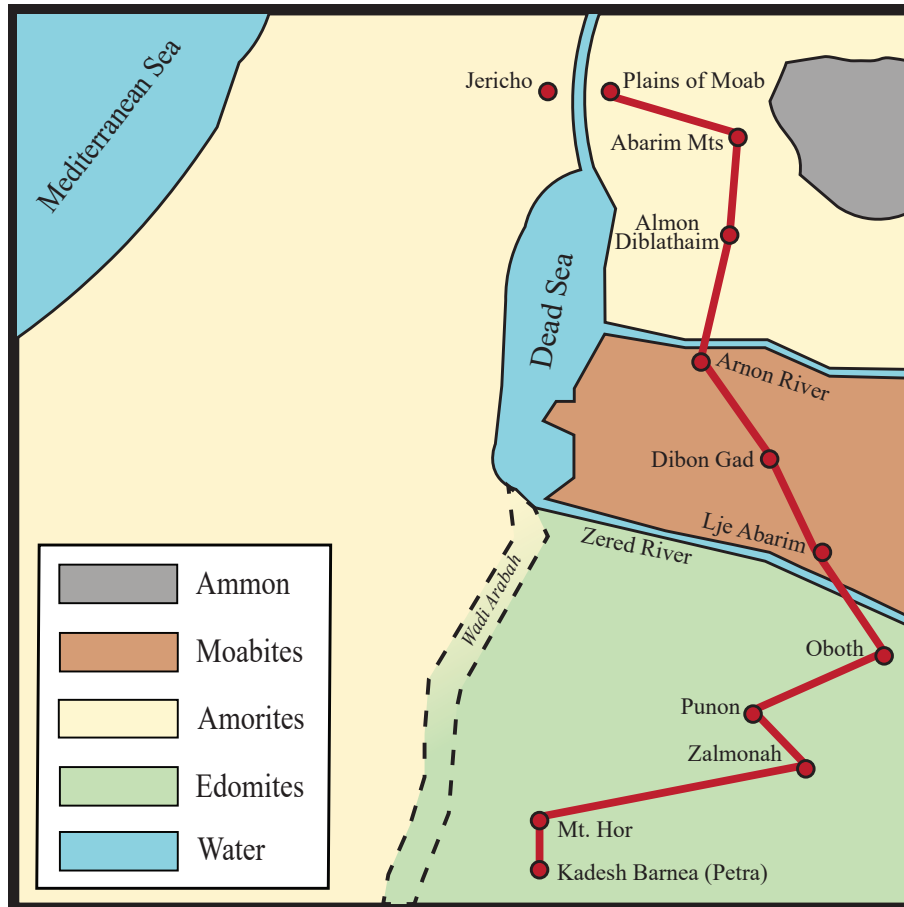


Figure 21: Trek through Edom, Moab, and Amorite lands

My Experience at Heshbon

One day I was driving from Amman (the modern name of the area of the Children of Ammon) toward Madaba, a city on the high plateau near Mount Nebo. I glanced to the right of the road and saw a hill with an arch on the top. The arch looked ancient, and I became curious. I exited the highway and drove up the hill and encountered a gate at the entrance to an archaeological site. The gate was open, and I walked onto the site. There were signs placed by each of the dig sites on the large 50-acre area at the top of the hill. These signs were descriptors of each location and were placed there by the team of Siegfried Horn and later by Lawrence Geraty, both of Andrews University, the leaders of the dig effort. They hoped to find evidence of the battle as recounted in Numbers 21:21-32. However, a review of their work states that they did not find the evidence they sought at this site but identified other nearby locations where the evidence might be found. The excellent work of the team in documenting and surveying the sites has given the world much information about post-Moses civilizations that occupied the site even into the Byzantine Period.⁶³ For me, it was a delightful and unexpected experience to walk the site, especially as I saw the name Hesbon on a sign pointing to the site and was able to read about it in the Bible. I have visited the site many times since then and each time I think that I am close to the actual road taken by the Israelites.

After the battle at Heshbon, the Israelites continued to the west, and they descended off the high plateau overlooking the Jordan River valley and they entered the Plain of Moab near the city of Shittim. There they camped. This area is quite large and relatively flat, with a gentle slope toward the Jordan River. Jericho is directly across the river. I have often driven along the side of the plain as I descended from Amman to the Dead Sea or the crossing location that is a mile or so north of the Dead Sea. Today the Plain of Moab is a rich agricultural area where many vegetables and fruits are grown.

Moses' Final Years

Conquering Northern Jordan

Moses was told to choose a thousand men from each of the tribes and to march northward with them, conquering the tribes in the area (mostly other Amorites) as they went. Presumably he marched up the Jordan River valley until he came to the Sea of Galilee and then he turned eastward and entered the hill country of Gilead. He may have gone as far east as the King's Highway.

Moses and his troops then turned south and marched back to a place where he could descend to the Plain of Moab, perhaps the same passageway that he took after conquering Hesbon. Along the way he conquered King Og and subdued the entire northern hills region of modern Jordan. The area was then given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and part of Manasseh.

Moses and Mount Nebo

After his return from the north, Moses climbed to the top of Mount Nebo. It is just south of the Plain of Moab. It is a steep climb from the place where they camped, but I have driven up the road many times and envisioned Moses making the climb. It would be difficult to walk but certainly doable.

The top of Mount Nebo is actually a raised portion of a large plateau that overlooks the Jordan River valley and the Dead Sea. There is a church at the edge of the plateau that was built in the middle ages and has been renewed several times because of earthquakes. A lookout point behind the church on the edge of the cliff allows good views of the valley and, on a clear day, the tower on the top of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem can be seen (barely).

The Bible reports that Moses died but his body was not found. Others believe that, like Elijah the Prophet, Moses was taken into heaven by the Lord or his angels. This opinion is reinforced by the appearance of Moses and Elijah to Jesus on the Mount of the Transfiguration.

My Opinions

In summary of the exodus, the major events seem to be clear although the details of locations and timing of events are a matter of dispute. As a PhD chemist who worked in both academia and industry, I have been trained in how to sort data and arrive at a conclusion, certainly with the realization that the conclusion might be wrong. I am not an archaeologist so I don't have the training in their methods, but I can read and understand much of what they report. I believe I also have a wide perspective, allowing me to sort their data and to blend it with biblical data and other information to arrive at a decision.

Because most of my research has been directed toward problem-solving and coming to a practical and useful remedy, I have generally relied on the principle set out by the 14th century English philosopher, William of Occam, called Occam's Razor, that has been popularly stated as "*The simplest explanation is usually the best one.*" In light of that concept, I have come to the following conclusions.

1. The likely route of the exodus from Egypt was the Way of Seir after the initial circuitous path taken to entice the Egyptian army to its drowning. This is the most direct and simplest route to Jordan and Midian.

2. The likely place where the Red Sea was crossed is the northern part of the Gulf of Suez. Not only is this physically possible (as found by Napoleon and others), it seems to fit the sequence of events by being near the beginning of the exodus and allows the Israelites to be in the wilderness and to camp at the Mountain of God without worrying about the Egyptians.
3. The location of the Mountain of God is likely near or in Midian. This allows Moses to keep the sheep within a reasonable area of where he was living. Some logical suggestions are Jebel Al-Lawz in Saudi Arabia and Jebel Baghir (or Jebel Ahmad al Baqir) in Jordan.
4. The location of Kadesh-Barnea, where the Israelites camped for 38 years, was in or near Petra in southern Jordan. This is within a reasonable distance from the Mountain of God and was safe and easily defended. It is also at the place where the final northward journey is known to have begun.
5. The places on the northern trek identified as the camping sites and the rivers that are crossed are all in modern Jordan. The trail is not straight but seems reasonable in light of the need to find water and to make the various meetings with the kings of the lands along the route.



Figure 22: Most likely route of the Exodus

Chapter 5: Period of the Judges

Separating the Tribes

Separation During the Exodus

During the 40 years of wilderness wandering and encampment, the tribal structure of the Israelites was maintained. Each tribe was assigned a location to camp and those locations were held while moving during the day. After the tabernacle was built, the locations of the tribes became fixed around the tabernacle. The locations are shown in the figure below.

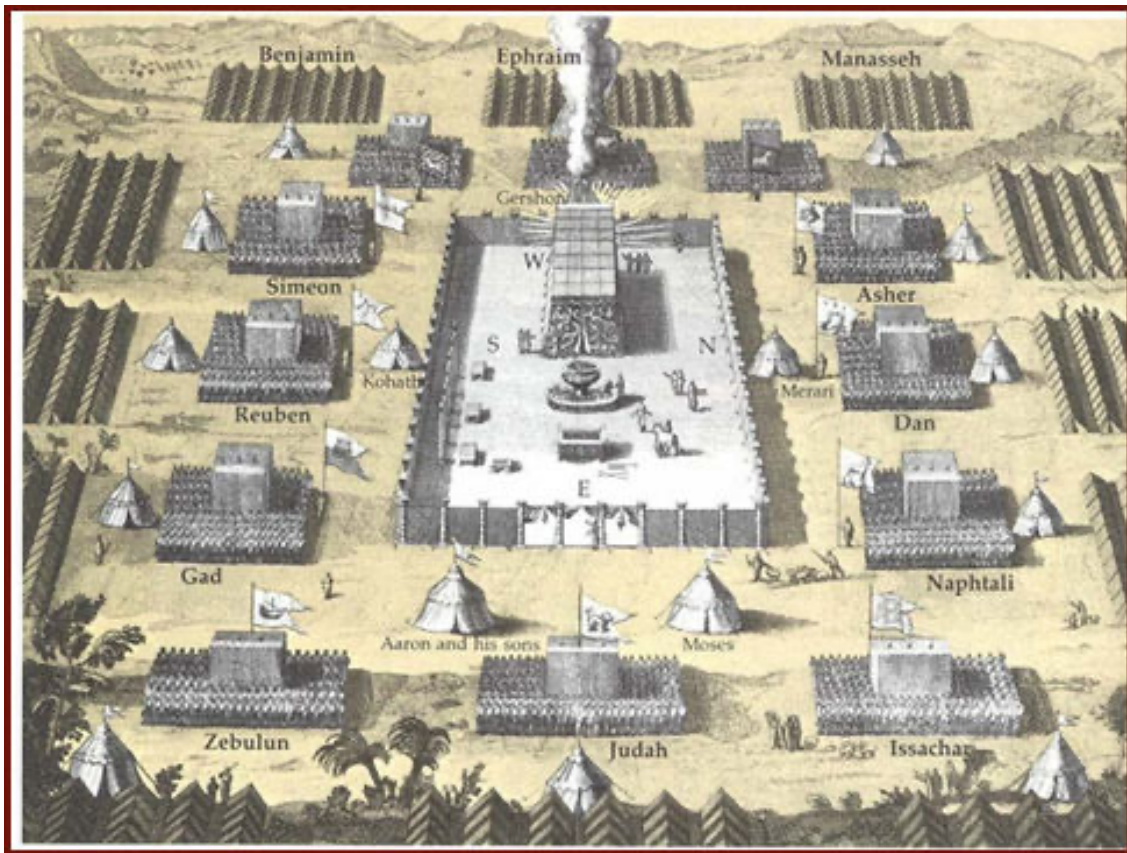


Figure 23: Camping and marching locations for each tribe (<https://biblestudentsdaily.com/2016/10/28/study-5-the-camp-the-israelites/>)

This separation was helpful in allowing the tribes to adequately pasture their animals and gather food. The congregating of each tribe also helped the elders of the tribe control behavior. The separation was likely maintained during the years of encampment at Kadesh-Barnea and the final trek northward through Jordan.

Tribal Assignments in the Promised Land

Beginning when the Israelites reached the Plains of Moab and later crossed into Canaan, each tribe was assigned a separate region in the land. Clearly the tribal nature of the Israelites was being maintained, even solidified. When threatened by an outside force, tribes would often fight by tribes, sometimes alone and

sometimes joined by a few other tribes. On a few occasions, the Israelite tribes fought each other. The period of the Judges, from Joshua to Samuel, was characterized by a continuation of tribal behavior and frequent warfare.

The nature of the land and the needs of the tribe, such as population and preferred occupations, were considered in the assignments. The assignments of tribal areas are shown in their general areas in the following figure. The spaces between are meant to suggest that the tribes shared the land with existing peoples who were already in the vicinity.

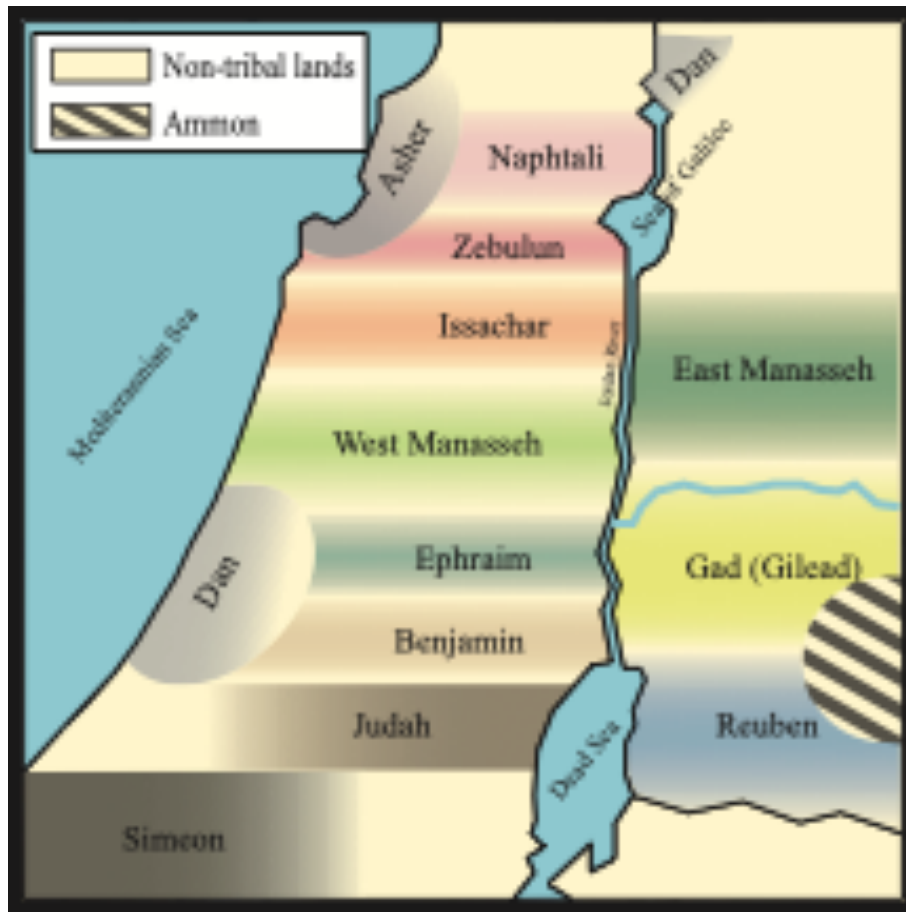


Figure 24: Tribal land assignments

Occupying of the Promised Land

Before Moses ascended Mt. Nebo where he saw the promised land and then disappeared, he consecrated Joshua, one of the two faithful spies, to be the leader of the people. Joshua was instructed by the Lord concerning the Israelites' entry into the promised land and the subsequent occupation of the land. Some of the land was taken, or at least occupied, by military victories while others, like the land of the Gibeonites, was occupied on peaceful terms. However, even with these military victories, much of the native population, including large numbers who did not live in cities, survived and lived in the vicinity of the Israelites.

Two or perhaps three models have been suggested for the nature of the occupation. One, the most obvious, is conquest. In this model the Israelites won military battles and subdued the local population. In the second model, assimilation, the Israelites simply entered the area and occupied land that the local population had not yet developed. The Bible suggests that both of these models were used. They are contrasted in Joshua 5-12 and Judges 1, 4-5. In a third model, some scholars have accepted the assimilation model for the initial

occupation and then envisioned a rising of the Israelites against the Canaanites to take over the land. This latter model is sometimes called the “revolution model.”

The first model is supported by both the Bible in stories such as the destruction of the Amorites in Heshbon and against King Og and in stories about Jericho and Ai. Archaeology also supports this model where a cessation of one culture and then the establishment of a second, semi-nomadic one, is seen in some locations about the time when Joshua would have entered the promised land.⁶⁴ Evidence of the second model is seen in the Stele of Merneptah, an Egyptian pharaoh living about 1220 B.C. in which Israel is mentioned as a tribal group subdued by Merneptah together with some Canaanite cities.⁶⁵ The Bible also supports the second model by frequently reporting the continued existence of some Canaanite strongholds, such as Jerusalem. The existence of Canaanite cities implies a continuing dual occupancy of the land. Other archaeological evidence of the second or third model was found in digs where the Canaanite civilization is seen to have continuous occupation of the lowlands while Israelite occupation suddenly appears in the surrounding hillsides. Scholars reasoned that the Canaanites occupied the flatlands because those places were best for grazing, the occupation that dominated Canaanite culture. Also, the flatlands were places where the superior military advantage of iron-wheeled Canaanite chariots was most easily used. Later, when the Israelites had learned iron technology and when their population had grown, they would have had better military strength and could force their way onto the flatlands.⁶⁶

At some point the highlands did not provide enough food and water to support the Israelite population. As reported in Joshua 17:16-18, “The highlands are not enough for us [complained the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh]. Yet the Canaanites living in the lowlands all have iron chariots” [and therefore we cannot dispossess them of the land]”... Joshua replied, “True, [the hill country] is a woodland, but you will clear it and possess it to its farthest limits.” Once the forests were cleared, the Israelites created agricultural terraces on the land. Terracing transformed the natural slopes into a series of level steps—artificially flattened surfaces suitable for farming. However, terracing also created problems with landslides and denuding. To obtain enough water in the hill country, the Israelites used large lime-plastered cisterns.⁶⁷ These problems support the idea of the third model of Israelite occupation.

The houses in the newly occupied Israelite areas often contained several generations. This living arrangement emphasized the tribal and family nature of the society. Each village seemed to have a governing council of elders, probably consisting of the heads of each of the families. Some interesting archaeology has discovered that not all the Israelites entered Canaan at the same time and that some crossed the Jordan River at a place further north (now called the Sheik Hussein Crossing by Jordanians and the Galilee Crossing by Israelis).⁶⁸ This crossing was in the land of Manasseh on the eastern side of the river and linked into the almost contiguous land of Manasseh on the western side of the river. Little is known of the interaction between these two parts of Manasseh, but surely, they were cooperative.

One of the most extensive archaeological surveys in the Levant was conducted in the area of western Manasseh. This work confirmed the rise of new settlements in the hillsides as opposed to the valleys. The author believed that this pattern resulted from a peaceful migration into the area, where the Israelites did not disturb the existing culture of the Canaanites. His belief is supported by the Bible where not a single battle between Israelites and Canaanites is recorded in the Galilean hill country where his study took place. The study also points out that settlement of the southern part of Canaan, the territory of Judah, occurred later than the settlement in the northern part of the hill country. This evidence suggests that settlement was initially strongest in the north and then moved to the south. The Bible agrees with this by noting the gradual movement of cultic (religious practice) centers to the south over time.⁶⁹

Ensuing Occupations by Non-Israelites

The settling of the Israelites into the land of Canaan was a magnet for warfare. Not too long after the death of Joshua, a king from Mesopotamia possessed the territory for eight years. The Israelites then followed a champion and judge who led them to victory by driving out the invaders from Mesopotamia (Judges 3:7-11). Later, the Moabites successfully invaded Israel with the help of the Ammonites and the Amalekites. This occupation lasted 18 years but was finally ended when an Israelite messenger killed the king of Moab during a private audience (Judges 3:12-23).

Fighting against the Canaanites continued during the time of the judges and one of the most important wars was the victory of Deborah and Barak. Later the Midianites, along with the Amalekites and others from the east invaded and conquered the Israelites. The Midianites were eventually defeated by Gideon through a surprise attack during the night that was so sudden the Midianites slew many of their own people in the confusion.

East of the Jordan River

Archaeological Evidence

In addition to the occupation and wars that involved the western part of the promised land, some major events involved the lands and people to the east of the Jordan River. A major archaeological study was conducted on Tall al-‘Umayri, an archaeological site just south of Jordan’s capital, Amman. The authors believe it is the Holy Land’s best-preserved site from the time of the judges.⁷⁰

They wondered if the people who lived at the site were Ammonites (descended from the son of Lot), or perhaps Amorites (part of the dominant group in the area that fought against Moses), or members of either the tribe of Reuben or Gad (who took over the land after it was assigned to them by Moses before the crossing of the Jordan River). The authors concluded, with some uncertainty, that the people who settled ‘Umayri were Reubenites. The uncertainty arises, in part, because of the location of ‘Umayri. As seen in the map below, Tall al-‘Umayri is near the junction of the land of Reuben, the land of Gad, the land of the Ammonites, and is close to Heshbon, the capital of the Amorites. The precise boundaries of the land assigned to Reuben and Gad are vague and that causes some of the uncertainty.

According to Numbers 32 and Joshua 13, the tribe of Reuben was allotted land east of the Jordan River, provided the Reubenites would help the rest of Israel conquer the promised land west of the Jordan. This they did (Joshua 4:12-13). The Bible indicates that the territory assigned to Reuben and Gad extended north from the Arnon River (modern Wadi Mujib) to Gilead (an area in northern Jordan). It included Heshbon, Madaba, and Dibon. Its western border was the Jordan River. The assignment of ‘Umayri to the tribe of Reuben was made by modern scholars on the basis of findings in the Bible describing the tribe of Reuben.⁷¹

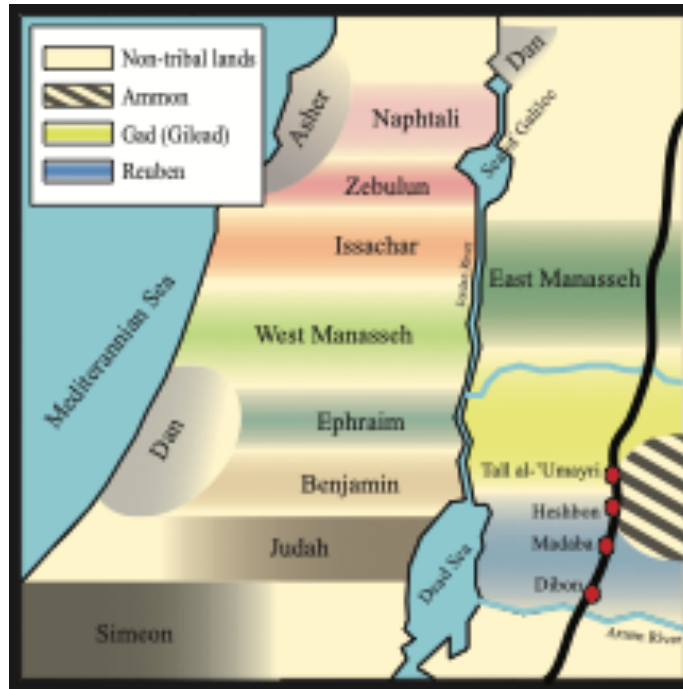


Figure 25: Location of Tell al-'Umayri

Story of Reuben

Reuben was the oldest son of the patriarch Jacob and, therefore, was legally entitled to a special birthright—an extra portion of the inheritance. However, in his early life Reuben was a poor example to both his parents and his siblings. He was cursed by Jacob for sleeping with one of Jacob's wives, supposedly losing in that act his birthright (Genesis 49:4). Later in life Reuben helped his mother, Leah, by gathering mandrakes (an herb that is supposedly an aphrodisiac) to gain favor with Jacob so that she could bear him more children (Genesis 30:14). Later, Reuben prevented his brothers from killing Joseph, Jacob's new favorite, and suggested, instead, throwing Joseph into a pit. Reuben was genuinely heartbroken when the brothers returned to the pit and found Joseph missing (Genesis 37:21-22, 29). When the brothers went to Egypt trying to get food and Joseph demanded that Benjamin, the other son of Rachel and Jacob's new favorite, be brought to Egypt, Reuben bargained with Jacob to let Benjamin go to Egypt and said that if something happened to Benjamin, Jacob would be allowed to kill Reuben's own sons (Genesis 42:37).

Based on Biblical lists of the Israelite tribes, the order usually indicating primacy, Reuben is listed first but, later in the story of the Israelites, the tribes on the western side of the Jordan River, especially Ephraim and Judah, have gained power and influence and have taken Reuben's place in primacy.

The southern-most position among the Israelite tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan River and straddling the King's Highway was the land given to the Reubenites. This land may have given them an economic boost because of a lucrative trade that seems to have developed with the Midianites and Arab tribes to the southeast, at least as judged by the prominence of Midianite pottery in the territory of Reuben. Not only is Midianite pottery found within Reubenite territory, some pottery was also found that has been described as "proto-Israelite" and is thought to be older than other Israelite pottery. This suggests that Reuben's land was occupied earlier than other tribal lands and that Reubenites were active in manufacturing. This is logical because the victory at Heshbon cleared away the former Amorite residents and opened the land for occupation by Reuben's descendants whereas in other areas, the Canaanites were still present.

The Canaanites were already doing some manufacturing and they simply sold items like pottery to the newly arriving Israelites. This early sophistication of the Reubenites is supported further because no other

archaeological site north of 'Umayri has been found to be as large and sophisticated as the land given to Reuben. This is evidence of wealth and power for the Reubenites. The early settlement and sophistication are seen in other Reubenite sites, to the west and south of 'Umayri. These are all within 12 miles of 'Umayri and have the same general characteristics, suggesting an urban region built for manufacturing and trade. These sites are at Tall Hesban, Tall Julal, Tall Jawa, and Tall Madaba.

One of the most significant discoveries at 'Umayri is the oldest example of a "four-room house," the most typical dwelling of the early Israelites. These dwellings at 'Umayri, coupled with the sophistication of the city structure and defenses (walls, etc.) suggest that the Reubenites were established earlier and became richer than other Israelite tribes, especially those living in the hillside villages west of the Jordan River.⁷²

Story of Gad/Gilead

The area assigned to the tribe of Gad, just north of the Reubenites, was sometimes called Gilead. It is a wooded and hilly area with some mountains rising above the Jordan River valley. As the area directly to the east of most of the tribes on the other side of the Jordan River and an easy pathway to access the King's Highway, Gilead soon became a major commercial center. This convenient location on the King's Highway was noted in the first biblical reference to Gilead in Age of the Patriarchs when Jacob reconciled with Laban, his father-in-law, following Jacob's long stay at Laban's home (Genesis 31:21-22).

Undoubtedly the early collection and refinement of the Balm of Gilead also contributed to the commercial success of the area. This balm, made from the resin of the terebinth tree was, and still is, used to treat a variety of ills including nervous disorders, coughs, constipation, water retention, and hair loss. The balm's medicinal values were described by Greek philosophers and physicians and by the Roman writer/scientist Pliny. It is mentioned in the Bible as being carried by a caravan of Ishmaelites to Egypt (Genesis 37:25), as a calming ointment for Jeremiah who was lamenting the defeat of his people (Jeremiah 8:21-22), and later when Jeremiah tells the people to get a balm of Gilead to assist in their healing (Jeremiah 46:11). It is also familiar to many Christians as it is mentioned in African spirituals such as *There is a Balm in Gilead*, and other hymns including *Did You Think to Pray*. In Christian settings, the balm is symbolic of the love and power of Christ.

The balm is a mostly clear but white or slightly blue liquid or paste with a strong odor. It was made from the buds of the terebinth tree (pistachio) although many other modern trees have now been used to make similar salves and they have also been called balm of Gilead. In the Middle East the trees were spiked or cut and the resin collected (usually taking about a month) with each tree producing about a pound of resin. The resin can then be cooked with water and infused with olive oil or other materials like wax to achieve the viscosity desired.⁷³ The balm of Gilead was sold as part of the spice trade along with myrrh and frankincense.

The tribe of Gad was noted as fierce fighters. However, there seems to be some reluctance for Gad and Reuben, the principal tribes located east of the Jordan River, to enter into some of the battles taking place west of the river. For example, both Reuben and Gad (Gilead) are mentioned in the Song of Deborah as not being part of the coalition that fought with Deborah and Barak against an alliance of Canaanite kings (Judges 5:15-17). Some scholars believe that economics influenced the decision of Reuben and Gad not to participate in Deborah's battle. These two eastern tribes had many economic entanglements with non-Israelites, probably because of their positions along the King's Highway. Also, the tribes of Reuben and Gad were pastoralists and had large flocks/herds (Numbers 32:1) as contrasted to the largely agriculturalists on the west side of the Jordan River. The pastoralists required markets for their products (wool, meat, milk) and these markets were often with non-Israelites. Furthermore, the pastoralists depended on their outside neighbors for many food products like grains, fruits, and vegetables. That resulted in the east bank tribes being far more dependent on their non-Israelite neighbors than those tribes across the river.⁷⁴

Jephthah and His Daughter

The story of the Gileadite Jephthah, son of a prostitute, is told in Judges 11. Because of his parentage, he had been driven out by his half-brothers and was living the life of an outlaw in another city. His band of fellow outlaws were successful in their work and Jephthah became a man of wealth and power. When trouble arose in his hometown, he was called back to his original home by the local elders. They asked him to lead the Israelites in battle because the Ammonites had declared war. After some convincing, Jephthah accepted but then made a foolish vow that if the Lord granted him victory over the Ammonites, he would sacrifice whatever first came out of his house upon his safe return.

Rather than immediately going to battle, Jephthah first tried diplomacy and spoke with the Ammonite king. The king declared that when the Israelites entered the area under Moses, they took Ammonite land. Jephthah explained that the land occupied by the Israelites was not part of Ammonite land but belonged to the Amorites. Unconvinced, the Ammonite king rejected Jephthah's reasoning and the battle commenced. Jephthah was victorious. When he returned home, his daughter came out to greet him.⁷⁵ Jephthah cried out in distress "Alas, daughter! You have brought me low...For I have uttered a vow to the Lord, and I cannot retract." His daughter responded, "Do to me as you have vowed, seeing that the Lord has vindicated you against your enemies, the Ammonites." She added, "Let me be for two months, and I will go with my companions and lament upon the hills and there bewail my maidenhood." After two months she returned, and the Bible tells us "He did to her as he had vowed and she had no relations with a man." (Judges 11:37-40).

Several biblical scholars are troubled by this text and believe that Jephthah killed his daughter. Other experts do not believe that Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter. As a female, she was not an acceptable offering, and a different path would be taken. They refer to the obvious references to virginity in her statements and believe that his vow really meant that she would be dedicated to God's service. Some historians like Josephus disagree and say that she was burned on an altar. However, Jephthah could have fulfilled his vow by asking her to become a cloistered virgin and serve in the temple, much as Samuel was dedicated by his mother to work in the temple.⁷⁶

After the battle with the Ammonites and while Jephthah was still the commanding general, the Ephraimites sent a message to Jephthah stating that they were angry because they were not given the opportunity to fight against the Ammonites and, presumably, profit from the Israelite victory. Jephthah responded to them that when they were asked to join him at the beginning of the Ammonite war, they did not respond. Hence, they were not allowed to participate in the war. A war ensued between the Gileadites under Jephthah and the angry Ephraimites. The Gileadites captured the crossing fords on the Jordan River opposite the land of Ephraim and trapped many of the Ephraimites in Gilead. The Gileadites began to control traffic across the river and wanted to eliminate any possibility that the Ephraimites could reassemble in their home country and then begin the war again. Therefore, when a person would arrive at the ford and ask to cross, the Gileadite guard would ask the person if he or she was an Ephraimite. Because Ephraimites were being killed at the crossing as spies or possible enemies, the person seeking to cross would answer "I am not an Ephraimite." However, the guards would then give another command, asking the person to say "*shibboleth*". But Ephraimites could not properly pronounce the "*sh*" sound and would say "sibboleth" and thus be detected. Those Ephraimites desiring to cross who were captured were then slain. The term "*shibboleth*" has entered modern English as a word in which one group is detected by another through their pronunciation. We are told that during WWII, the Dutch, who have an *s* in their phonology but not a *sh*, identified Germans, who have a *sh* (spelled *sch*) but not an *s*. The most common *shibboleth* for the Dutch was asking the Germans to pronounce the city Scheveningen.⁷⁷

Story of Ruth

One other important story that involved people on the east side of the river was the story of Ruth. She was a Moabitess who married a man whose father, mother, and brother moved with him from a famine-stricken Bethlehem in the land of Judah to Moab where there was ample food. While in their 10-year stay in Moab, the father of the family died and so did the two sons. That tragedy left the Israelite mother, Naomi, and her two Moabite daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, alone with no support.

Naomi heard that that famine was abated in Judah, and she decided to return to her original home. She counseled her two daughters-in-law to also return to their homes in Moab. After a discussion filled with much sadness because the daughters loved Naomi, Orpah decided to return to her home in Moab, but Ruth insisted on staying with Naomi and said, “Your people shall be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Naomi and Ruth then traveled to Bethlehem together. Upon their arrival, Ruth became a gleaner and went into the field following the reapers. She happened to go into a field owned by Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi. Boaz went to the field, saw Ruth, and asked his steward over the field who she was. The steward explained that Ruth was a relative of Naomi who had taken care of Naomi on their return to Bethlehem. Boaz was impressed with Ruth’s kindness and arranged for her to be treated as one of his servants and not as a stranger.

Ruth continued to glean in the fields of Boaz throughout the harvest. She then spoke with Naomi who formulated a plan for Ruth to meet with Boaz again under very favorable conditions. Ruth carried out the plan and Boaz saw Ruth and asked her what she wanted. Ruth explained that she was a close relative to Boaz and desired his continued help. Boaz agreed and arranged to buy all the possessions that Naomi’s husband and sons had abandoned when they went to Moab. By rights of family ties, this act of kindness by Boaz included accepting Ruth as his wife, which he was happy to do. We read that they lived together and had a child, and we learn that King David was a descendent of the Moabitess, Ruth.

Technology

We should remember that on both sides of the Jordan River, the newly arrived Israelites were surrounded by existing societies that were more technically advanced than their own. On the west, the Israelites lived among the Canaanites but were next to the Philistines. The Canaanites were, of course, the original occupants of the land. The Philistines, who are sometimes called the Sea People, are from Lebanon and were expert seafarers and traders. They had learned the art of making iron from the Hittites, a people from Europe via Turkey, who had shared that technology with the Philistines. They had developed iron military gear (like chariot wheels) and also farm implements like rakes and plows. Therefore, the Israelites under Joshua and, later, various judges were initially at a disadvantage in warfare and commerce. To overcome this disadvantage, the Israelites used stratagem and creativity. For example, they sent spies to scout the enemy’s defenses. They also attacked at night using surprise as a weapon. They marched around cities, perhaps as a way to infiltrate the city secretly and attack both from within and without, much like the Trojan Horse story. They also wiped out entire cities, perhaps as a way to show others that, when united, the Israelites could be strong.

On the eastern side of the Jordan River, the non-Israelite people—Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Midianites, and the Arabs—were all older civilizations and were highly developed in manufacturing and trade. The archaeological artefacts like pottery and other household implements from the eastern lands are much more skillfully made and of greater complexity than those done in the western area.⁷⁸

The eastern Israelites had the King's Highway as a way to further their trade and they became wealthier and more integrated with their non-Israelite neighbors than their cousins on the west side of the river. The two Israelite groups began to drift apart. Meanwhile, the tribes of the west began to assert themselves as dominant over their eastern relatives.

Chapter 6: Two Kingdoms

Saul

End of the Judges

After about 450 years of rule by judges,⁷⁹ the Israelites wanted a king to rule over them and they asked Samuel, the judge and prophet, to appoint a king. Samuel was a good man who served both them and God faithfully, but Samuel's sons, whom he had made judges, were corrupt. The people demanded a change from continued rule by judges and were eager to have a charismatic leader as king like other people. They also wanted a king who was a strong military leader. Throughout the period of Joshua and the Judges, the Israelites had won some battles but had lost others.

Large areas within Canaan and areas surrounding them were controlled by people who were either opposed to the Israelites or who occupied the most desirable land and forced the Israelites onto less productive land. A king, they believed, would help the Israelites compete against the armies around them, chiefly the Philistines and Canaanites, but also the people in the east—Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and Midianites.

Choosing Saul

With divine assistance, Samuel was directed to anoint a man from the tribe of Benjamin as the king. His name was Saul, and he was described as choice and handsome (more so than any other in Israel) and taller than any by the height of his shoulders and up. He was charismatic, at least by appearance.

After calling together the people from all the tribes, Samuel said to them, "Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people. So, all the people shouted and said, 'Long live the king'" (1 Samuel 10:24). He was proclaimed the king and the people, both the western tribes and the eastern tribes, were united into one kingdom. Saul was charismatic but still needed to prove his military capabilities.

Military Leadership

The military test came quickly when the king of the Ammonites, Nahash (the name must be an Israelite caricature: it means "snake") besieged Jabesh-gilead, a city within the territory of the tribe of Gad (on the eastern side of the Jordan). The men of Jabesh-gilead said to the Ammonite king that they were willing to make a covenant to serve him if the siege were lifted. The king said that he would agree with one added condition. All the men in Jabesh-gilead were to gouge out their right eye as a sign of reproach for Israel. The elders of Jabesh-gilead could not immediately agree to such a demand and they asked for seven days to consider the terms.

Chapter 6: Two Kingdoms

The elders then sent messengers to Saul who heard them and became very angry. King Saul needed to assemble an army to fight the Ammonites and devised a plan where he cut up two oxen and sent pieces of the oxen to each of the tribes with the message that whoever did not immediately come to be in the army with Saul and Samuel, the same would be done to his oxen. The people in all the tribes were frightened and obeyed the demand. The army was formed, and a message was sent to the elders of Jabesh-gilead that deliverance would arrive at their city on the morrow.

Saul's Israelite army fought the Ammonites and the Israelites struck down the bulk of the Ammonites and completely scattered the survivors. All Israel then united even more strongly behind Saul as their king and reaffirmed their loyalty with sacrifices and peace offerings. They did this in Gilgal, a city in the overall center of the kingdom just west of the Jordan River and across from the border of Gilead and Reuben.

Shortly thereafter, the Philistines (who lived along the western coast) assembled a massive army that was an especially challenging threat because of their large number of iron-wheeled chariots included in the army. The Philistines had been successful in keeping the secrets of iron working from the Israelites and used this secret technology to dominate the coastal area of Canaan. The Philistines were even superior in agriculture and other peaceful activities as the Bible comments that the Israelites had to go to Philistines for the manufacture and repair of farm implements. As the Bible says, "No blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears" (1 Samuel 13:19). The Philistines threatened Michmash, a city of Benjamin, and the frightened people fled into caves and cellars and some even crossed into Gilead. With a combination of bravery, an earthquake, and confusion among the Philistines, Saul's son, Jonathan led the Israelite farmers into the fight and the Philistines were routed.

Saul continued to prove himself militarily. As reported in the Bible, "Saul ... fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines, and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment. He acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them" (1 Samuel 14:47-48). Saul was forty years old when he began to reign and he ruled for thirty-two years.

Saul's Decline

You would think that Saul's reign would be a highlight of Israelite history but there was a dark shadow about his later years. It began with the assembling of troops for one of the major battles with the Philistines. Saul's victories had brought many people to Gilgal where Saul was waiting for the army to assemble and where he had agreed to meet with Samuel so that Samuel could offer a sacrifice to the Lord to gain the Lord's support in an upcoming battle. Saul waited seven days past the appointed time, but Samuel did not arrive and Saul became worried because some of the troops began to drift away to go home. Therefore, to preserve the strength of his army, Saul demanded that the sacrifice be brought to him, and he then performed the sacrifice in place of Samuel. As Saul concluded the sacrifice, Samuel arrived and saw what had happened. Samuel chastised Saul because he performed the religious rite without religious authority and pronounced that another person would be chosen to be the king because of Saul's impatience and presumptuousness. Not only did Saul break a commandment of God in taking upon himself the duties of the prophet/priest, Saul showed that he considered military needs to be greater than religious order. This was not pleasing to the Lord who wanted the nation to be strong but guided first by religious principles.

The difficulties between Saul and Samuel became even more tense when Saul disobeyed the command of the Lord concerning the Amalekites. Because of their wickedness, the Lord told Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites and all of their flocks. No living thing was to be spared. However, after the Israelite victory, some of the soldiers kept some Amalekite cattle to help build their own herds. Samuel confronted Saul as the sound of the bleating of the Amalekite animals betrayed Saul's disobedience. Saul briefly tried to explain but

soon realized that Samuel (and God) expected total obedience and so Saul confessed and felt deep remorse. From that time forward, Samuel grieved because of Saul and never saw Saul again until Saul's death.

David

Different Criteria for Choosing a King

Shortly after the confrontation with Saul over the Amalekites, Samuel was directed to go to the home of Jesse in Bethlehem and there he would find a young man who would be the next king. Samuel interviewed seven of Jesse's sons and, although some seemed qualified to be the new king, Samuel was told to "not look upon their appearance or the height of their stature...for God sees not as man sees, for man looks upon the outward appearance but God looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 15:7). Clearly, Samuel was instructed to change the criteria for choosing a king—no longer would he be chosen on his appearance or physical attributes, as was Saul, but he was to be chosen on his heart, presumably his dedication to God and to the Israelite people.

Samuel asked Jesse if there were any other sons and Jesse said that one other was in the fields tending the sheep. He was summoned and the Lord confirmed to Samuel that Jesse's youngest son, David, was the right person. Samuel anointed him to become king, presumably to occur after the death of Saul as there is no indication that David attempted to preempt Saul at any time during Saul's life.

Even though Saul knew he had been rejected as king, he did not know about David being anointed as Samuel's visit to Bethlehem was done secretly. Therefore, Saul continued to reign, but he was troubled, perhaps with depression (called an evil spirit) and he asked his attendants if they knew someone who could play the harp and soothe him. David, son of Jesse was recommended and, upon hearing him play, Saul was pleased, and he asked David to come to the palace and play for him whenever the darkness came into Saul's mind.

David and Goliath

The Philistines continued to be a threat to the Israelites and a short time later the Philistines gathered their army to one side of the Valley of Elah, about 20 miles southeast of Jerusalem. The Israelite army gathered onto the opposite ridge of the same valley. The Philistines sent out a champion warrior, Goliath, from among their army. He was a giant, literally, who yelled a challenge to the Israelites demanding that they choose a champion who would meet him (Goliath) in one-on-one battle. Whichever champion lost; his army would become servants to the winning side. The Israelite army was frightened, and no champion could be found. Goliath continued to give his challenge daily for 40 days.

Meanwhile, Jesse asked his son, David, to take some food to three of his older brothers who were serving in the Israelite army and were camped at Elah. While meeting with his brothers, David heard the giant's challenge and was enraged. He wondered why no Israelite would accept the challenge. He then was brought to the king and there David volunteered to be the champion. Saul initially demurred but agreed after David told him that while tending sheep, he had killed both a lion and a bear when they tried to attack the sheep. Initially David was dressed in armor, but he was not able to move well with the armor and discarded it.

He went to meet Goliath with only a shepherd's staff, a sling, and five smooth stones that he picked up from the brook flowing through the valley. (I have been to the valley and selected a stone from the small stream flowing there. The local Israeli who tends the site and I laughed when he told me that one of his duties was to haul in small stones and place them in the stream for the tourists to pick up.) When Goliath saw David, he laughed and insulted him. David replied that he would be helped by the power of God. As Goliath rushed to

engage him, David inserted a stone into the sling and struck Goliath in the forehead. Goliath was knocked unconscious and he fell face down to the ground. David then approached Goliath, removed Goliath's sword, and cut off the giant's head. He held up the head for all to see. The Philistine army then fled, and the Israelite army chased after them and slew many.

As reported in his book *David and Goliath*, Malcolm Gladwell reports that "modern medical experts believe that Goliath suffered from a malady called acromegaly—a disease caused by a benign tumor of the pituitary gland. The tumor causes an overproduction of human growth hormone." This condition would account for many of the strange details of the biblical story such as Goliath's demand that David come to him (people with acromegaly don't see well) and Goliath's plodding motion.

I have been struck with the similarity between the battle of David and Goliath and the battle between Achilles and Hector as told in the *Iliad*. Having a champion fight a key battle seems unusual in today's world and even in history. I know of few other battles that were decided by champions. I was even more impressed with the similarity of David/Goliath and Achilles/Hector when I realized that both of these battles between champions were fought at about the same time in history—around 1000 B.C. In both cases the victor was protected by a god. I think that these similarities, while possibly just coincidences, could also be an affirmation that both stories tell of actual events, thus affirming the historical reality of both the *Iliad* and of the Bible.

David at Saul's Court

David was a hero and was brought into Saul's presence and became a permanent resident at court. Jonathan, the king's son, and David became close friends and they led Saul's armies and gained many victories. The people sang praises about David and in some cases esteemed him higher than Saul. This angered the king, and he became upset and began to lay plans to kill David. At one time, while Saul was depressed and David was playing the harp for him, Saul threw a spear, hoping to pin David to the wall, but David escaped. On another occasion Saul sent David against the Philistines, hoping that they would kill David, but David emerged victorious and unhurt. Saul even offered his daughter, Michal, to David and said that the only dowry would be 200 foreskins from Philistines. David accepted the challenge, killed the Philistines with his army, and took the trophies to the king. David and Michal were married, and Saul realized that the Lord was with David and that further enraged the king.

Saul cast David out of the court and told his servants and his son to kill David when they saw him. Jonathan loved David and protected him in spite of these commands and warned David to go into hiding with a small group of loyal followers.

David in Hiding

Saul began to hunt for David. Whenever he heard reports of David, Saul would go there in hopes of surprising him. However, David was protected by the people and, when Saul saw that someone had helped David, Saul would have that person killed. On some occasions, Saul would get close to David. In one case, David was hiding in a cave near the city of En Gedi, on the shore of the Dead Sea. Saul came into the same cave to relieve himself and David retreated deeper into the cave. David thought about killing Saul and David certainly could have done it. However, David cut a portion from Saul's cloak while he was in the cave and, when Saul had exited the cave and climbed down the cliff, David came out from the cave and waved the cloth from Saul's cloak and humbled himself before Saul. The king realized that he had been in David's power and that David did not seek to harm him. Saul was saddened at his own behavior and returned to the palace. Later, Saul began again to hunt for David.

David and his loyal band of 600 soldiers continued to hide from Saul. David took two wives as Saul had given David's first wife, Michal, to another man. David's band traveled to many parts of the land, even staying for over a year within the land of the Philistines and serving them in some military exploits. However, when the Philistines gathered to war against the Israelites, the Philistine commanders were uncomfortable with David in their presence and David's band was sent away. Soon, however, David's band encountered a city in the south that had been trashed by the Amalekites. David pursued the Amalekites and destroyed them. Meanwhile, the Philistines attacked the Israelites near the southern end of the Jezreel Valley. In the course of the battle, Saul and all his sons were killed, and the Israelites fled from the battlefield and from several of the nearby cities. The Philistines occupied the cities and found the body of Saul. They cut off his head and paraded it throughout the land of the Philistines. They also affixed his body and the bodies of his sons to the walls of the cities they had occupied. However, the people of Jabesh-gilead, just across the Jordan River from those cities, heard what had happened and they secretly crossed the river and removed the bodies from the wall. They carried them to Gilead where they cremated the bodies and gave a suitable burial to the king and his dead family.

A New King

The death of a ruler has often been a time of uncertainty and conflict. While still in the Negev pursuing the Amalekites, David heard of the death of Saul and was so impressed with the good works of the men of Jabesh-gilead in honoring the dead king and his family that David sent a special messenger to them with thanks. David then moved his entourage to Hebron, within Judah, where the elders of Judah came and anointed him king. (Samuel's anointing was that David would eventually become king.)

But Abner, commander of Saul's army, took one of Saul's sons who had not been killed in the battle with the Philistines, and, in Gilead, made him king over the tribes on the east and then over several of the tribes on the west, but Judah followed David. A civil war ensued with the major battle in the southern part of the Jezreel Valley and carrying over the Jordan River into Gilead. The war ended with a series of arguments and assassinations of Saul's commander and Saul's son who had been crowned king of the northern and eastern tribes. David was victorious. Then, the leaders of all the tribes went to Hebron where David resided, and they unitedly proclaimed him king over all the tribes of Israel.

Clearly the power in Israel had shifted from the eastern tribes to the western ones, initially to Benjamin, the tribe of Saul, and then to Judah, the tribe of David. David soon moved to make Judah even more powerful. He attacked and conquered Jerusalem, a city on the boundary of Judah and Benjamin that had been occupied by the Jebusites (a Canaanite group). Adjacent to the old city on the south side David built a palace using materials from as far away as Lebanon. Jerusalem became the City of David and capital of the united kingdom. King David further strengthened the influence of Jerusalem by bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the city and establishing Jerusalem as the religious center for all Israel. David desired to build a permanent temple in Jerusalem to replace the tent that had housed the Ark of the Covenant up to that time, thus further strengthening the position of Jerusalem and the tribe of Judah. He therefore went to the prophet, Nathan (Samuel had died), and asked him to inquire of God whether that would be permitted. Nathan received a revelation that David should not build the temple because he was a man of war but that his son would be permitted to do so. David could, however, prepare the land, develop the plans, develop the regulations for the priests, and gather the materials for the temple (1 Chronicles 28:11-19).

When the Philistines heard that David had become king of all Israel, they believed that he was vulnerable to attack. The Philistines gathered on a hillside in Israelite territory and defied David. The Israelite army was assembled and battled the Philistines. David was able to drive the Philistines away. Soon, however, they reassembled at another valley where David again fought and defeated them. These victories were devastating to the Philistines and, thereafter, the old enemies of the Israelites were confined to five coastal cities and

Chapter 6: Two Kingdoms

never again attempted warfare against the Israelites. With these victories and his previous victories against the Amalekites, David had consolidated power over all the people within Canaan, both Israelites and non-Israelites.

War Outside Israelite Territory

David was an expansionist and soon began to attack the eastern kingdoms that bordered his land. He first attacked and conquered Moab. He then went north into Aram-Zobah (Syria) and, when the Arameans of Damascus entered the battle to support Zobah, David conquered them also and took control of the land up to the northern part of Mesopotamia. He then subdued the Ammonites and placed army units in Edom.

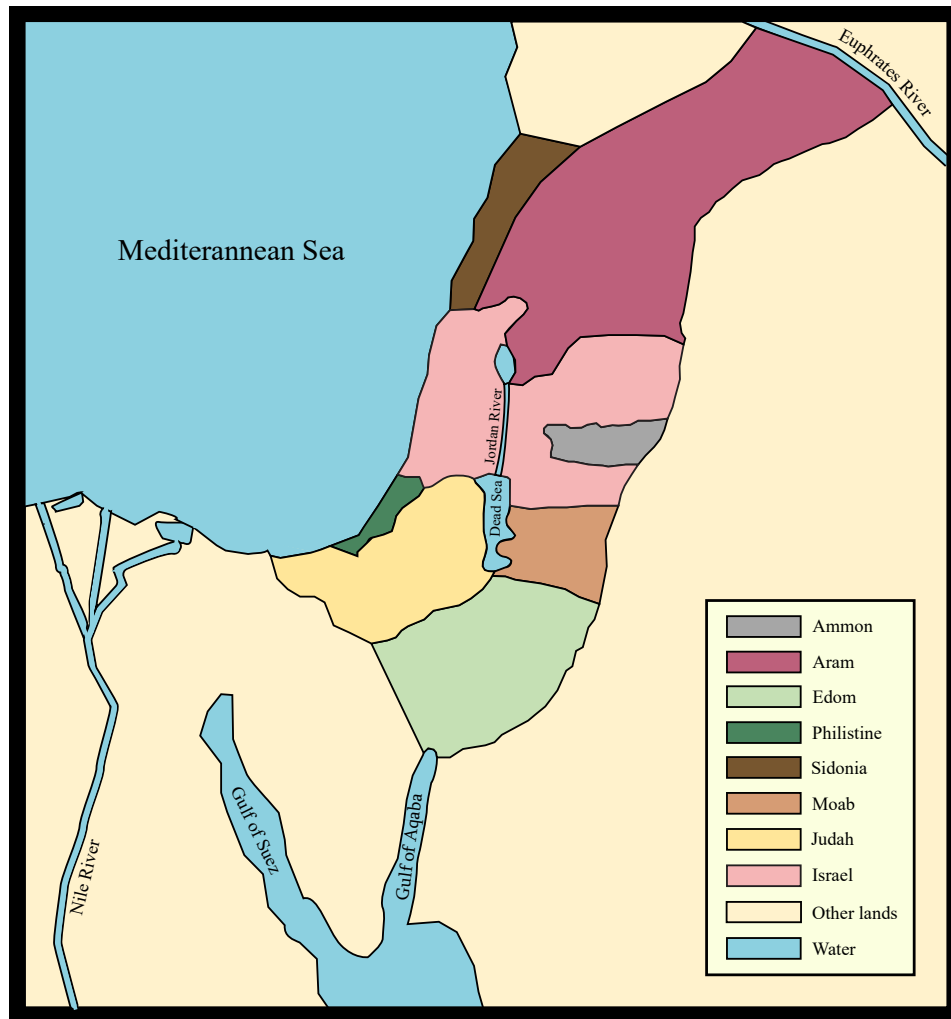


Figure 26: David's empire

Stability rarely continues for long periods, especially within an empire formed by conquest. When the king of the Ammonites died, David sent a small contingent to meet the new king and to offer condolences over the loss of his father. When the Israelites arrived, the new king's advisors cautioned that the envoys were sent to spy. The new king believed his advisors and he decided to show his strength with a humiliation of the envoys by cutting off half of their beards and ripping half of their clothes. They were then summarily shipped across the Jordan River to Jericho. There the envoys sent word to David of their humiliation. David was very angry and began preparations to subdue the new king. When the Ammonite king heard of the Israelite moves, he began to gather his own army and hired mercenaries from the north (Arameans) to fight

for him to strengthen his defenses. David sent his army, under the direction of his main general, Joab, to fight the Ammonites and war ensued.

David and Bathsheba

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, David saw a woman, Bathsheba, bathing on her rooftop and sent word to have the woman brought to him. They slept together and she became pregnant. They tried to cover the adultery by recalling her husband, Uriah, a Hittite commander in the Israelite army who was then fighting the Ammonites, and induce him to sleep with his wife. The husband refused to have relations with his wife while his troops were still in the field and so David sent the husband back to the war and instructed Joab to send Uriah into the front of a battle so that he would likely be killed. It happened as David commanded. David then married Bathsheba, but the child she was carrying died. David was chastised by Nathan the prophet for this act of adultery and the murder of Uriah. David realized his error and repented, as well as he could.

When I read or hear the story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah, I remember visiting one of the many watchtowers surrounding the city of Amman. There are about 19 such towers located from 1 mile to 18 miles from the center of the old city center. They may have served as agricultural installations as well as military watchtowers. Each tower is about 60 feet in diameter and 20 feet high. The area within the tower is a living place and has at least two floors of rooms. The current towers date from the Roman times but are built on foundations that date from the time of King David (about 1000 B.C.). I have often thought that one of these towers have been the place where Uriah died as I imagined the Israelites rushing to the tower and fighting with the guards who were stationed there.



Figure 27: Ammonite tower outside Amman (<https://universes.art/en/art-destinations/jordan/amman/museums/ammonite-watchtower>)

End of David's Reign

Following his marriage to Bathsheba, David's family problems grew worse. His son Amnon committed incest with his half-sister, Tamar, and in retaliation Tamar's brother, Absalom, slew Amnon. After some negotiation, Absalom was forgiven by David and returned to court. However, something must have been triggered in Absalom's mind by this incident as he began to curry favor with the people as a replacement for David and secretly form a coalition of troops loyal to him but not to David. Soon a civil war broke out

between David's troops, again headed by Joab, and Absalom's group. During the battle, Absalom's long hair became entangled in the low-hanging branches of a tree, and he was not able to free himself. While hanging from the tree, Joab found him and killed him in spite of the order from David that his son should not be harmed. Joab returned to court and was forgiven by David.

David ordered a census of the population. The people resented it because they saw it as an excuse to estimate taxes and/or a way to initiate conscriptions. The military objective of the census was confirmed when the census was announced in terms of fighting men. The size of the potential army was listed and, as with other very large numbers, the totals are questioned by many scholars. One scholar points out that the term '*elep*' in Hebrew or *alff* in Arabic can be translated as both "thousand" and "fighting unit." Therefore, when the Bible says the size was 300,000 men it could also have meant 300 fighting units which could have been considerably fewer people.⁸⁰

Another of David's many sons, Adonijah, began to form a group to initiate another attempt to wrest the throne from David. As part of his plan, Adonijah held a great feast for his supporters but did not invite some key people, including Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan. It became obvious to Nathan and Bathsheba what Adonijah was planning, and they decided that moment would be a good time to convince David to crown Solomon, Bathsheba's son, as the new king, even while David was still alive. David agreed and Solomon became king, thus cutting off further potential rebellions from other sons (at least while David was alive). The aging David grew weak and could not stay physically warm. He knew that his death was near, and he told Solomon to be strong and follow the commandments of God as written in the law of Moses. He added that this will ensure that there will always be a man from the House of David to lead the people. David cautioned about Joab, a man of violence and suggested some who would be good advisors. David repeatedly told Solomon to act with wisdom. This may have been the impetus for Solomon to ask the Lord for wisdom and to cultivate that attribute. Then, in peacefulness, David died.

Solomon

Consolidation of Power

Once Solomon was on the throne, he began to eliminate his enemies, one by one. He established himself as the absolute authority in the land. Solomon built the temple and gave the people pride of having what some described as the most beautiful building in the world at that time. He insisted that the Jerusalem temple was the only place where sacrifices could be legitimately performed. This required that the entire population come to Jerusalem for their sacred sacrificial obligations.

After consolidating power within his own kingdom, Solomon began to marry daughters of foreign kings, thus improving the ties between his and other empires and kingdoms. He built high places to other gods so that these wives and the many traders and other visitors who came to Jerusalem would have places to worship. All of this increased the influence and wealth of Jerusalem. Solomon also continued to centralize administrative power thus diminishing the power of the tribes. Additionally, he usurped some of the freedom of operation that each of the tribes had enjoyed under the judges. This was especially galling to those in the north, chiefly the tribe of Ephraim who saw themselves as equal in power and authority with Judah.

Over time various parts of the empire began to revolt against the smothering rule from Jerusalem. In addition, both northern Syria and Edom pushed out the Israelite administrators and army and reestablished separate rule. Therefore, by the time that Solomon died, the empire was smaller than the one he inherited from David.



Figure 28: Solomon's temple (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/image/solomons-temple-sam-lawlor-92ca419?lang=eng>)

Division of the Kingdom

Death of Solomon

The ascent of Solomon to the Israelite throne carried on an Israelite tradition that a younger son who was, perhaps, better qualified, would rule rather than always defaulting to the oldest son. This practice had occurred with Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and Reuben, David and Jonathan, and Solomon and other sons of David. It was, therefore, the duty of the incoming king (especially if he was a younger son) to demonstrate that he was capable and worthy of the position of leader. This verification process was especially important in a society that saw itself as tribal and patriarchal. In the time when, under Solomon, David's empire was falling apart, this affirmation of capability was very important.

Therefore, when Solomon died, his son and successor, Rehoboam, who had already been accepted as king of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, traveled to Shechem, a city in the center of the northern tribal areas, to meet with the elders of the northern tribes and, hopefully for him, to demonstrate his capability and be accepted as their king. The northern tribes were uncertain about Rehoboam's capabilities. He was the son of a foreign wife, an Ammonitess, and was untried in war and diplomacy. The people in the north told Rehoboam that Solomon had burdened them excessively (through taxes and oppressive administration) and they wondered if Rehoboam would lighten the level of service required.

Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father, and they counseled that Rehoboam should be a servant to the people and grant their petition. Rehoboam then went to a group of young advisors who he had recruited, and they advised him to take a hard line to demonstrate that he was a strong leader, even stronger than Solomon. Rehoboam sided with the young advisors and proclaimed the hard line to the people. The northern elders denounced Rehoboam and said to the people who had gathered, "Return to your tents." Thus, denying Rehoboam his confirmation. This statement about tents is interesting because most of the Israelites had moved into brick houses by this time but the referral to tents suggests that the old days of tribal living were still strong among the people and still had its roots in their language (1 Kings 12:16).

Separation

The northern people immediately proclaimed Jeroboam, an Ephramite, as their king. He was a hero who had already shown his defiance of the strict administration from Jerusalem and who had recently returned from forced exile in Egypt because of his anti-government activity. The Judean government was never able to force the north to reunite and the division of the tribes became permanent.

The tribes on the eastern side of the river, Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, joined with the break-away northern tribes. They saw little value in the oppressive southern regime and forced centralization of power in Jerusalem. However, the Bible writers saw the situation differently. As expressed in 1 Kings 12:19, “And Israel [the northern kingdom] has sinned against the House of David down to this day.” The sympathies of the Bible authors are strongly Judean biased against the northern kingdom. All worship outside the temple in Jerusalem, whether to Yahweh or some other god, was condemned. The kings of Judah were judged on the basis of their devotion to the religion based in Jerusalem, but the kings of the northern kingdom were universally condemned regardless of religious practice.

As noted previously, the areas of Aram (northern Syria up to Mesopotamia) and Edom had already broken away from Solomonic domination. They probably became completely independent when the Israelite kingdoms broke apart. Some archaeological evidence suggests that Moab and Ammon also became independent at this time. Without their taxes and tribute, the kingdom of Judah experienced severe economic problems. The seaports on the Mediterranean were still controlled by the Philistines and the port on the Red Sea was part of Edom. The overland trade routes were controlled by Edom, Moab, Ammon, and the northern kingdom (now called Israel). These kingdoms expanded at the expense of the Israelite tribes on the east (Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh). The arable land in the kingdom of Judah was limited to a few fertile valleys. As a result, Judah became vulnerable and was successfully attacked and subdued by the Egyptians. Rehoboam was forced to strip precious materials from the temple to pay as a tribute. The Egyptians continued north and also attacked Israel, with good results but did not occupy the land of the north.

In spite of these problems, the house of David ruled Judah continuously for about 340 years.⁸¹ In contrast, the northern kingdom was plagued with assassinations of kings and changes in the ruling house from the beginning.⁸² Even during the chaos of the ruling families of the north, one king, Omri, legitimately bought land in the center of the kingdom and built the city of Samaria that became the capital of the northern kingdom, Israel. It was easily defended, centered in the kingdom, and sat astride two major trade routes.

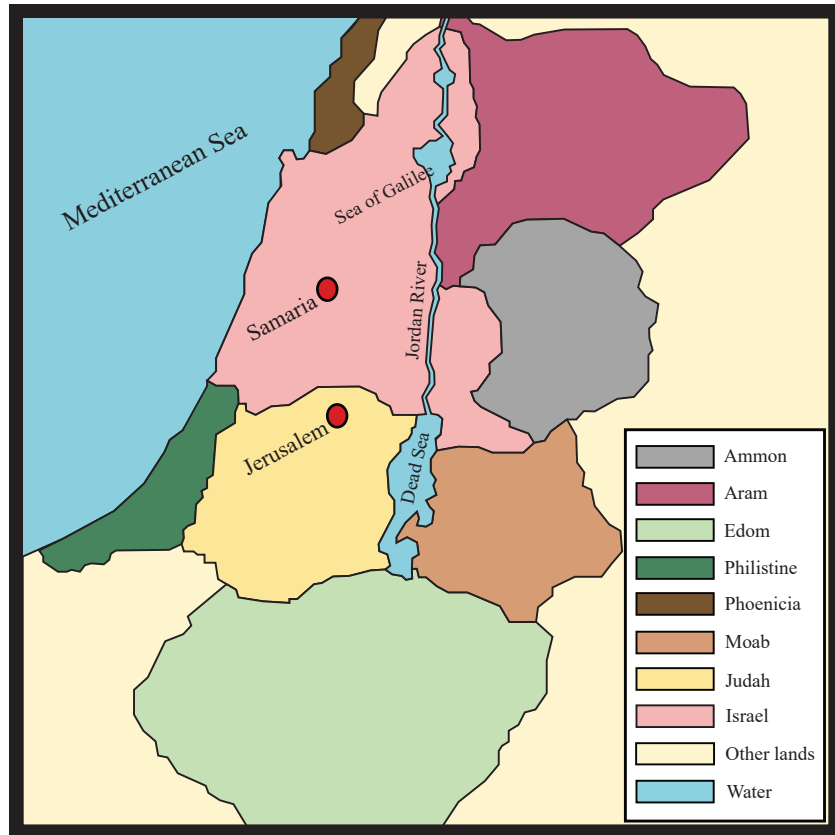


Figure 29: The Levant after the breakup of the united kingdom

Ahab, Elijah, and Elisha

Kings Versus Prophets

Wars continued between the Kingdom of Israel and its eastern neighbors. During the reign of Omri of the northern kingdom, the land of Moab was reconquered so that it was dominated by Omri's son, Ahab. This victory over Moab is not mentioned in the Bible but is known from the Mesha Stele, a stone marker found in the city of Dibon, the capital of Moab. The stele, found in 1868, describes the exploits of the Moab king, Mesha, in attacking Israel. The stele also describes Mesha's victory over the men of Gad even describing how he king tore down the altars of Yahweh.⁸³

The stone may be the earliest archaeological reference to the "House of David." Even though the stone has been damaged, a paper squeeze (an imprint of the face of the stone) was made before the damage and that has proven to be invaluable in discerning the text. (A similar squeeze was also valuable in translating the Rosetta Stone that was found by Napoleon's troops in Egypt in 1799). A photo of the Mesha Stele is shown below.



Figure 30: Mesha Stele (<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/524483>)

Even through King Ahab lost Moab, he proved to be a capable leader in other military and political realms, in spite of the poor religious picture painted of him in the Bible. He recovered lands from the Kingdom of Damascus that had been lost in previous administrations, he established good trade relations with his father-in-law, Jezebel's father, the king of Phoenicia, and even with Damascus to whom he gave generous conditions when he defeated them. He helped organize a coalition to fight the advancement of King Shalmaneser III of Assyria who, in 853 B.C. waged a battle in Syria on his way to Canaan. (Note that this is first date that can be confirmed in the Bible and in external evidences.) Shalmaneser III was successful in the battle and further advances, thus enriching Assyria with much plunder, but the major cities remained intact and after a few years he returned to Assyria and the status of Syria and Israel returned to where it was before his attack.

Elijah

Undoubtedly the major problem of Ahab in the Bible is linked to Jezebel, his wife. Her worship and introduction of Baal into Israel, her reliance on a different set of moral standards, and her blatant use of power to get her own way were abhorrent to the Bible writers and to God's prophet as we see from the actions of Elijah. Elijah was born in Tishbe, a village in the territory of Gad. (I have been to the village and

there is a nice memorial to Elijah on the hill overlooking the village.) Elijah doesn't seem to be concerned with the politics of Ahab, but he was eager to rid Israel of the practice of Baal and to bring the people back into the worship of Yahweh.

Elijah was instructed to announce an upcoming famine to the king and then to go to the River Cherith that is before the Jordan where he would be fed by ravens while the rest of the land experienced a famine. There are several small streams that intermittently flow into the Jordan River and the Cherith was one of these. The cliffs along the eastern edge of the Jordan Valley and in the valleys formed by the streams are filled with caves and would provide excellent locations where someone could hide. When the River Cherith dried up because of the lack of rain, Elijah was instructed to go to the town of Zarephath, generally thought to be a city in Lebanon. There he was cared for by a widow who, although without sufficient flour and oil to make bread, experienced a miraculous continuation of the flour and oil while Elijah was with her. While there he also brought her son back from the dead.

Elijah was then told to go to Ahab. When they met, Elijah asked Ahab to bring the priests of Baal to Mount Carmel where a contest would be held. On Mount Carmel Elijah issued a challenge to the priests to ask Baal to light a stack of wood set up for sacrifice. The priests prayed all day for Baal to light the fire, even cutting themselves to show devotion to Baal, but nothing happened. Then Elijah repaired the altar of Yahweh and set it up for a sacrifice. He then poured water over the altar and repeated the water dousing twice more. Elijah then prayed to God to send fire and the fire (perhaps lightning) came and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the altar, and the water in the trench around the altar. The people fell on their faces and worshiped God. They then seized the priests of Baal and killed them. Elijah then announced to Ahab that the famine would shortly end and, as prophesized, the rains came.

Ahab told Jezebel what happened on Mount Carmel and Jezebel was furious and vowed to kill Elijah. Therefore, Elijah fled to Beersheba in southern Judah where he was fed by an angel. Then, he traveled to the Mountain of God (Horeb) where he found a cave and lived there for 40 days. Elijah was instructed to stand on the mountain. There he heard a great wind and then an earthquake and then a fire. Finally, he heard the sound of a soft gentle blowing. Elijah said that God was not in the earlier phenomena but only in the gentle breeze. (Some people have interpreted these phenomena to indicate that the Mountain of God is a volcano.)

Elijah was then told to travel to Damascus where he would anoint a new king of Damascus and then to the home of Elisha, who would be anointed as Elijah's successor. After some time together, Elijah and Elisha journeyed to Jericho where Elijah struck the Jordan River with his cloak and parted it. They crossed the river and Elisha witnessed Elijah ascend into heaven in a chariot of fire. The local tradition in Jordan is that the place where Elijah ascended to heaven is the same place where Joshua and the Israelites first crossed into Canaan. Both sites are described as being opposite Jericho and there is a good ford in the Jordan River at that location.

Elisha

While Elisha was prophet, the armies of Damascus (Arameans) occupied the Kingdom of Israel. The Aramean captain, Naaman, heard about the prophet Elisha and wondered if the prophet could cure him of leprosy. Naaman went to Elisha's house and Elisha sent a servant to Naaman and told him to go and bathe in the Jordan River seven times and be healed. Naaman was furious that Elisha did not come out to meet with him personally and, further, told him to do such a trivial thing as bathe in the Jordan River. But Naaman's servant said that if the prophet would have asked him to do some great thing, he would have done it. How much more is it advisable to do a simple thing. Naaman reconsidered his anger and went to the river and bathed as Elisha had said. Naaman was healed. Naaman offered Elisha a reward for his service, but Elisha refused anything and Naaman left. Then Elisha's servant decided to profit personally from Naaman, and he

ran after the captain and said that Elisha had reconsidered. Naaman then gave the servant two talents. Upon his return to Elisha's house, Elisha asked the servant where he had been, and the servant confessed that he got money from Naaman. Elisha then said that the leprosy of Naaman would fall upon the servant and that is what happened.

Kingdoms in Chaos

Throughout the ninth and early eighth centuries B.C., the kingdoms of the Levant—Judah, Israel, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Damascus, and Lebanon—formed and broke alliances. They fought against common enemies, and they fought each other. It seemed as though every change of a king in one of the countries brought a realignment and reevaluation of the status of each kingdom.

Throughout all of this chaos and warfare, the counties all became weakened and vulnerable. Israel, in particular, suffered economically and militarily, partly because there was no continuity of leadership in the land. Kings were assassinated and new ruling houses rose frequently. By the middle of the eighth century B.C., the tribal lands east of the Jordan River—Reuben, Gad, and eastern Manasseh—all ceased to exist. The lands were part of other kingdoms and the people had either moved to the western side of the Jordan River or had established themselves under non-Israelite rule. All the tribes of the Kingdom of Israel were, essentially and outwardly, confined to only northern Canaan.

Chapter 7: Empire Invasions

Assyrians

Beginnings of Empires

The Assyrians, with their homeland in northern Mesopotamia, expanded throughout eastern Syria and Anatolia (central Turkey today) and eventually subdued all of Mesopotamia—Babylonia to the south and Urartu to the north. In the early 8th century B.C., the Assyrians expanded southward and won battles in southern Syria and northern Israel against King Ahab. He was part of a coalition of 12 small kingdoms that were united to attempt to stop the Assyrians. The Assyrians were partially successful in these battles, did some looting, and soon withdrew into their own homeland.

In the middle of the 8th century B.C. a new king in Assyria, Tiglathpileser III (sometimes called Pul), changed the way Assyria dealt with conquered kingdoms. In the past, the Assyrians would make incursions into a country, gather booty, round up a large group of slaves, exact whatever tribute they could get quickly, and go home. To reconquer the state, the Assyrians would have to start all over again with another campaign. Tiglathpileser began a new policy of incorporating the conquered territory into the empire as a province, establishing an administration that was often characterized by cruelty to conquered inhabitants, and extracting the riches of the conquered land more leisurely. Obviously, the territory under Assyrian control was greatly expanded. Many historians consider this widespread control to constitute an empire and consider Assyria to be the first real empire in which they retained and administered conquered territories.

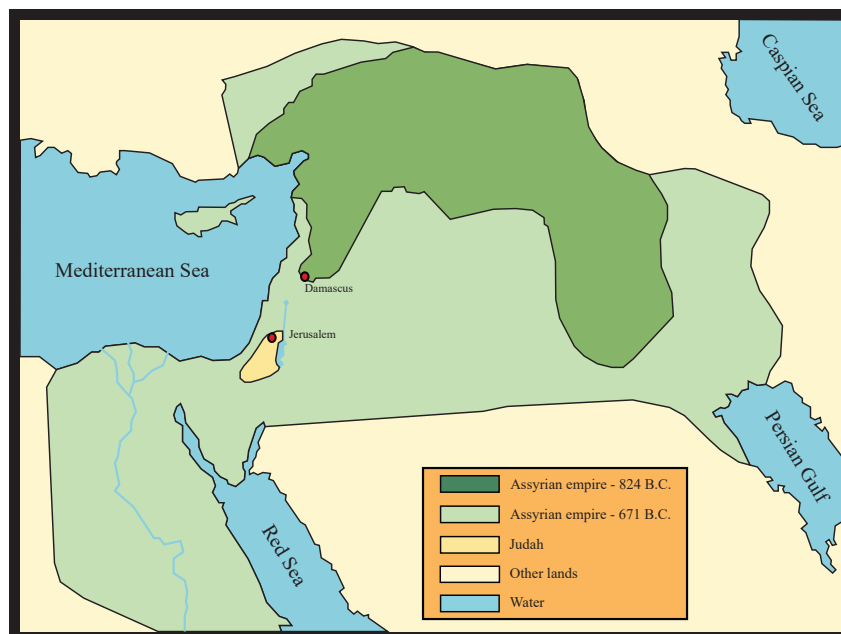


Figure 31: Assyrian empires

Among its achievements, Assyria's military was superb. The army specialized in siege warfare and chariot combats and was ruthless in their treatment of conquered cities. Imperial highways and extensive support staff made the military and communications networks very effective. The entire Assyrian society seemed to

focus on warfare and used hunting as a training ground. This is seen in the Assyrian walls on display in the British Museum and other places.



Figure 32: Assyrian hunting party

(https://www.google.com/search?q=assyrian+hunting+scenes&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwihqimpsv_AhVGB0QIHxjyCbgQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=assyrian+hunting+scenes&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzoHCAAQGBCABDoHCAAQigUQQzoKCAAQigUQsQMQQzoICAAQgAQQsQM6BQgAEIAEOgYIABA)

King Hezekiah and the Assyrians

The rulers who followed Tiglathpileser III followed his policy. The Assyrians conquered all of the Levant including the kingdoms east and west of the Jordan River except some parts of the Kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem, the capital, was besieged but not taken. The reason for Jerusalem's survival depends on who is telling the story. In the Bible, the records state that the "angel of the Lord smote 185,000 Assyrians in the camp" (2 Kings 19:35). However, the Assyrian records state that the Judean king, Hezekiah, was trapped "like a bird in a cage" and surrendered and paid a heavy tribute. Others suggest that the Assyrians were struck by a disease while others suggest that they simply ran out of time with an approaching winter and had to return home. Whichever is the case, Hezekiah remained in power and some of his kingdom remained separate from the rest of the Assyrian empire. Eventually, even Egypt was incorporated into the empire.

Another factor in the survival of Jerusalem was the tunnel built under Hezekiah's orders that connected a spring outside the walls of Jerusalem with a pool inside the walls, thus providing a secret flow of water into the city during the siege. The tunnel was found by explorers in the 19th century complete with an inscription telling how the tunnel was made. The workers began at opposite ends and met in the middle with amazing accuracy, especially because the watercourse is not a straight line but follows an S-shaped path.⁸⁴ I have walked through the waterway (called Hezekiah's Tunnel or the Siloam Tunnel) and it is truly amazing. It is about six feet high and about three feet wide. The water level varies but when I walked through, it was about three feet deep. I enjoyed the experience and would recommend it to visitors to Jerusalem.

A later Assyrian king was killed in a battle in 705 B.C. and that gave Judah enough courage to join an anti-Assyrian coalition with Lebanon, Edom, and Moab. The coalition was defeated and forced to pay tribute but Hezekiah, the king of Judah, was allowed to retain his throne. The verdict on Hezekiah in the Bible is very positive. He put an end to high places and other pagan practices.

The Kingdom of Ammon under Assyria

You might have noticed from the previous paragraph that the Kingdom of Ammon did not participate in the revolt against Assyria that included Judah, Lebanon, Edom, and Moab. The likely reason was that for years the Kingdom of Ammon had good working relations with Assyria through trade along the King's Highway. When Assyria began to expand, Ammon's position as a buffer between Assyria's trade and the harsh and powerful Arabian tribes to the east of Ammon further enhanced the good relations between Ammon and Assyria.

Archaeology informs us that at this time the Kingdom of Ammon seemed to prosper before and during the occupation by Assyria and was quite unique among the small states within the Levant. The Ammonites had their own language and script, worshiped their own chief deity, Milkom, who is mentioned in the Bible, and created a large number of stone statues (about 40) that seem to be unique in the Levant. It is difficult to know who the statues represent, if anyone in particular, because only one statue has an inscription. That statue is identified as a king who lived in the seventh century B.C.—the time of the Assyrian dominance. He is seen holding a lotus close to his chest, a diadem form of headgear, and the Ammonite robe—a two-piece garment consisting of a broad scarf with decorated border and a belted skirt that hangs below the knee.⁸⁵



Figure 33: Ammonite stone statue of a king from the Assyrian period

Some of the statues have been assumed to represent gods as identified by their unique headgear: a conical crown with a broad top and side volutes. Similar headgear has been used in other Middle Eastern countries to represent gods.

The Ammonite kingdom's prosperity can be inferred from the significant increase in the number of towns and villages that were settled during this period. The statues were an expression of the kingdom's wealth and connections. It was the only southern Levantine kingdom that never rebelled against Assyria and always reliably paid tribute.⁸⁶

Demise of the Kingdom of Israel

We are told that the Assyrians took a high tribute from King Menahem of the Kingdom of Israel who taxed every landowner 50 shekels of silver to pay the Assyrians. The heavy taxes were a burden, and the Kingdom of Israel joined a coalition to drive the Assyrians from the entire land. The Assyrians wiped out the coalition and placed Hoshea on the throne of the Kingdom of Israel as a puppet ruler. When Hoshea defaulted on the tax payment and sought Egyptian help against the Assyrians, the Assyrian army returned, besieged and destroyed Samaria, the Israelite capital. More than 27,000 Israelites were deported at one time and surely many others fled southward to Judah as refugees and eastward into Ammon. This deportation marks the end of the Kingdom of Israel. The ten tribes of the Kingdom of Israel ceased to have a definite identity and are now known as the "Lost Ten Tribes."

The deportation of people to Assyria occurred over an extended period from 734 B.C. when the invasion began to at least 722 B.C. when Samaria was destroyed and continued to at least 715 B.C.⁸⁷

The deportation of the tribes of the northern kingdom is pictured in reliefs from Nimrud and in a fragmentary Assyrian inscription. Some deportees seemed to have been treated very well; most were treated terribly. A person's fate depended on his or her prior status and skills. Some were used in the military, sometimes forming their own units. Others became domestic servants. Still others who could write were integrated into the imperial administration. Most of the deportees, however, became slaves.

The archaeological record from digs in Galilee confirms the deportation of the local population. The Galilee reached the height of its population and development in the time of Kings David and Solomon and then there was a slow decrease in activity and then a gap in inhabitation and evidence of destruction. The destruction and evacuation of the region almost certainly resulted from the large-scale campaigns carried out by the Assyrians. These findings are confirmed by Assyrian records.

About a century later, the population of Galilee began to rise again. The most significant portion of the new settlers appears to have come from Phoenicia, based on the design of their pottery.⁸⁸ However, people from east of the Jordan River and from Judah were also present in the inward migration.

Samaritans and Religion

All during their supremacy, the Assyrians continued to move people between provinces and back to Assyria. The Bible suggests that some Elamites (Syrians) were moved to Samaria (Ezra 4:9-10).⁸⁹ People from the east were also moved into Samaria, perhaps even as a reward for the friendly Ammonites. Thus, Samaria became a melting pot of people from many different areas. Some may have been returnees from Assyria.

The newcomers to Samaria felt the need for something to give them unity and purpose. They turned to the local religion, worship of Yahweh, as they believed that only the god of a particular area could be effective in that area. (Each country at that time had their own god.) Accordingly, they wanted a legitimate Yahweh priest to teach them the religion of Yahweh. A Yahweh priest was found among the deportees in Assyria and was returned to Samaria. However, many other priests (not of the priestly tribe) were eventually chosen from all strata of life and ethnicity. This was one of the factors that led to condemnation of the Samaritans by

those in Judah. The Samaritans also built many high places where sacrifices could be made and, according to the Bible, mixed pagan practices into the religion.⁹⁰

I am intrigued by the biblical story of Jonah and his connection to the Assyrians. God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. Probably because of the reputation of the Assyrians as ruthless and cruel, Jonah was frightened and got on a ship heading away from Nineveh. In the midst of a storm at sea, Jonah was thrown overboard, swallowed by a big fish, and was coughed up on the shore. He then repented and went to Nineveh to preach the religion of Yahweh.

If Jonah went there after the fall of the Kingdom of Israel, he might have been asked to preach to the deported Israelites and the people who lived around them. This is all speculation since the timing of the Book of Jonah is unknown, but the text of Jonah clearly coincides with the time of the deportees. Moreover, at that time, Nineveh was the greatest city in the world and, perhaps, that was part of the lesson to be learned—God loves all people wherever they are.⁹¹ It may also indicate that Yahweh is the God of all people everywhere and not just the God of the Israelite/Jewish people and is not limited to a single geographical area as was the common belief of the time among the pagan gods.

Assyria Begins to Fall

Beginning about 630 B.C. with the death of Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian empire began to disintegrate. Babylonia (in southern Mesopotamia) reawaked and joined with the Medes (people from northern Iran) and Scythians (people from central Iran) to reconquer Mesopotamia. The Assyrian capital, Nineveh, fell in 612 B.C. and that quickly led to a collapse of the entire empire. The Assyrians seemed to have overextended.

Babylonians

New Conquerors from Mesopotamia

The new dynasty rising in southern Mesopotamia was called Chaldean or Neo-Babylonian and, in union with the Medes, they crushed the Assyrians. This coalition was reinforced by the marriage of the Babylonian crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar, with a Median princess. The numerous lands that were under Assyrian control had not yet developed their own armies and political infrastructure and were ripe for Babylonian conquest. The coalition of Babylon and Media sensed this opportunity and moved quickly throughout the old Assyrian empire. All the Assyrian territory was retaken with Media being awarded northern Mesopotamia and with Babylon getting southern Mesopotamia and Syria, including the lands in Jordan and Canaan. A new empire was forming as Babylon gained power. This empire was to have major effect on the lives of the Judean people and their religion.

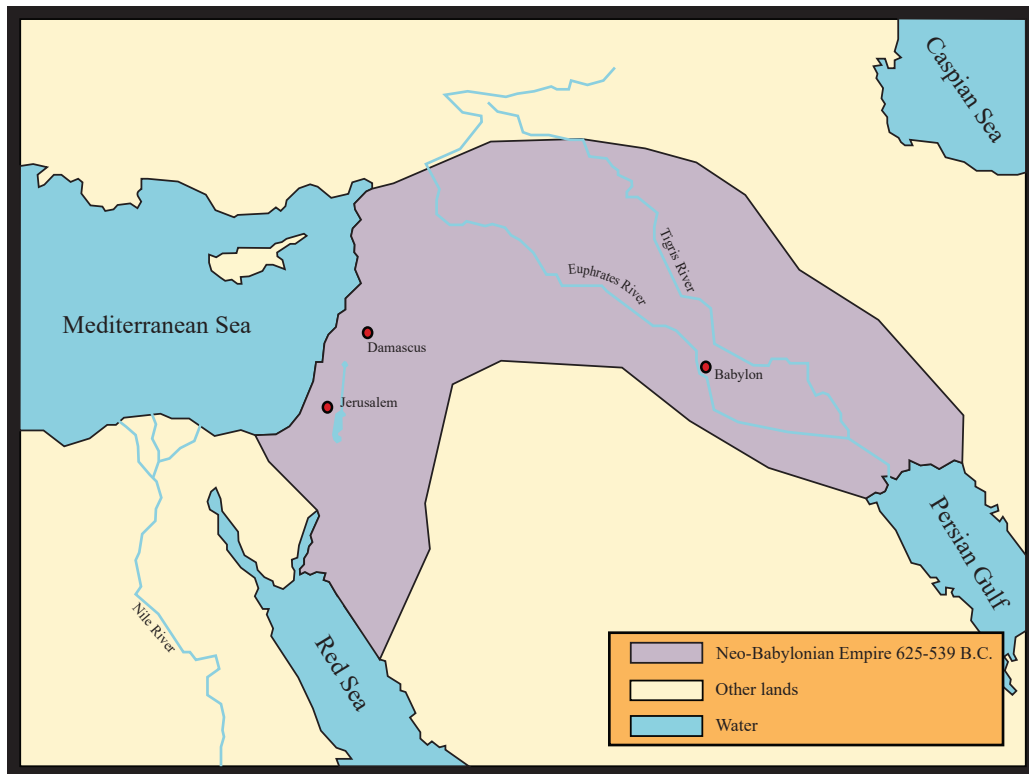


Figure 34: Neo-Babylonian Empire

Rocky Record of the Babylonians in Jordan

One of the Babylonian kings who overthrew the Assyrians was Nabonidus and he chose a promontory called Sela (the “rock”) to leave a testimony of his military exploits in Edom. The rock face is approximately 10-by-6.5 foot in area and the inscription is in cuneiform. There is also a relief of Nabonidus holding a staff in his right hand, while lifting his left hand to his mouth in a well-known Mesopotamian gesture of prayer. Sela is known from the Bible as the Edomites’ mountain stronghold (2 Kings 14:7) and is surrounded by deep ravines making it strategically defensible.⁹² On the top of the rock are ruins of several rock-cut houses and more than a hundred structures related to water management. The pottery in the area indicated the site had been occupied during the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C and then later during the Nabatean time (fourth century B.C. to first century A.D.) and then again in Mamluk and Ottoman periods (seventh to twentieth centuries A.D.).

Using a sophisticated tripod and rope arrangement, the archaeologist who explored the site in 2014 to 2018 (Rocío Da Riva) was able to translate the text, determine how the inscription was made, and suggest why it was carved in that highly inaccessible location. By examining the entire face of the rock, the exploration team found many small holes into which the ends of poles or beams from a scaffolding could be inserted. Further, the rock’s surface had been chiseled at certain places, probably to adjust beams or platforms to support the scaffolding. They also found that a series of rock-cut stairs was the only access to the site, thus providing an easily defensible fortress. It was an ideal place for a conquering king to leave a message of strength and give anyone thinking about attacking something to consider as a deterrent.⁹³



Figure 35: Studying the Sela inscription (<https://www.baslibrary.org/images/bsba4506020021jpg>)

Nebuchadnezzar II

Upon assuming the throne in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar II began a period of architectural activity in the capital city of Babylon. He rebuilt the entire imperial complex including a ziggurat (pyramidal temple) and the famous Ishtar gate (now housed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin). He is also credited with the construction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, named one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The word “hanging” comes from a Greek word meaning overhanging and refers to the many trees, shrubs, and other plants that were planted on the terraces and spilled over the side so that the entire structure seemed like a large green mountain. As I once worked for a drip irrigation company, I have always thought that the terraces might have been the place where drip irrigation engineering originated, and that efficient use of water was part of the wonder of the gardens.



Figure 36: Ishtar gate of Babylon (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar_Gate)

Nebuchadnezzar was the king who attacked and conquered the Kingdom of Judah, including the destruction of the temple, and took many of the elite to Babylon. Therefore, within a little over a century (721 B.C. to 586 B.C.) both the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah were destroyed. As destroyers, the Assyrians and Babylonians had much in common. But the periods following their conquests were very different. While the Assyrians left a clear imprint of their extended presence in Samaria, there is little archaeological evidence of any Babylonian presence in Judah after the destruction of the temple. When Nebuchadnezzar first put Jerusalem under siege, the city quickly capitulated, thereby avoiding general destruction. But, a few years later, in response to a revolt by Judah's King Zedekiah, King Nebuchadnezzar's army conducted an 18-month siege that was concluded by a capitulation of the people and subsequent destruction of the temple and city walls. The siege has been confirmed by much archaeological evidence. But there is little evidence of any occupation by Babylonians.⁹⁴

The pattern of destruction and then absence of occupation was also true in the Arabah Valley (south of the Dead Sea), the Jordan River Valley, along the coasts of the Dead Sea, throughout central Judah, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and even up to the source of the Jordan River north of the Sea of Galilee. Moreover, during that time when no occupation was evident, no evidence has been discovered of any town being destroyed and no evidence of any conquered town being resettled. There is a lack of pottery sherds, suggesting that trade and other parts of the economy stopped after the destruction. A Babylonian cuneiform tablet discovered in Edom and dated after the Babylonian period, said that activity along the King's Highway had recommenced, thus suggesting that during the Babylonian time no or little activity was done on the highway.

This absence of occupation should be compared to the Assyrian presence in the Kingdom of Israel. After their conquest, the Assyrians established several provinces in Israel as attested by four stone memorial stelae. Many Assyrian administrative tablets have also been found throughout the area. Several Assyrian-style gates and fortifications were built and even the style of houses changed from the typical four-room house of the Levant to the open-court style of Mesopotamia. The Assyrians even influenced the burial customs as demonstrated by a unique style of coffins found at sites in the Northern Kingdom where Assyria was in control.⁹⁵

The difference between the Assyrian conquest and occupation versus the Babylonian is stark. We might ask why. In my opinion, the Assyrians were trying to establish a long-term empire so that they could extract taxes and other benefits from the conquered territories. This meant rebuilding what had been destroyed and repopulating the area with new inhabitants to take the place of the deported native population. The Babylonians, on the other hand, seemed to only want booty and slaves. They looted the cities and took the people back to Babylonia with little thought of the conquered lands left desolate.

Lasting Effects from the Babylonian Captivity

If the Babylonians did not occupy the land, how did their conquest have such a major effect on the Jewish people and religion? The answer is in what they destroyed and who they took back to Babylon. When the temple was destroyed, the Judeans, both those who remained in the former Kingdom of Judah, and those who were transported to Babylon, had to re-evaluate some key features of their religion. When the temple was functioning, the Jews obtained forgiveness of sins only with temple ordinances. With the temple gone, some other way to obtain salvation was needed.

The new concept for salvation was based on an incident in the life of King Saul as reported in 1 Samuel 15:13-23. Saul had won a great victory over the Amalekites and even though he had been commanded to kill all the people and all the livestock, some livestock remained. When Samuel asked Saul why he didn't follow the command exactly, Saul responded that the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to serve as sacrifices to the Lord. Then Samuel said, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The Judeans reasoned that in the absence of the temple, the laws of God could still be kept and, in fact, keeping the laws is more important than temple sacrifices. Therefore law-keeping is a legitimate way to salvation.

It then became very important that the Jews knew the commandments (law) and a major effort commenced to write the Bible (Scribes were introduced) and study the scriptures (Pharisees/rabbis were introduced). Prayer also gained importance. This fundamental change of religious practice and focus has been described as a change from the Israelite religion to the Jewish religion.

Another modification in the lives of Judeans came in their concept of God. Until the exile to Babylon, the Judeans and most other people, believed that gods were territorial. That is, they were affiliated with a particular land and were only worshiped in that land. But with the transfer to Babylon, the Judeans came to view God as a universal being who could be worshipped anywhere. This concept diminished the exclusivity of a promised land, but also allowed Judeans to move to other lands and still be faithful to Yahweh.

Another change was the assimilation of large numbers of Judeans into Babylonian culture. While some of the displaced Judeans were eager to return, others heeded the prophet Jeremiah who exhorted Judah's exiles to build houses, plant gardens, marry, and have families—to engage in activities that would assure the stability and continuity of life and community in a foreign land (Jeremiah 29:5-7).⁹⁶ The Judeans in Babylon even began to speak and write in Aramaic, the local language. What about the people who remained in Judah? Sadly, most of the elite were taken and the people left behind showed little tendency to rebuild their society. They were probably anxiously awaiting and hoping for the return of the captives. Even after the return, many Judeans remained in Babylon, and it became a major center for Jewish thought and culture.

Effect of the Babylonian Conquest on People East of the Jordan River

So, what happened to the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites when the Babylonians invaded? The Babylonians occupied these land but did not destroy their cities as happened when they wiped out Judah. Little direct information was available about the lands on the eastern side of the Jordan River until some of

the mounds in Jordan were explored. Before that time, historians just assumed that the history on the east was similar to the history on the west.

Data from several archaeological sites in Jordan indicates that the Ammonites did not disappear with the Babylonian invasion, but instead flourished right through it and into the Persian period. The archaeological record reflects little or no break in the material remains east of the Jordan at the time of the Babylonian captivity of Judah. There is no evidence for a period of vacancy and stagnation as there was in Judah. Instead, there is strong evidence of the emergence of a distinctive Ammonite culture with unique types of pottery, some with inscribed writing in an Ammonite language. The language is similar to Hebrew but has some Arabic words that were likely introduced because of the Ammonite nearness to the Arab tribes to their east. There was even evidence that the Ammonites developed a unique way of writing the Canaanite alphabetic script. Another evidence of the continuation of Ammonite society was seen in the existence of some buildings that had basements, a rare occurrence in the Levant and an indication of the public use of these buildings. The dates of use of these buildings has been determined to have begun about the time of the Babylonian occupation and to have continued through Babylonian times and into the Persian period.

The importance of these buildings and their confirmation of its Ammonite nature was further confirmed with the discovery of a seal that was shown to belong to a high official of the Ammonite royal court. The name on the seal was identified as Baalis, an Ammonite king identified by Jeremiah as living in the early part of the Babylonian period (Jeremiah 40:14).⁹⁷ Ammonite culture continued unscathed, and the Ammonites prospered right through the sixth century B.C. and on into the Persian period, perhaps as late as the fourth century B.C., based on potsherds that look very close to Hellenistic vessels. Although outsiders no doubt exercised suzerainty over the area, the basic Ammonite culture, including language and pottery techniques, continued just as it had been when Ammon was independent.⁹⁸

There has not been the same level of thorough archaeology in Moab and in Edom as in Ammon, but scholars believe that these people also persisted in their own culture and on their own land through the Babylonian period.

Persians

Cyrus the Great

In 539 B.C. a major change occurred when a king in Persia attacked and conquered the city of Babylon without a single arrow being shot. The Persian king was Cyrus I (the Great) and he cleverly diverted enough of the Euphrates River, the river on which Babylon was built, so that the Persian army could wade into the city without being detected. The concealment was also aided because the day chosen for the attack was a religious holiday and the Babylonians were focused elsewhere.

With the fall of the Babylonian capital, the rest of the empire, including the lands east and west of the Jordan River, quickly fell to the Persians. This began the first Persian or Achaemenid Empire. They brought an attitude toward conquered lands that was vastly different from the Babylonians. Instead of abandoning the lands, the Persians wanted each area to be populated with natives and to be a long-term economic contributor to the Persian Empire. Hence, Cyrus I proclaimed to the Judeans in Babylon that they could return to Judah and that they could reestablish their society and religion, including rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. About 40,000 people accepted the invitation and returned. These people rebuilt the walls of the city and restored the temple. The governor of the territory at that time was Zerubbabell and it is by his name that this second temple is called, at least until it was remodeled at the time of Herod.

There was friction between the returning Judeans and the Samaritans, their neighbors to the north. The aggressive and devout leader of the Judeans, Nehemiah, disliked the Samaritans for their intermarriage with non-Israelites and their denial of Jerusalem as the only place where a temple could be built. Nehemiah also enforced religious observances, such as closing shops on the Sabbath, and that action further separated the conforming Judeans from the more liberal Samaritans. It was, therefore, during this time that the antagonism and separation between the two groups grew to be very strong and bitter.⁹⁹

Expansion of the Persian Empire

The son of Cyrus the Great, Cambyses, continued to expand Persian influence and was able to destroy a resisting Egyptian army. Cambyses was declared to be a pharaoh and Egypt became a province of Persia. In Egypt, the Persians found a large Judean community that had fled Judah when Nebuchadnezzar threatened Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah had cautioned against going to Egypt but eventually he also followed them. The Judean colony was in the far southern end of Egypt on an island in the Nile called Elephantine. Because the refugees in Egypt constructed a temple on the island, some scholars believe that some of the people living there were descended from people who left the northern Kingdom of Israel who allowed temples to be built outside Jerusalem. Whatever their origin, this colony remained in place for many decades and provided much wisdom for the Jewish people.

The Persian Dynasty established a successful centralized, bureaucratic administration and a good road system and postal system. It also organized a large professional army to provide the means to expand the empire. Over the ensuing years the empire expanded into Central Asia, Anatolia (Turkey), and beyond Egypt to Libya and Ethiopia.

This is the time when the Book of Esther is set. (Many scholars doubt that the story of Esther relates a real historical event. The book was not included in the original versions of the Hebrew Bible and, therefore, is considered by many to not be scriptural.)¹⁰⁰ The story of Esther is about a Persian king who sought to marry and held a beauty contest to choose the lucky bride. Esther, a lovely Jewish woman, won the contest and became the wife of the king—Xerxes. However, Esther's uncle, Mordecai, drew the anger of Haman, the second in command of the Persian state. Mordecai would not bow down to Haman and extrapolated his anger toward all Jewish people. Haman issued an order that all Jews are to be killed. But Haman didn't know that Esther was a Jew and therefore when Esther intervened with King Xerxes on behalf of her people, Haman was the one that was to be killed and the Jewish people were saved.

The Persians wanted to dominate sea trade just as they had dominated the land. They saw the power of the Greeks in sea trade, especially the dominance of Athens, and decided to use both sea power and their huge army to subdue the Greeks. A series of emperors crossed the Dardanelles and attacked Greece and Macedonia, scoring some victories yet also suffering some defeats. The Persian Empire was likely the largest the world had known up to the time when it reached its maximum size, about 500 B.C. However, the incursions into Europe proved to be the downfall of the Persian Empire.

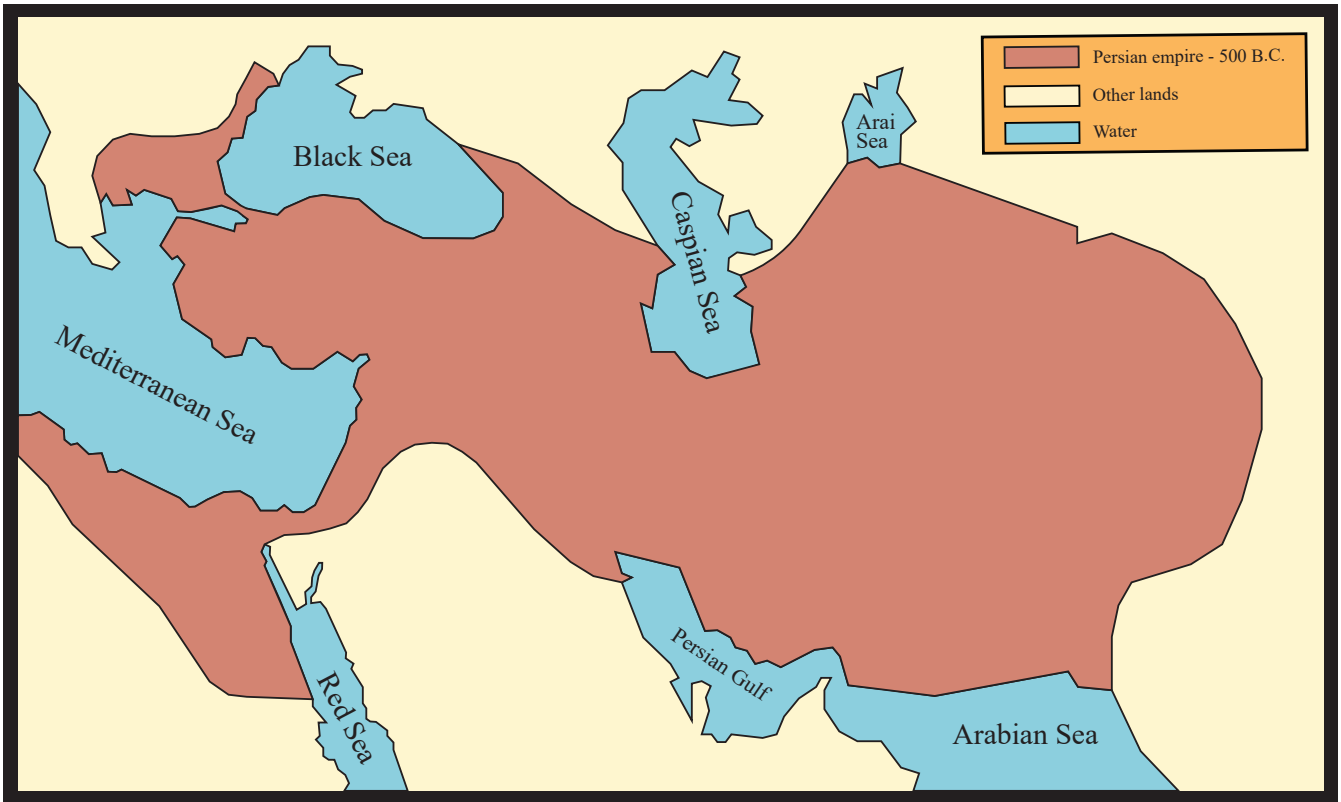


Figure 37: Persian (Achaemenid) Empire about 500 B.C.

Chapter 8: Greeks

Early Greece

A Trade-based Society

Greece is a mountainous peninsula of limited arable land that extends southward from the southeastern corner of Europe plus many islands that are scattered across much of the eastern Mediterranean Sea. This geography led early Greeks to become traders, seafarers, and merchants. They built up a strong navy, both for commercial purposes and for warfare to protect their commercial interests. Most of the major cities along the coast of Greece and on the islands were trading ports. They also established outposts, chiefly in Anatolia (modern day Turkey), initially as trading ports and as agricultural centers to grow materials for trade.

They fought a war against Troy, a Greek-speaking kingdom located in Anatolia near the entrance to the Dardanelles (entrance to the Black Sea), ostensibly over a runaway wife named Helen but probably equally motivated by commercial considerations. By defeating Troy, the Greeks gained access to the Black Sea. As their trading empire grew, they established new outposts along the coasts of the Black Sea partially motivated by legends of the Golden Fleece that could be found along the southern Black Sea coast. With great prosperity they expanded westward and established trading centers on Sicily and on the coast of Italy. By about 400 B.C. this trading empire was a major force throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

The initial trading competition came from Phoenicia (Lebanon) who established trading outposts along the Canaanite coast and along the northern coast of Africa, the largest of these outposts being at Carthage (Tunis), and along the Spanish coast. Phoenicia, also called the Sea People, dominated trade in the western Mediterranean through their colony at Carthage.

Greek-Persian Wars

When the Persians established their empire, around 550 B.C. and onward, they also became a major competitor to the Greeks. Some trouble arose among the Greek outpost cities in Ionia, a province within Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), but the rebellion was crushed when the Persian army went there. However, the Persians saw the commercial and cultural success of Greece, suspected a connection between the Ionian outposts and the Greek mainland, and they decided to invade mainland Greece. The Persians crossed the Dardanelles, marched around the top of the Aegean Sea, and struck at Greece from the north. This Persian invasion was repulsed 26 miles north of Athens at Marathon and the Persians returned to Persia.

A generation later, the Persians invaded again and were successful in defeating the Greeks at Thermopylae despite a valiant stand by 500 Spartans. The Persians advanced southward and captured the evacuated Athens. The Persian navy wanted to complete the conquest of Greece with a major naval victory and sailed to engage the Greek fleet that had gathered off the coast of the island of Salamis. In the ensuing battle that occurred in the cramped spaces of the strait, the smaller and more maneuverable Greek ships were able to rout the Persian navy. (I am reminded of the victory of the English over the Spanish armada.)

The Persian emperor, Xerxes, who had led the invasion became discouraged and left with a small contingent of the Persian army. The remainder of the army stayed to complete the conquest of the entire Greek peninsula. However, the following year, 479 B.C., the Greek army was able to defeat the Persian army at the battle of Plataea and the Persian invasion was thwarted. The Persian army retreated back to Persia.

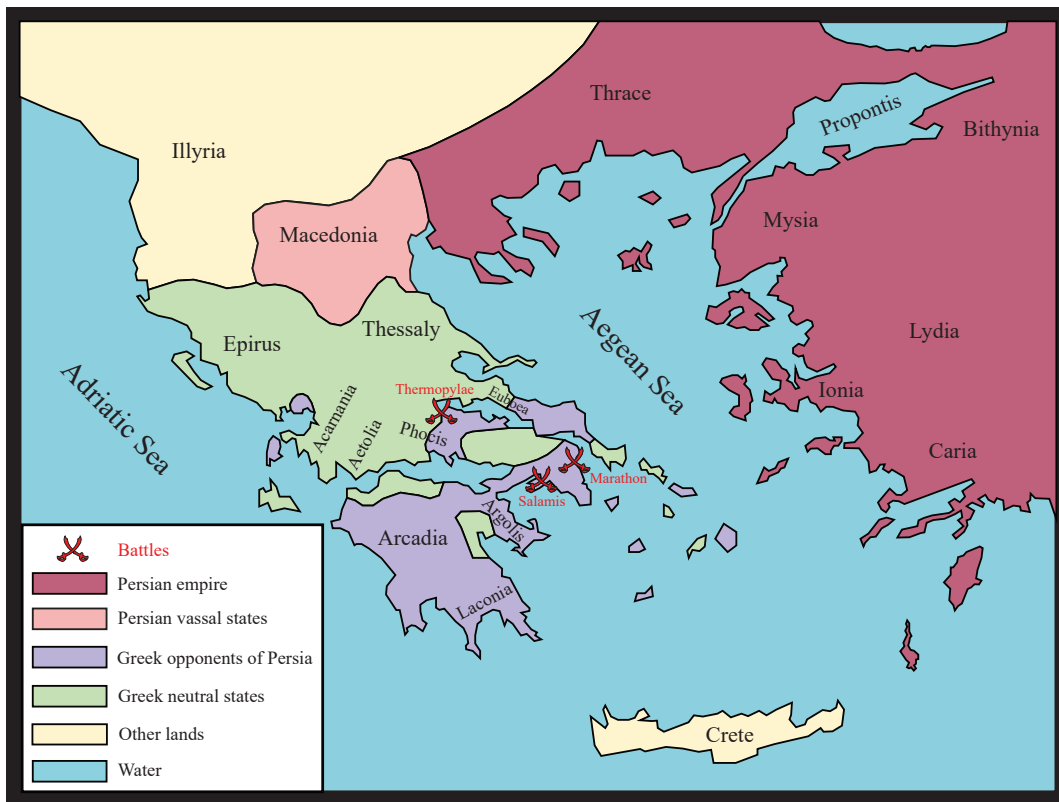


Figure 38: Greek-Persian Wars

Greek Golden Age and Decline

After the Persian Wars, Greece entered its Golden Age with the administration of Pericles in Athens and the burst of building, art, philosophy, and drama that became a standard throughout history. This Athenian cultural excellence spread into surrounding Greek city-states, to Greek colonies around the Mediterranean, and even into the Greek-speaking kingdoms surrounding Greece. In particular, the king of Macedonia, directly north of Greece, invited Aristotle, a native Macedonian who had been educated in Athens by Plato, to return to Macedonia and teach his son, Alexander. There had been a disagreement between Aristotle and Plato, so Aristotle agreed and went to Macedonia and taught Alexander for about two years.

Some wars between the Greek city-states, called the Peloponnesian War, weakened Greek armies and navies, and seemed to invite invasion. Shortly after Aristotle's return to Athens where he founded a rival school to Plato's, King Phillip of Macedonia recognized the Greek military weakness. He invaded and conquered all of Greece and used Alexander as one of his generals. Shortly after his final victory, Phillip was assassinated, and Alexander became king of Macedonia and Greece.

Alexander the Great

Invasion of Persia

Alexander saw the continuing military threat and trade competition from the Persians and decided to invade the Persian Empire. Alexander not only led the combined armies of Macedonia and the Greek city-states; he also took a large contingent of scientists and historians who advised him and noted interesting things they saw throughout the campaign. The presence of these scientists was, I believe, a reflection of Alexander's training under Aristotle. (The presence of scientists on a military campaign also reminds me of Napoleon's

Chapter 8: Greeks

invasion of Egypt in 1799 when he took scientists along who made several important discoveries of Egyptian artefacts, including the Rosetta Stone. Napoleon was deliberately emulating Alexander.)

Alexander crossed the Dardanelles and entered Asia Minor where he won major battles against the Persians at Granicus and Issus while taking time to visit the site of the Trojan War (Ilium) and to cut the Gordian Knot at Gordium. (Legend said that whoever could undo the Gordian knot would rule the world. Alexander simply cut the knot and claimed that the legend had been fulfilled in himself.)

The Greek army (called Greek because the Macedonians adopted Greek culture and the number of Greeks in the army may have been larger than the number of Macedonians) followed the Mediterranean coast into Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) and fought a major battle at Tyre where the locals resisted his demands and suffered the consequences of a long siege and subsequent destruction of the city. The Greeks continued south into Egypt with little resistance. In Egypt Alexander founded the city of Alexandria as a trading port and, later, a major city of learning. It became the capital of Egypt under the Greeks. While in Egypt, Alexander went into the desert to an oasis (Ammon) to visit a seer who told him that his real father was Zeus. Alexander was also crowned as a pharaoh, thus adding to his belief that he was divine.

The Greek army then turned northeastward and marched through Jordan, probably along the King's Highway. He was welcomed as a liberator from the Persian overlords throughout Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. When he reached Mesopotamia, he encountered the Persian army just outside the city of Arbela (near present-day Irbil in northern Iraq—a part of Kurdistan) at a site known as Gaugamela. There he used the same battle tactic that had proven successful at Issus in Turkey against the Persians—a rapid cavalry charge directly toward the tent of Darius III, the Persian ruler. As happened previously, Darius fled to avoid capture and the Persian troops surrendered.

Later, Darius was killed by his own guard (probably because of his obvious cowardice). Alexander continued eastward and secured all of the Persian territory in Ariana and Bactria. Although Alexander wanted to cross into and conquer India, his troops resisted and forced Alexander to order a march back into the heartland of Persia. Throughout this eastward excursion, additional trading centers were established with 20 of them called Alexandria. He never lost a battle.

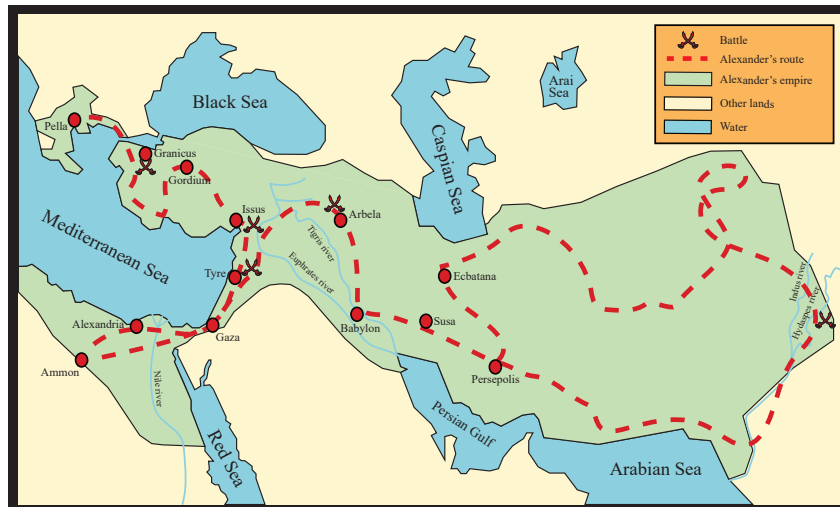


Figure 39: Alexander's conquest of Persia

After Alexander—Hellenism

The Hellenistic Age

Shortly after arriving back in Babylonia, Alexander contracted an illness and died. His death was followed by a 40-year period of chaos where his generals fought against each other for supreme leadership. The empire was finally divided between his principal generals as shown in the map below.

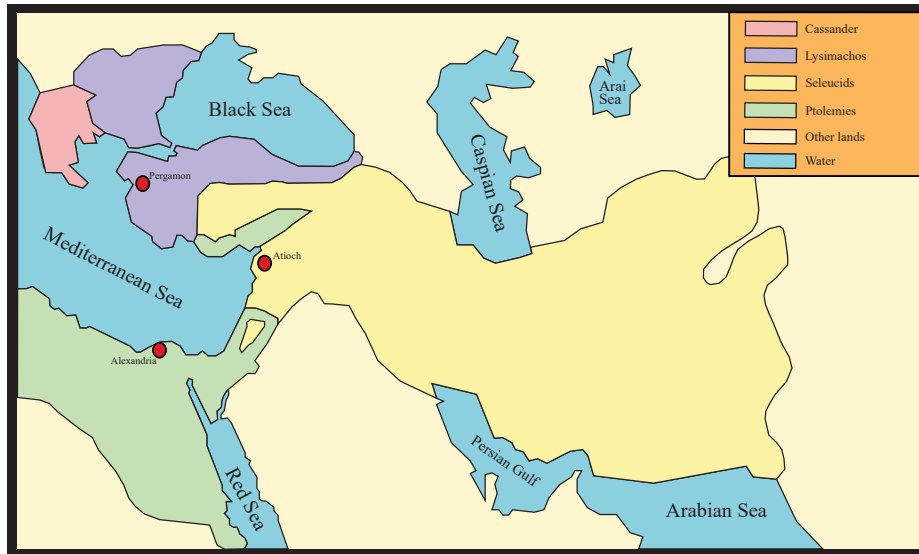


Figure 40: Division of Alexander's empire

Continuing border disputes among the generals and their successors over the next 250 years led to a frequent shifting of governance of control over the Levant. Most of the time it was controlled by the Seleucids who also governed Asia. Sometimes it came under the governance of the Ptolemies who controlled Egypt.

The establishment of Greek control over the Persian Empire began what historians have called the Hellenistic Period. (*Hella* is the Greek word for Greece.) This period lasted until the rise of Augustus Caesar in 31 B.C. that marked the beginning of the Roman Empire. The Hellenistic Period saw a continuation of the objectives that had always governed Greece—controlling trade, making money as merchants, and enjoying cultural activities. All of the Greek kingdoms followed these principles and, as a result, Greek products and culture spread throughout all of the lands Alexander had conquered and, because of merchant operations, far beyond.

Because the lands east of the Jordan River surrounded the major trading route (King's Highway), the eastern lands became more important than the lands to the west of the river. These eastern lands profited greatly from this commerce and became increasingly culturally diverse.

Decapolis

Greeks in Jordan

The establishment of trading outposts throughout the empire was an important factor in making the Greek system work. In the area east of the Jordan River, the Greeks identified locations for ten outpost trading cities. These cities stretched from Damascus on the north to Amman (called Philadelphia at that time) on the south. They were called the Decapolis. All of the cities were on the east side of the Jordan River except

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Scythopolis, which was just across the river, and Damascus, which was north of the Jordan River Valley in Syria. The cities were built either along a major trade route, mostly the King's Highway, or on a key secondary trade route. Pella, for example, is not on the King's Highway but is in the Jordan River Valley at an important river crossing.

Decapolis Cities

Ancient Name	Modern Name	Location/Identification
Damascus	Damascus	Capital of Syria
Canatha/Konata	Qanawat	In modern Syria
Hippus/Hippos	Sussita	In the Golan Heights
Dion/Capitolias	Beit Ras	In modern Jordan
Raphana	Raphana	In modern Jordan
Gadara	Umm Qais	Village overlooking Galilee
Scythopolis	Beth-Shean	Across from Pella
Pella	Pella	In the Jordan River Valley
Gerasa	Jerash	Large city and many ruins
Philadelphia	Amman	Capital of Jordan

Greek natives were encouraged to move to the Decapolis to manage business affairs in the cities. As a result, the Greek population in the Middle East grew rapidly and Greek became the principal language for commerce in the entire eastern Mediterranean area including the Levant. Over time it also became the language of learning and politics, persisting as the dominant language even after the Roman conquest of the area. (The native language for most of the Middle East was Aramaic, a Syrian language, that had risen in importance when the Persians made Syria the provincial capital for the Middle East.) We even see many Greek loan words used in the portion of the Book of Daniel that was written in Aramaic. Also, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek and that version, called the Septuagint, became the most commonly read version outside of the synagogue.



Figure 41: Decapolis cities

Damascus is not in Jordan but is clearly an important northern anchor for the Decapolis. It is claimed to be the oldest continuously occupied city in the world with carbon dating suggesting occupation as early as 6300 B.C. It was founded by Aramaeans, a Semitic people who abandoned their nomadic life and settled a fixed location and started a city. Damascus sits on the King's Highway, and this may have been a prime reason for its choice as a place to live. The kingdom established in Aram-Damascus had strong interactions with the Kingdom of Israel and was part of a coalition trying to withstand occupation by the Assyrians. It suffered through the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian periods and must have viewed the conquest of the city by Alexander as a new beginning. However, it was caught in the struggles between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires and, when a Seleucid king made Antioch his capital, Damascus suffered a decline. The Romans revived Damascus and made it an important city in the Roman province of Syria.

Sussita/Hippos is a spectacular site overlooking the Sea of Galilee. It was destroyed in an earthquake in 749 A.D. and has never been resettled. Some preliminary archaeological work has found evidence of Roman occupation, including an aqueduct, Byzantine churches, and anchorages on the Sea of Galilee suggesting trade activities. The old city is about a mile from the shore and rises about a thousand feet above the level of the sea. It is on the road that circles the Sea of Galilee and seems situated to observe traffic on and around the sea, thus providing some dominance over the area. The site appears to have been founded when the Ptolemies controlled the area but the name of the city, Antiochia Hippos, was given when the Seleucids gained control. The name Sussita probably arose from local use as "Sussita" and "Hippos" both mean horse in Aramaic and Greek, respectively.¹⁰¹

Gadara/Umm Qais is a town in northern Jordan overlooking the Sea of Galilee, the Golan Heights, and Jordan's northern frontier. The modern town is located near the ruins of the ancient city of Gadara. The site appears to have been founded as a military outpost as implied by the name, Gadara, that derives from a Semitic word meaning "fortifications." When the Ptolemies occupied the southern Decapolis cities, Gadara was on the frontier of Seleucid territory and, therefore, had a strong military purpose. Gadara was described by a Greek historian, Polybius, as the "strongest of all places in the region."¹⁰² It was not on the King's

Highway but was a convenient location to accept trade goods from the upper Galilee and then transport them to other sites, such as Raphana and Gerasa that were on the highway.

Scythopolis (Beth-Shean) has been occupied for over 6000 years. It lies at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley and near a ford over the Jordan River. During the time when an Israelite kingdom existed, it was the location where the Philistines hung the bodies of King Saul and his sons from the city's walls. In the Hellenistic Period the city moved from the ancient hill location to the foot of the mound and the name was changed to Scythopolis, meaning city of the Scythians. It is not clear where the Scythians came from, although Scythia was part of the Greek empire, and they might have moved there by assignment. The move to the bottom of the mound may have been to facilitate access for trade. There are temples dedicated to Greek gods and later modified for Roman worship. There is also an amphitheater, but that might have been built in the Roman period. The city continued to grow through Roman times.¹⁰³

Pella is in the northern part of the Jordan River Valley. It is close to a water source (spring) and has been occupied since Neolithic times. The ruins of a Canaanite temple, massive mud-brick walls, and large residence are an indication of the importance of the site in the Bronze Age, about the time that Abraham would have lived. The name, Pella, comes from the Greek and is the same as Alexander's birthplace in Macedonia. This may have been an indication of the importance that the Greeks attached to this site as it clearly could benefit from being opposite Scythopolis at an important ford in the Jordan River. However, no major public buildings have been identified from the Greek period although some elaborate residences from the period have been discovered. The absence of public buildings may have resulted from the destruction of the city that occurred during the 3rd century B.C. The city was rebuilt during the Roman occupation. It became an important location during the Jewish-Roman war in 66 A.D. as the place to which Christians fled to avoid the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Gerasa/Jerash sits astride the King's Highway in the area known anciently as Gilead, about 30 miles north of Amman. Because of its abundant water and reasonable proximity to the important Jabbok River, the site has been occupied since Neolithic times. It was an important trading city during the Decapolis days and then, when the Romans took over, it became a principal Roman provincial town. The ruins of that time are well preserved, and it has been touted as the best Roman ruins site in the Levant. There are temples, a hippodrome, an amphitheater, a well-preserved cardo with a sewer system beneath the road, a nymphaeum, an impressive forum, a triumphal arch, and many other buildings from both the Roman and Byzantine times.



Figure 42: Jerash city and ruins

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Jordan#/media/File:Jerash_01_\(cropped\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Jordan#/media/File:Jerash_01_(cropped).jpg))

Philadelphia was named in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 B.C.). It was previously called Rabbath Ammon. (The name was later changed to Amman by the Arabs in about 634 A.D.) Philadelphia sits on the edge of the arable land, to the west, where the rainfall is higher and the desert to the east where the population is mostly Bedouins. The King's Highway passes through the western reaches of the city but avoids the congested valley in which the central city is located. Few ruins remain from the Greek period as Roman, Byzantine, and Muslim occupiers built on top of or destroyed the Greek foundation.¹⁰⁴

Trade Routes

Nabateans

Not too long after Alexander's conquest of the Persians, a Greek historian toured the new empire and visited the Dead Sea and areas in the south of what is today Jordan. He reported, "There are many Arabian tribes who use the desert as pasture, [but] the Nabateans far surpass the others in wealth, although they are not much more than 10,000 in number."¹⁰⁵ The wealth came from control of the King's Highway in the former kingdom of Edom. This area was especially profitable because of the spice trade, chiefly in frankincense, myrrh, and other spices native to Arabia, as well as control of the main trade route between Mesopotamia and Egypt. The spices were often forwarded on to Athens and Rome when the Greeks and Romans occupied the Middle East.

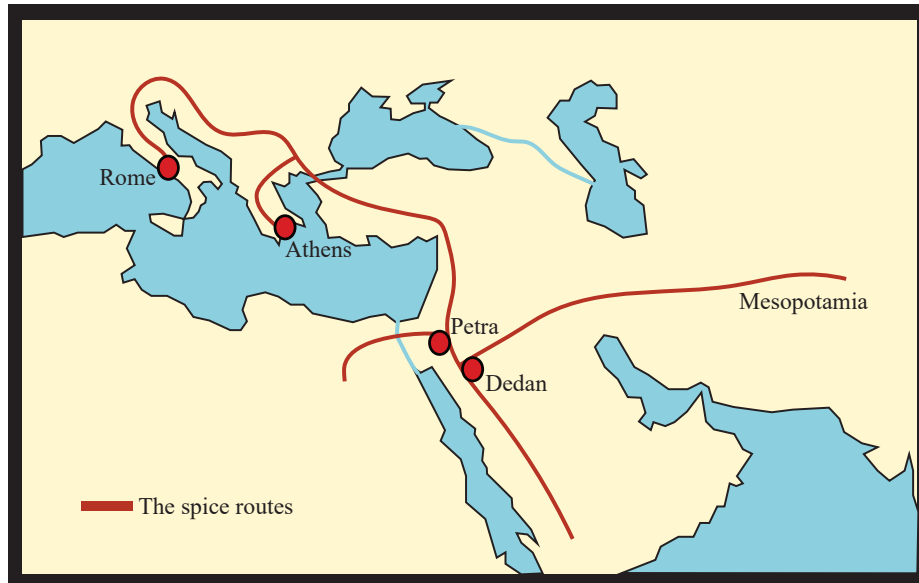


Figure 43: The Spice Route in the Middle East

When the Seleucid Greeks gained control of the lands east of the Jordan River (about 300 B.C.), they tried to take over this dominant trade position and attacked the Nabateans. They were successful in raiding the largely undefended Petra (the men were off trading and collecting bounty), but when the men returned, the Nabateans caught the Greeks in the desert on the way back to Syria and recaptured the bounty and routed the Seleucid army. During the ensuing years of battles between Seleucids and Ptolemies, the Nabateans were relatively undisturbed as both Hellenistic groups wanted to maintain good relations with the Nabateans because both Syria and Egypt benefited greatly from the spice trade. During this time, many aspects of the Hellenistic culture were adopted by the Nabateans as revealed in the pottery, art, and architecture within Nabatean territory.¹⁰⁶

The Nabateans began to expand their empire, seeking to control more of the trade along the King's Highway. By 150 B.C. they were able to expand as far north as Damascus. Clearly the Nabateans became major rivals to the Greeks. This competition along with the problems in Palestine with the Maccabees (discussed below) probably led to some of the weaknesses in the Seleucids and allowed the Nabateans to expand. When the Maccabees drove out the Seleucids from Judea, the Nabateans became allies with the Maccabeans but later, when the Maccabeans were fighting internally, their cooperation ceased.

Apparently secure in their domination of the local trade, the Nabateans began to enhance the accommodations and usefulness of the trade routes. At many of the major caravan stops temples were constructed and regular religious services offered. These temples also served as banks that allowed merchants to make a deposit at one location and withdraw elsewhere. This avoided the need to carry large sums of money and, therefore, thwarted the ever-present highway robbers. Near each temple was usually a bath house where weary caravanners could refresh themselves. The Nabateans also assembled military units that were tasked with guarding the routes and discouraging the bandits. They also built forts and watchtowers along the roads. Several installations had facilities for breeding camels and numerous pens for herds of sheep and goats, restaurants for travelers, and sleeping accommodations (mostly tents). There were even cemeteries for people who died along the way.¹⁰⁷

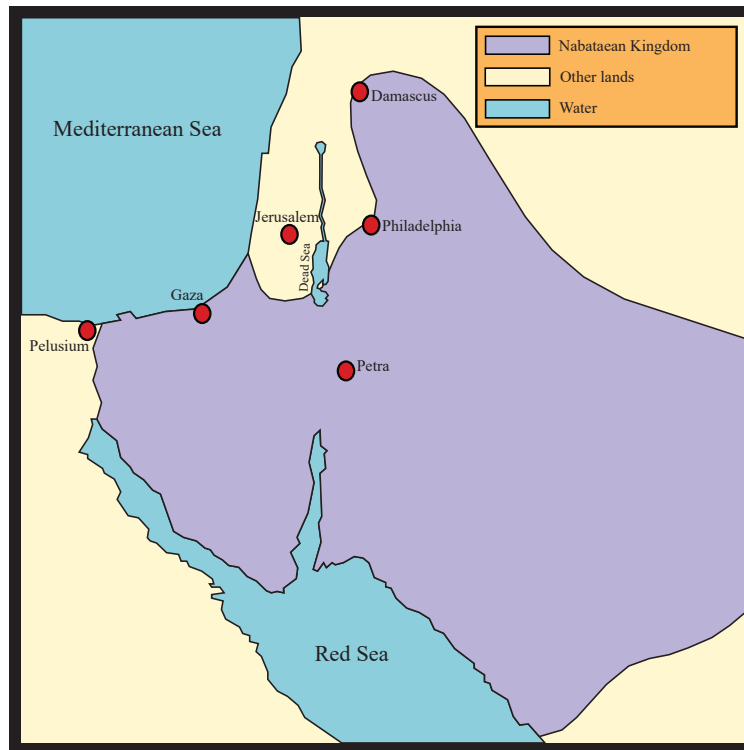


Figure 44: The Nabataean kingdom at its apex

Petra

The location most widely associated with the Nabateans is Petra in ancient Edom (today southern Jordan). Petra, however, is several miles from the King's Highway, thus raising the question of why the Nabateans built (carved) such elaborate edifices as we see today at Petra. Many scholars believe that Petra served principally as a religious city, perhaps also as a headquarters for the kingdom, although no palace has been found. (That may be because the Nabateans retained their desert and nomadic traditions and lived in tents.) Whatever its purpose, Petra grew to a city with a population estimated to be 20,000. It is undoubtedly one of the most spectacular locations to visit in the Middle East.¹⁰⁸

Through careful analysis of the carved rockfaces in Petra, the method of construction has been determined. It was carved from the top downward using platforms that were anchored in holes on either side of the entire rock structure and at the top. (I was reminded of window washers for skyscrapers when I thought of this method.) I thought this construction was brilliant, especially for work done in the second or third century B.C.

Not only are the carvings of the buildings and tombs impressive, but the water system is superb. The Nabateans made ceramic pipes and channels that captured rainwater and also tapped into eight natural springs to bring the water to storage in over 100 reservoirs and cisterns. Sometimes the water was transported over five miles. The system also allowed the yearly flash floods to be captured and stored for later use.¹⁰⁹



Figure 45: Entrance to Petra showing the treasury

Greek Culture and the Maccabees

Greeks in Judea

Most people in the areas occupied by Alexander's generals liked Greek culture and readily adopted it into their ordinary lives. The Greeks loved learning and education, and this gave rise to advances in science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, history, and many other related fields. Greek culture also promoted the arts, especially drama, sculpture, writing, and music. The Greeks were conscious of the benefits of physical activity and avidly promoted athletic contests, personal exercise, and physical beauty. They were not reluctant to perform many of these activities in the nude and that, for Jewish men, was a problem since it violated rules of modesty and they were sometimes criticized by the Greeks for being circumcised.

The lands on the eastern side of the Jordan River, especially Jordan, saw little political difference and no major religious differences between the practices imposed on them by the Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks and so the relaxed and creative lifestyle of the Greeks was easily integrated into society. There was little resistance to either the Seleucids or the Ptolemies.

The western side of the river was different from the east. The Jews saw the presence of pagan worship from the Greeks as distasteful and resented the general worldliness of Greek society that seemed to have such a

magnetism for many, even some of the Jewish people. The Jewish religious leaders saw themselves as purifiers and felt it was their responsibility to resist any worldly change from the ancient Mosaic laws and practices. Hence, there was friction and some defiance of their Greek overlords. To relieve this tension, the Greek leaders appointed Jewish priests as local leaders, thus establishing a ruling class among the Jewish people. These were the Sadducees. Corruption, buying of office in particular, was a problem among these Jewish leaders and there arose much dissent among the Jewish leader-priests.

With the ascent of the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168 B.C., the lid blew off the troubled western area. The Seleucid king decided to impose pagan/king worship on all people throughout his domain, including in the Jewish temple and other sacred Jewish locations. A Jewish priest, Mattathias Maccabeus, refused to comply and killed the Greek official charged with forcing the Jewish priests to comply. The Maccabean family then led a revolt that was eventually successful, and a large portion of the western lands came under independent control with a member of the Maccabean family as the king. The kingdom that was established became known as the Hasmonean Kingdom. The Maccabeans captured Jerusalem and then cleaned and rededicated the temple. The Jewish festival of Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the temple.

Eventually the Maccabean rulers lost strength and outsiders married into their family and took over control. The most obvious example was Herod, an Edomite (called Idumean at the time), who married a Maccabean princess. Herod ruled as an independent king for a period but made sure that he had the support of the most important political and military power of his day—Rome.



Figure 46: The Hasmonean Kingdom (as of 142 B.C.)

Jewish Factions

During the Maccabean period several Jewish factions gained strength. These included the Sadducees, the priestly class that had been used by the Greeks as local leaders. When the Maccabeans took control, the Sadducees continued their role as spiritual leaders and keepers of the temple. In addition, the Sadducees, who had integrated well with the Greeks, were used as diplomats, royal advisors, and judges. They formed a governing and judicial council called the Sanhedrin through which many domestic policies and disputes were

Chapter 8: Greeks

decided. Their influence remained strong, even during the ensuing Roman period, and was finally ended with the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D.

Another group that gained power during Maccabean times was the Pharisees. They grew out of the rabbinic system developed during the Babylonian captivity and were religious rivals to the Sadducees. The Pharisees believed in strict adherence to the law of Moses and tolerated no deviations. This strict adherence also carried over into lifestyle so that the Pharisees criticized, often openly and harshly, any accommodation with Greek ways of living and the more relaxed methods of practicing religion. Because of their intellectual prowess and influence among a large segment of the population, the Pharisees were also given seats on the Sanhedrin and, therefore, gained some political power.

Yet another Jewish religious and political faction was the Essenes. Their approach was to maintain ritual purity. They believed this could best be done in isolation from the rest of society and so they began to gather followers in a dedicated community on the northern shore of the Dead Sea. This area was called Qumran. Although not a large group, they have become well known in our time because of the cache of records that were found in 1949 in the caves above their settlement. These are the Dead Sea Scrolls. This community seemed to fade away in the 1st century A.D.

Throughout Judah, Greek culture was embedded even though some Jews were highly resistant to any “contamination” of Jewish culture by the outside group. Some Jewish people even took Greek names, including some of the Jewish Sadducees. We have a record of a Jewish marriage in which the contract states the terms of the marriage are “according to Greek law and custom.” Greek was even used in Jewish funerary and synagogue inscriptions as late as the 7th century A.D.¹¹⁰

Outside of Palestine, many Jewish scholars adapted Jewish teachings to Greek philosophical methods and concepts. To accommodate the Greek speakers around the Mediterranean, a group of 70 scholars gathered in Alexandria and translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek. This translation, called the Septuagint, became the basis for the Christian version of the Bible.

Greek influence in both politics and lifestyle was profound throughout the entire Hellenistic Empire and because the Romans largely adopted the same culture, it spread throughout the ensuing Roman Empire. In the eastern Mediterranean Greek became the common language of most educated people and was the language of writing, travel, and diplomacy, even for the Roman overlords.

Chapter 9: Romans

History of Rome

Origins of Rome

Before there was a city in the vicinity of Rome, there were inhabitants of the Latin tribe and refugees from Troy including Aeneas who left Troy, sailed the eastern Mediterranean searching for his destiny, and eventually landed on the west coast of Italy. He married the daughter of the king of the Latins and began the race that would eventually occupy the city of Rome.

The actual city of Rome began in the 8th century B.C. when two brothers, Romulus and Remus, who were left to drown in a basket, floated on the Tiber River, were washed ashore, and were suckled and raised by a she-wolf. They grew, built a few huts, erected walls to protect the village, and struggled to survive the attacks of the tribes that surrounded the new city. They argued with each other, and Romulus killed his brother and became the first king of Rome. The city grew, often with castoffs from other places, and the inhabitants struggled through a series of seven kings, some from neighboring and conquering tribes. After an experience with a cruel king, the Roman people overthrew the outsiders and resolved to never have a king again.

Roman Republic

They devised and founded the Roman Republic with a structure giving voices to both the upper class (Patricians) and the commoners (Plebeians) and with many safeguards to ensure an equitable and representative government. (Many of the features of the Roman Republic were incorporated into the United States government.) The formation of the republic brought the citizens together in a common cause of building Rome into a great power, in part, because the government gave significant privileges to the citizens such as exemption from taxes and the right to appeal court decisions directly to the head of state (a consul during the days of the republic and to the emperor after the formation of the empire).

To make Rome great, the people reasoned that it had to grow. If the growth came by conquering, that would also help Rome become powerful because the booty derived from the conquered nation would fund the continued growth of the republic. Therefore, Rome immediately began to attack the nearby tribes and, with success, to venture against tribes and peoples even farther afield. Over the next 200 years Rome's efforts against their neighbors were successful and Rome gained control over the entire Italian peninsula. Brilliantly, the Romans incorporated all of this territory into a greater Rome and gave people throughout the peninsula an opportunity to become Roman citizens, with all the privileges, if they served Rome well (usually as soldiers or as government workers). Furthermore, Rome made belonging to the republic easy. They did not try to change a conquered people's religion or their culture. In fact, Rome took what was good about a newly conquered land and incorporated it into Roman culture.

In the mid-3rd century B.C. Rome began its expansion outside Italy. The leaders of the Republic realized that any outside expansion would require a strong navy to transport troops, to protect the foreign territories, and to increase trade that was seen as a fruitful way to get more money to finance even more growth. Therefore, Rome began to build a navy. This obvious buildup of sea power threatened the Phoenicians who had controlled trade in the western Mediterranean from their major outpost in the city of Carthage, on the north African coast opposite the Italian peninsula. Soon there was war between Rome and Phoenicia/Carthage.

(These are called the Punic wars after the name for Phoenicia in Latin—*Poeni*). After three semi-connected Punic wars, including a difficult defeat of the Carthaginian general Hannibal who had invaded Italy with elephants transported across the alps from Spain, Rome sacked Carthage and took control of trade in the western Mediterranean and also acquired Phoenician outposts and colonies along north Africa, in Spain, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica.

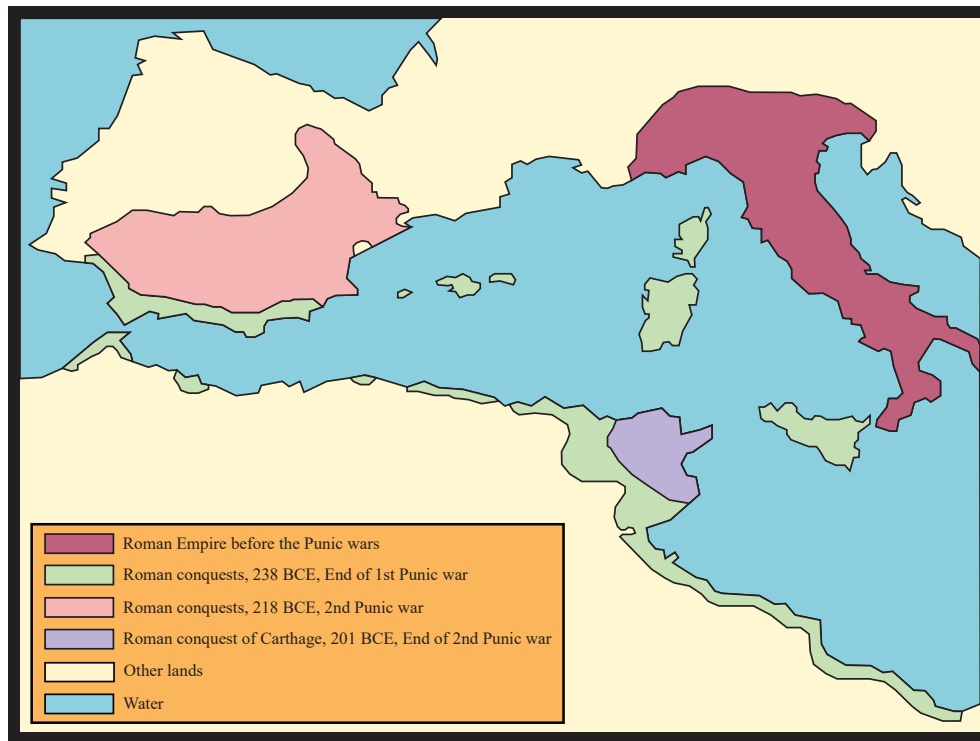


Figure 47: Roman Republic lands after the Punic Wars

With control of trade in the western Mediterranean, Rome then looked to the east and realized that if they conquered the various Greek kingdoms descended from Alexander’s conquests, they would control all of the trade in the Mediterranean. Therefore, expansion against the Greek mainland followed and was successful, often without any battles. This occurred because Greek people saw the advantages of being part of Rome and, in some cases, they were dissatisfied with the corruptness that had taken over some of the Greek kingdoms. Therefore, by about 100 B.C., Rome had taken over most of the Greek Empire starting with the Greek mainland and islands and then moving to the Seleucid territories headquartered in Syria. Some difficulties still remained in places that were separately controlled such as Judea, the Nabateans, and the Egyptians.

Judea

Unwelcome Occupiers

In 63 B.C. the Roman general Pompey defeated the Seleucid Greek ruler, occupied Jerusalem, and established the Roman province of Syria. This brought an end to Hellenistic rule in the Levant. Pompey installed a Hasmonean prince (remember the Maccabees) in Judea as Ethnarch (ruler over an ethnic group) and High Priest but not as a king. A few years later Julius Caesar appointed Antipater the Idumaeans (a relative of the Hasmoneans whose family was from Idumaea, a region of ancient Edom) as Roman

Procurator (governor of a province). Later, Antipater's son Herod, who was educated in Rome, became a friend with Augustus Caesar and was designated "King of the Jews" in 37 B.C.

Herod was the king at the time of the birth of Jesus and was known as Herod the Great. He tried to curry favor with the local population by refurbishing the temple in Jerusalem and it is the wall of his refurbished temple that still remains in Jerusalem and is called the "Wailing Wall." Upon his death, the kingdom was divided between Herod's three sons—half to one son who was called an ethnarch and a quarter to the other sons who were called tetrarchs. Two of the sons ruled so poorly that they were dismissed by Rome after a revolt of the people. The revolt was crushed, and the ethnarch was dismissed in 6 A.D. and part of his territory—Judea, Samaria, and Galilee—was controlled with direct rule by a Roman citizen, Pilate, who was appointed by the Roman governor in Syria.

Messianic Revolts

This revolt of the people that brought Pilate to power was not only a protest against a corrupt government, it was also messianic in focus, that is, an effort to install a Jewish person who claimed to be the Messiah. Judea was highly sensitized to what the people thought was the coming of a military messiah. This revolt gave rise to another Jewish faction—the Zealots who actively promoted rebellion against the Romans and rule by a messiah. This period, when Pilate ruled on behalf of Rome, was the time when Christianity started and was of such great importance in the Levant that it will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

In 36 A.D. another messianic revolt occurred in Samaria and was ruthlessly crushed by Pilate. Pontius Pilate was removed in 36 A.D. when he was accused of brutality by the Samaritans. Rome continued to have problems with Judea and other places where Jews lived. In 37 A.D. the emperor Caligula enraged the Jews when he ordered that a statue of himself be erected in the temple at Jerusalem. For fear of a major rebellion, the legate in Syria delayed implementing this order by a year and the local Jewish ruler, Herod Agrippa, was able to convince Caligula to reverse this order. Later, Caligula reinstated the order, but the emperor was murdered by his own guard before it could be carried out. The next emperor, Claudius, cancelled the order calling the situation "the crisis under Caligula" and briefly restored the Herodian dynasty with the appointment of Herod Agrippa, possibly in an attempt to calm the situation. The plan did not work as the Jews continued their agitation and precipitated a major revolt in 66 A.D.

The First Jewish-Roman War

The first Jewish-Roman War occurred from 66 to 74 A.D. Tensions had been high for several years but the trigger for the war seemed to be the seizing of the temple treasury by the Roman governor who also arrested numerous senior Jewish officials. This prompted widespread rebellion in Jerusalem, the occupying of the Roman garrison, and the fleeing of the Roman officials.

The legate of Syria attempted to quell the revolt by attacking the Jews, but his troops were ambushed and defeated by rebels and over 6,000 Roman troops were killed.¹¹¹ At this point the Jewish leadership organized a government and appointed military leaders, including Josephus who was later captured and then wrote about the wars.

After Claudius died, the new emperor, Nero, gave the Roman general, Vespasian, four legions with instructions to take control of the area. Vespasian's son, Titus, accompanied him on this foray. The Romans invaded Galilee in 67 A.D. and steadily moved southward, conquering major cities as they proceeded. The arrival in Jerusalem of thousands of refugees, including large numbers of Zealots, created tensions and fighting among the Sadducees of Jerusalem and the newly arriving Zealots. This provided the Roman army with an excellent opportunity to take the city. However, in 69 A.D. the lead Roman general, Vespasian, was

called to Rome to become the new emperor. He left his son, Titus, in charge with instructions to take Jerusalem and destroy all opposition. Titus besieged Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and took the city after a seven-month siege. He sacked the city and looted the temple as is shown in the triumphal arch in Rome dedicated to Titus where the Roman soldiers can be seen carrying the temple menorah and other temple objects. After sacking the city, Titus departed for Rome and instructed the new commander to continue the suppression of all opposition.



Figure 48: Decoration on the Arch of Titus showing temple trophies (<https://jweekly.com/2017/08/29/rome-charlottesville-statue-never-just-statue/>)

Machaerus and Masada

Some of the Zealots were chased southward to a Herodian palace at Machaerus, a plateau on the eastern side of the Dead Sea and others fled to Masada, a sister Herodian palace on a plateau on the western side of the Dead Sea. At Machaerus the rebels surrendered after seeing the Romans build an earthen ramp to the walls of the palace/fortress. They were allowed to leave peacefully. At Masada, the rebels held out for many weeks until the Romans had built another earthen ramp to the walls. Just before the Romans breached the walls of the fortress, the Zealot rebels all committed suicide. This ended the first Jewish-Roman war.

During the war, many refugees had fled Palestine and began life in other places around the Mediterranean basin. They joined Jews still living in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and elsewhere from the time of the Babylonian captivity.

Another Change in the Jewish Religion

Even though thousands of Jews were killed in the siege and sacking of the Jerusalem, the Jewish population throughout the country recovered under a strict Roman rule. However, the loss of the temple meant that Judaism was forced to give up temple sacrifices and to seek other methods of worshipping and obtaining salvation. Just as they did in Babylon when the first temple was destroyed, they adopted knowledge of the laws of God and obedience as their path to salvation. As a result, rabbis (mostly Pharisees) took the place of high priests as leaders of the Jewish community. The Sadducees ceased to exist.

Second and Third Jewish Wars

Tensions continued between the Romans and the Jews even after the end of the first war. When there was a threat to Roman power in Mesopotamia from the Parthians in 117 A.D. (as happened regularly), the Romans in Judea were distracted, and some transferred to combat the threat. The Jews seized the opportunity to revolt. The Jews were quickly crushed, and their number was drastically reduced.

The third and final conflict in the Jewish-Roman wars occurred in 132-136 A.D., mostly in Judea. This was led by Simon bar Kokhba who was believed by many to be a messiah. He was initially successful and established a 3-year Jewish independent state. However, the eventual Roman victory resulted in a huge destruction of the Jewish population and a ban on Jewish presence in Judea and the Roman province of Syria Palaestina. Many Jews were sold as slaves or were forced to flee to other lands. This was a continuation of the Diaspora. The Jews were scattered all around the Mediterranean and, eventually throughout Europe and the Middle East, except for Palestine/Syria.¹¹²

Following the death of King Herod Agrippa, his son, Herod Agrippa II, succeeded and was also given the title of King of the Jews. He retained titular control until his death in about 93 A.D. but the rebelliousness of the Jews forced Rome to install a Roman legate capable of commanding troops in 70 A.D. who became the real ruler of the area. The Romans maintained this system until the end of rule by the city of Rome in the 3rd century A.D. and shifted rule to Constantinople, the beginning of what is called the Byzantine Period. The Byzantines controlled the area until the Muslim invasion in the 7th century. These are both discussed in later chapters.

Nabateans

Controlling the Trade Routes

Meanwhile, the situation on the eastern side of the Jordan River was vastly different. The eastern side was dominated by the Nabateans (the Arab tribe that arose during the Greek period to control the King's Highway and other trade routes to the east and south of the Greek trading cities). Back when the Romans first entered the Levant, they attempted to subdue the Nabateans. The Romans were not very successful. The Roman army moved from Syria southward and began their attempt to subdue the Nabateans with a siege of Petra in 62 B.C. When the siege dragged on, the Romans accepted a settlement of 300 talents to lift the siege. The Romans agreed that the Nabatean king would retain control over his territory (from Damascus to Aqaba) and would accept the designation of being a Roman ally. As an ally of the Romans, the Nabateans and Romans extended their combined territory into Arabia. They moved southward along the Red Sea to Yemen, thus capturing most of the spice route even to the places where frankincense and myrrh grew along the southern coast of the Arabian peninsula in modern Yemen and Oman.

Roman Chaos

After the death of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., a period of chaos and uncertainty enveloped the Roman Republic with fighting between two factions. One faction followed the conspirators who killed Julius Caesar and the other was loyal to Julius Caesar's designated heirs and compatriot. The loyal group was led by Marc Anthony and Octavian, a nephew of Julius Caesar.

The Parthians (from Persia and Mesopotamia) took advantage of this chaos and attacked Roman territory in the Levant and entered Nabatean territory. The Nabateans sided with the Parthians and, after the Romans defeated the Parthians, the Nabateans were forced to pay tribute to the Romans. In 32 B.C. when the

Nabateans fell behind in their tribute payments, they were invaded by a combined army from Roman vassal states—Egypt (Cleopatra was the ruler) and Judea (Herod the Great was the ruler). Battles were lost and won on both sides, but Herod finally occupied Nabataea.

After an earthquake in Judea caused chaos in Herod's kingdom, the Nabateans rebelled against Herod and invaded Judea, but Herod crossed the Jordan River near Amman and won a battle forcing the Nabateans to retreat. Herod then established a siege around Amman and eventually defeated the Nabateans. He took control over the northern part of Nabatean territory but allowed the Nabateans to continue to rule in the south of Jordan.¹¹³

Later, during the Jewish-Roman wars, the Nabateans sided with the Romans (having learned to not oppose the world's strongest nation) and continued to prosper without much Roman interference. However, the continued strength of the Romans bore down on the Nabateans and the last Nabatean king struck an agreement with the Romans that if he cooperated with them, they would allow him to reign until his death and then Rome would take over total control of Nabatean territory. In 106 A.D. the king died, and Nabataea became a Roman province and was renamed Arabia Petrea.

The city of Petra was redesigned along traditional Roman lines with a main north-south street called a *cardo*, an amphitheater, and Roman temples. The Nabateans initially profited from their incorporation into the Roman empire but a shift of trade routes towards the Mediterranean coast in Syria led to a decline in the southern trade and Petra declined. Sometime about the 4th century A.D., the Nabateans abandoned Petra (no one knows why) and the city became largely vacant.



Figure 49: Roman amphitheater in Petra

Mines in the Desert

The union of the Nabateans and the Romans led to another profitable venture. From prehistoric times the mines in the Faynan area, southeast of the Dead Sea, had been an important source of copper. However, archaeological evidence indicates that the mines ceased operation about the ninth century B.C. Then, in the first century B.C. when the Nabateans became part of the Roman Empire, mining activity began again and grew to significant industrial production. This increase could have been due to local floods that may have exposed additional ore-bearing strata but might also have been due to the superior Roman engineering and technology plus direct imperial supervision of mining operations that were an imperial monopoly.

The copper was mined and smelted by slaves, war captives, and sometimes prisoners (Christians in the times of their persecution) under the supervision of soldiers. This model fits with the Romans. The working of the mines continued throughout the Byzantine period, especially when the mines in Spain became depleted. One fact remained clear throughout the Roman working of the mines—being sent to the mines in Faynan was a hot, dangerous, and feared destination. There were frequent cave-ins (the soil was sandy) and the temperatures often rose to sweltering with little water and no shade. *Damnatio ad metalla* (condemned to the mines) was a living hell.¹¹⁴

Egyptians

Roman Power in Egypt

For most of the first 3000 years of its existence, Egypt was the powerhouse of the ancient world. Its annual flooding of the Nile brought fresh topsoil to the farms along the river's banks and then the sun shone brightly to yield a bountiful harvest almost every year. There was an overabundance of food that Egypt traded to gain money to build armies, religious shrines like the pyramids and temples, and to trade for the commodities and luxuries of the world. No wonder that Rome, in its search for glory and power, desired to include Egypt in its empire, but some caution was needed to ensure victory.

The Ptolemies, (Greek rulers who took Egypt after the death of Alexander), had enjoyed the profits of Egypt and had organized a highly developed urban society, army, and navy. Alexandria, the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt, was the second largest city in the Mediterranean basin and had become the intellectual and trading capital of the world. The strengths and weaknesses of Egypt were known to the Romans, and this led to Roman caution. The Romans did not want to get tied up in a long war, especially since some nations on Rome's periphery, like Parthia, were always eager to attack and nibble away at Roman territory.

The king of Egypt, Ptolemy XII, in the mid-first century B.C., saw the Roman triumphs over the Greek empire on the mainland of Greece and in Syria and decided that an invasion of Romans would be a disaster to his dynasty. He therefore elected to ally with Rome and sought some support in this position from important Roman senators and businessmen. Ptolemy continued to be king of Egypt when it became a client/ally of Rome and his mentor was Pompey, the general who had conquered Seleucid Greece.

At that moment, there was also internal conflict in Rome between Julius Caesar and Pompey. These two were former co-consuls who had split politically. While Caesar was fighting in Gaul (France), Pompey sensed a chance to take sole control of Rome and he declared Caesar an outlaw. Caesar immediately returned toward Rome and, after crossing the Rubicon River, marched on the city. Pompey fled to Greece. Caesar followed and defeated Pompey in a battle in central Greece, but Pompey fled to Egypt with the assistance of Ptolemy of Egypt.

Caesar and Cleopatra

Caesar followed to Egypt. When Pompey and King Ptolemy met, the Egyptians had decided that it was best to support the victorious Caesar and the Egyptian courtiers assassinated Pompey. Then, Ptolemy XII died and was succeeded by his son, Ptolemy XIII, but Cleopatra VII, a daughter of the king, also laid claim to the throne. (The Ptolemies frequently used the names Ptolemy for their sons and Cleopatra for their daughters.) These two each desired to be sole ruler of Egypt and a war began.

Julius Caesar was sailing toward Egypt when Pompey was killed and when the war began between Cleopatra and her brother. When Caesar arrived in Alexandria, he was assessing the situation when Cleopatra appeared

at his rooms. She believed that she could convince Caesar to be on her side in the war and so she was secretly transported to his rooms rolled up in a rug to avoid detection by her brother's troops. She was successful in convincing Caesar of her right to rule, and with the help of Caesar's troops, Cleopatra won the war against her brother.

Caesar lingered in Egypt for several months and Cleopatra and Caesar became lovers and had a child, Caesarion. Later, when returning to Rome, Cleopatra accompanied Caesar and was featured in his victory celebration. When Caesar was assassinated, Cleopatra returned to Egypt.

Antony and Cleopatra

Later, Egypt again entered Roman history when Cleopatra sailed her fleet to assist Mark Antony in his battle with Octavian. These two Roman leaders and generals had been allies after the assassination of Caesar and had chased the conspirators who killed Caesar to Greece where the conspirators were defeated in a battle. Antony and Octavian, together with another ally, decided they would divide the Roman Empire into three governing sections. Octavian took Rome, Antony took Asia, and Lepidus took Africa. They all went to their respective areas of control. However, internal discord in Rome forced Antony to return to Rome where he met with Octavian and reconciled any differences, even marrying Octavian's sister.

Antony then went to Egypt where he had an alliance and romance with Cleopatra. They had children together and that made Octavian very angry as it embarrassed his sister and appeared as though Antony had abandoned his duties as a ruler of the Roman provinces he was assigned. The situation degraded into war and the two leaders met at Actium, Greece, where Antony's fleet was defeated. He fled to Egypt where the distraught Antony committed suicide when Octavian's fleet approached. Cleopatra then committed suicide also.

The Roman Empire

Octavian incorporated Egypt as a formal part of the empire as a Roman province and returned to Rome where he formed the Roman Empire (succeeding the Roman Republic that had been ripped apart by internal wars). He became the first emperor, although he never actually took the title, preferring to call himself the "First Citizen" of Rome. He was, however, given the title of Augustus (the Greatest) by the senate. When he took control of Rome, Augustus/Octavian killed Caesarion to eliminate any rival claims to his authority.

Chapter 9: Romans



Figure 50: Roman Empire at its peak

After Augustus Caesar, little growth occurred in the Roman Empire. The emperors immediately following Augustus—Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Aulus Vitellius—were either inept or crazy and the empire struggled to get direction. Then, a series of excellent emperors—Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antonius Pius, and Marcus Aurelius—gave Rome focus and the will to expand again. They made some modest attempts to incorporate Germany, but those generally failed. Dacia (modern Romania) was added by the Emperor Trajan in about 120 A.D. but little after that.

Romans in Jordan

The good emperors also made some concerted efforts to improve the existing empire by building roads, aqueducts, public buildings, and generally had concern for all parts of the empire. One of those roads is still visible today in the city of Madaba, Jordan. Another example of their far-flung attention is the aqueduct that was built on the western side of Amman to supply water to a town between Amman and the Jordan River Valley.

A typical example of the general concern is the imperial visit of Hadrian to the lands on the eastern side of the Jordan River. The tour occurred in 129-130 A.D. and the places visited included Palmyra, a caravan city in Syria where he strengthened local ties against the Parthians; Jerash/Gerasa, a Decapolis city along the King's Highway where the local Greek population would be strengthened; and then several cities in Judea where he listened to the troublesome Jews. In every location he projected Roman power and promoted a continuation of the prosperity (called *Pax Romana*) that was being enjoyed at that time.

One obvious show of Roman power and honor to the emperor was the gate that was constructed in his honor at Jerash. This gate (triumphal arch), well preserved today, clearly shows and summarizes with inscriptions, the power of Rome.¹¹⁵



Figure 51: Hadrian's arch at Jerash/Gerasa (<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/9352/arch-of-hadrian-jerash/>)

Roman Hot Springs

The Romans saw other benefits in the lands east of the Jordan River. Several emperors and, of course, many commoners, benefited from visits to the hot springs of the area. Dating mostly from the Roman period, some of the springs are still operating. One spring, Hammatha de Pehal was located north of the city of Pella in the Jordan River Valley and was used by Emperor Vespasian to relieve his gout. When Herod the Great was dying, he went to immerse himself in the Kallirhoe hot springs on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, pursuant to his doctors' recommendation. The ancient historian Josephus said that the waters there were therapeutic to drink and Pliny the Elder, a Roman historian and scientist, noted that "the very name alone, Kallirhoe [which means a beautiful flowing], attests to its celebrated and renowned waters." A fifth-century monk from Iberia (Spain) went to Hammel-Bar'arah, east of the Dead Sea, to heal his body that, as his assistant reported, "had grown weak from abstinence." The largest and most important bath seemed to be Hammat-Gader, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Emperor Caracalla went there as did Hadrian who had dermatological problems.¹¹⁶



Figure 52: Hot springs on eastern and western areas of the Holy Land

Demise of the Roman Empire in the West

The empire was beset with a series of weak emperors throughout the 3rd century and then, at the beginning of the 4th century, the Emperor Diocletian divided the empire into a Latin-speaking western side and a Greek-speaking eastern side. The successor to Diocletian, Constantine, reunited the empire but moved the capital from Rome in Italy to a new city called Constantinople (located in modern Turkey on the shores of the Bosphorus).

Soon after Constantine, the empire again split, and the western (Latin-speaking) side slowly began a slide into chaos and eventual defeat at the hands of various German invaders. The eastern half (Greek-speaking) continued its strength from Constantinople for several decades but then, little by little, lost land to various invaders. The area east of the Jordan River saw few changes during this period until the split of the empire and then a new energy arose with emperors located in Constantinople, at least for several years. This began the Byzantine Period and that will be discussed in a later chapter.

Chapter 10: Christian Era

Jesus of Nazareth

Birth and Youth of Jesus

Jesus the Christ (as he came to be called by Christians) was born in Bethlehem, a small village just south of Jerusalem during the concurrent reigns of Caesar Augustus and his designated puppet ruler of the Jews, Herod the Great. During the events that occurred at Jesus' birth, including the appearance of a new star (or convergence of planets or a comet), some kings/wisemen traveled to Jerusalem from the east (probably Mesopotamia) and met with Herod, inquiring about the birth of a new king. The wisemen left Herod, found the newborn Jesus, worshipped him, and returned directly home. When the wisemen did not return to him, Herod, always paranoid about losing his throne, even to the extent of killing some of his own children, was alarmed and issued a decree that all males recently born (under 2 years old) were to be killed. This tragedy has been called the "Slaughter of the Innocents." Fearing the death decree, Jesus was taken by Mary, his mother, and Joseph, her husband, to Egypt where they stayed until it was safe to return after the death of Herod. Upon their return, they went to live in Nazareth, a town in Galilee that was the home of Mary and Joseph. Jesus was then called, by many, Jesus of Nazareth.

Only a few things are known from the Bible about Jesus before the age of 30. The Bible reports that he was taken as an infant (40 days after his birth and presumably before Herod issued his decree about killing the infants) to the temple to be blessed and to complete Mary's ritual purification after childbirth. He was also taken to the temple when he was 12 years old and at that time he conversed with several wise men within the temple. The Bible also states that he grew in maturity and knowledge. Joseph was a carpenter and Mark 6:3 states that Jesus followed the same trade.

Many non-biblical stories and traditions are told about Jesus' youth. Some purport that Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, and the member of the Sanhedrin (Jewish council) was a follower of Jesus and an uncle of Jesus' mother, Mary. It is said that Joseph of Arimathea made many trips to Britain for the tin trade and sometimes took Jesus with him. In addition, after the death of Jesus, Joseph supposedly brought the gospel to that country along with a group of refugees from the persecutions of Christians in Jerusalem. Supposedly, Mary Magdalene and several other key Christians were part of the group. In England, this story is strongly and widely believed.¹¹⁷ What we find in the Scriptures is only that Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man and part of the Sanhedrin. The Bible also reports that together with Nicodemus, also a member of the Sanhedrin, they petitioned Pilate to allow them to take Jesus' body and entomb it. That request was granted, and the body was placed in a new tomb that had been made for Joseph. The Bible is silent about Joseph after Jesus' burial, so we cannot know from scriptural accounts what path he took later in life.¹¹⁸

When Jesus was 30, he began his ministry. Although the timing of events in his life is a bit difficult to determine, one of the first things he did was to travel to visit his cousin, John the Baptist. John was born to Zechariah, an elderly priest, and Elizabeth, an elderly woman who conceived miraculously as a gift from God even when she was past the age of childbearing. Elizabeth was related to Mary, the mother of Jesus and, therefore, Jesus and John were cousins. Matthew 23:25 states that Zechariah was killed between the temple and the altar and Origen, a well-respected Church Father, states that this Zechariah was the father of John. The Gospel of James, a 2nd century apocryphal work, confirms that John's father was killed by King Herod's troops because he would not reveal the place where Elizabeth had taken John for safekeeping. This account is accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church.¹¹⁹

John the Baptist

Bethany Beyond Jordan

The Bible states that John was raised in the wilderness of the Jordan River Valley and local tradition identifies his dwelling place as a small cave in the face of the cliff overlooking a small grove of tamarisk trees in a wadi with a stream running through it. The cave and stream are named for John the Baptist.

The entry of the small stream into the Jordan River created a small quiescent pool that would have been a perfect spot for baptisms and was likely used by John when he baptized people wishing to repent and dedicate their lives to a better path. Hence, it would be a logical place for Jesus to go searching for John when he wanted to be baptized. This area of cave, grove, stream, and pool are where Christians from as early as the 3rd century built churches and honored it as the place where Jesus was baptized. Recent archaeological evidence confirms this as the baptism location.¹²⁰

This site is located on the eastern side of the Jordan River about 7 miles north of the Dead Sea and has been opened for tourism and archaeological work. The actual site of the baptism, where the early commemorative churches were built, is about 500 feet east of the present Jordan River but there is clearly a nearly dry waterway showing that formerly, before an earthquake in the 8th century, the river flowed next to the commemorative site. In the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope John Paul II visited this site, and it has been designated by Catholic bishops as one of five pilgrimage sites in Jordan.¹²¹

Interestingly, the same site is also the place where Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River. (The site is directly across the Jordan River from Jericho.) Additionally, tradition also holds that it is the site where Elijah ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire.¹²² (Also attested in the Bible to be opposite Jericho.) This connection to Elijah is interesting because when Pharisees went to visit John where he was baptizing, they asked him whether he thought of himself as the Messiah or perhaps as Elijah (who will return and announce the Messiah).

The Bible refers to the site as “Bethany beyond Jordan,” a confirmation that the site is in modern Jordan and gives further evidence that the area by the stream and grove is the correct location. An even further confirmation is found in John 10:40 where it states that Jesus escaped from hostile Pharisees in Jerusalem and went “across the Jordan to the place where John at first baptized.”

Recent archaeological work in the area has discovered a large multi-church complex dating from the Byzantine era with sleeping quarters for monks, caves, ceramic pipes (part of a sophisticated water system), large, plastered pools, and at least two sleeping locations for pilgrims. There are also heavy stone jars that date from the first century B.C. and into the first century A.D.¹²³



Figure 53: Baptism site in Jordan

Temptation of Jesus

The Bible reports that after his baptism Jesus went into the wilderness and fasted for 40 days and, afterwards, was tempted by the devil. Two local traditions claim locations for this period of fasting. One site is in Jordan, just southeast of the baptism site on the southern side of Mount Nebo. Those supporting this site point out that Jesus was already near this location when he was baptized and would not need to travel to begin his fasting. The ravine on the southern side of Mt. Nebo is called “*wadi al ifrit*” or “valley of the devil,” a further confirmation of the site as the place where the devil tempted Jesus. The other location is across the Jordan River on the western side of Jericho. People favoring this location note that Luke 4:1 says he was tempted, “after he had returned from Jordan” and suggest that this phrase means that he returned to the western side of the Jordan River.

Death of John the Baptist

After his baptism and temptations Jesus returned to Galilee. John the Baptist was arrested about that same time. This is stated in Mark 1:14, “When he heard that John had been arrested, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God.” John was arrested by Herod Antipas, Herod the Great’s son who ruled Galilee and Peræa (the area east of the Jordan River) until about 39 A.D. Herod Antipas lusted after his brother’s wife, Herodias, and persuaded her to divorce her husband and marry him. She complied, but this union was denounced by John the Baptist as unlawful. This statement infuriated Herod Antipas and, especially, Herodias. John was then arrested.

We don't know the place of arrest but it was likely at the baptism site, not only because that is where John was traditionally working and baptizing, but because the place where he was incarcerated was just a few miles south of there at Machaerus, a Herodian fortified palace built on a plateau overlooking the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. (There were at least seven of these palaces including the well-known Masada, a sister location to Machaerus on the opposite side of the Dead Sea.) All of the other sites, including the city of Jerusalem, are visible from Machaerus, thus letting Machaerus be a warning location for any invasion coming from the east. According to the Roman author/scientist, Pliny, Machaerus was the strongest citadel in the Roman province of Judea, after Jerusalem.¹²⁴ Machaerus was one of the last battle sites in the first Judeo-Roman war as discussed in the previous chapter.

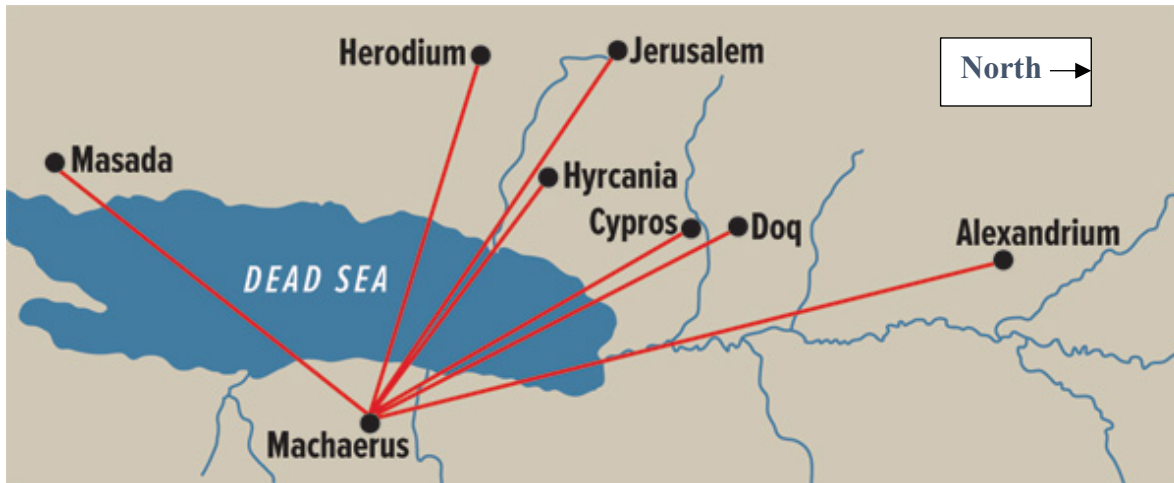


Figure 54: Sites of Herodian palace/fortresses
 (https://www.baslibrary.org/sites/default/files/bsba3805033221.jpg)

Sometime after John's imprisonment, Herod Antipas and his family went to Machaerus to celebrate Herod's birthday. As part of the celebration, Salome, Herodias' daughter from her previous marriage, danced for Herod and pleased him so much that he promised to grant her whatever she might ask. After consulting with Herodias, Salome asked for the head of John the Baptist to be brought to her on a platter. This was easily done since John was incarcerated in the prison cave directly under the palace where they were staying and dancing. Afterward, John's disciples went to the palace, took his body and buried it; and then they went to inform Jesus (Matthew 14:1-12).

Machaerus is an interesting place to visit. It is about an hour drive southwest of Amman, not too far off the King's Highway. At the site there is a small parking lot and a place where visitors can rest and enjoy the view of the plateau and the Dead Sea. From there you can descend steps and take a rather steep path from the bottom of the trail leading up the side of the plateau on which the palace is built. It is about a 20-minute hike along this graded gravel pathway to the top of the plateau. I have enjoyed visiting the site on several occasions and highly recommend it, but the climb can be hot and difficult.



Figure 55: Pathway to Machaerus (<https://www.heritagedaily.com/2020/12/machaerus-the-palace-fortress-of-king-herod/136596>)

Ministry of Jesus East of the Jordan River

Why Jesus Crossed Over into Jordan

As reported in Matthew 14:13-36, when Jesus heard the news of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a secluded place where he could be by himself. Clearly Jesus was saddened by John's death and as was typical throughout his ministry, when he wanted to be alone, he crossed over to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee or the Jordan River. The land in the east was a place of refuge for Jesus as it had been for many others in history. It was relatively free of the "religious police"—the Pharisees, the militant agitation of the Zealots, the greed and self-serving of the Sadducees, and the suffocating presence of the Romans. (The Romans also controlled the eastern areas but were less invasive and strident because the people east of the Jordan were less combative and more peaceful.)

Matthew continued the story noting that when Jesus was still on the eastern side (a desert place apart), a crowd gathered to hear him, and he had compassion on them and ministered to them. This lasted all day and when it was evening the disciples said that the people were hungry and suggested that they be sent away. Jesus replied that the people needed to be fed, but the disciples had only five loaves and two fishes—surely not enough to feed the 5000 people who had gathered. However, when the food was distributed, there was sufficient and more.

Afterwards, Jesus dismissed the people and told the disciples to get into the boat and sail back to Galilee. He would follow later. After praying alone, Jesus saw the boat a long ways off the shore and began to travel toward it, walking on the water. This is when Peter also walked for a short time on the water and then had to be rescued from sinking by Jesus when Peter doubted what he was doing. Jesus and the disciples then completed the trip to the Galilean shore. While some of the people in the crowd of 5000 clearly followed Jesus from Galilee, the large number suggests that many lived on the eastern shore, thus giving rise to the speculation that there were actually more believers on the eastern side than on the western of the Jordan.

Travel from Galilee to and from Jerusalem

During the three years of his ministry, Jesus made annual trips from Galilee to Judea. He also made trips to Decapolis and Peræa, and, on at least one occasion, he traveled through Samaria. It will be helpful, I think, to see where these political divisions were at the time of Jesus as shown in the map below.



Figure 56: Roman provinces in the Levant in the first century

Because of the Jewish hatred for the Samaritans, getting from Galilee to Judea by crossing over Samaritan land was discouraged (perhaps forbidden). The Bible seems to indicate that, except for one trip when Jesus specifically (and surprisingly to his disciples) went through Samaria, he followed Jewish custom and avoided Samaria when traveling between Galilee and Judea. A group of scholars have suggested three routes that were likely used during the time of Jesus.

The first path goes through Samaria. This path would have been the shortest, but most Jews chose to avoid it for hatred of the Samaritans, religious restrictions, and safety reasons. Josephus records a violent quarrel between some Galilean Jews and Samaritans when the Jews were passing through Samaria on this route.

The second path lies to the west and is part of the coastal route. It was the longest of the three paths. Furthermore, it still crossed some portion of Samaria and was therefore avoided.

The third pathway crossed over the Jordan River and followed the King's Highway or, perhaps, the route through the Jordan River Valley. We know that Jesus frequented this path since he reported visiting the Decapolis (which of the ten cities is unknown), Peræa, and smaller villages like Bethpage and Bethany. Because of the Jewish communities in Peræa, this path was safest of the three and more hospitable for Jewish travelers. The trip can easily be traveled today in a few hours but in Jesus' time it could take up to a week.¹²⁵ The Jordanian path may have been inferred by Jesus when he related the parable of the Good Samaritan that took place on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho—clearly a route that would be known to Jesus.

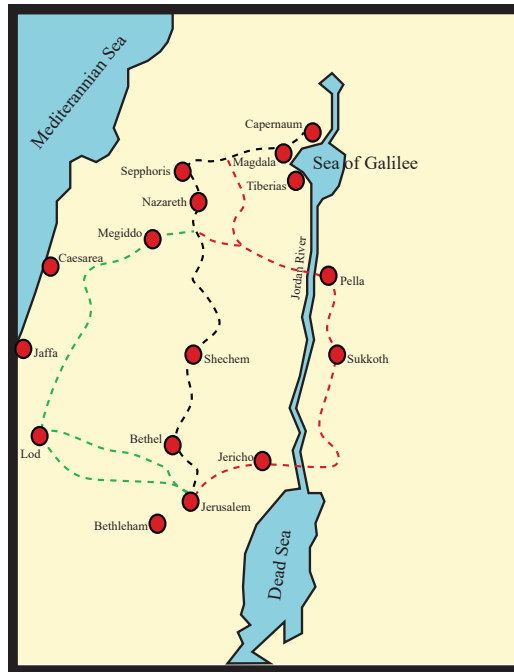


Figure 57: Routes between Judea and Galilee at the time of Jesus

Jesus clearly entered the area covered by modern Jordan several times during his ministry. It is helpful to discuss these locations in this history of Jordan. We will discuss the locations that are specifically mentioned in the Bible. Many other places are identified by local traditions, but these have not been verified at present.

Decapolis

General Reference to Decapolis

Listing the biblical references to the Decapolis as a group followed by individual Decapolis cities can give insight into the frequency of Jesus' visits and their purpose. Note that all the Decapolis cities are either on the King's Highway or on the Jordan River Highway with the exception of Scythopolis that is in Samaria.



Figure 58: Decapolis cities

- Matthew 4:25—“And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.” This verse shows that the teachings had spread to the eastern side of the Jordan River and implies that the gospel was taught in the east in the Decapolis and other places beyond Jordan.
- Matthew 5:20—“And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.” This verse gives some indication of how the word about Jesus was spread—probably by individuals who had been healed. At the feeding of 5,000, the scriptures say that Jesus healed many, thus suggesting that they may be the conveyors of the message.
- Mark 7:31—“Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.” This verse shows that he taught in Lebanon and gives some indication of his path into the Decapolis, perhaps a northern route that bypassed Palestine or at least went on the north side of the Sea of Galilee and then followed the King’s Highway into Decapolis.

Gadara (modern Umm Qais)

- Matthew 8:28 — “When he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs coming out of the tombs met him. They were so fierce that no one could pass that way.” This verse gives some information that demoniacs lived in the tombs of Gadara. These tombs can still be visited and are just below the ruins of the ancient town of Gadara, near modern Umm Qais in northern Jordan.
- Luke 8:30-37 — “And Jesus asked him. “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him. They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. And the demons came out of the

man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. The people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned.” This interesting verse solidifies the position of Gadara as being on the hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee. That is certainly true, although the lake shore today is about 500 yards away, but is easily visible from the ruins of Gadara and from the tomb area nearby. Another location is also claimed for Gadara that is farther north along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and much closer to the water. The fear in the people likely arose because of their fear of demons and the power that Jesus had over those devilish spirits. The reference to the country of Gerasenes probably refers to the entire surrounding area of the Decapolis.

Gerasa (modern Jerash)

- Mark 5:1 — “They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.” This verse clearly indicates that the city was on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. It does not link directly to the city of Jerash and may refer to the general area around it that was called Gilead in the Old Testament.
- Luke 8:26 — “Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.” Confirms the eastern side. Local tradition ties it to Jerash but it might also be a general reference.

Damascus

- There are 61 verses in which Damascus is mentioned in the Bible—45 in the Old Testament and 16 in the New Testament. All of those in the New Testament discuss events that occurred after the death of Jesus. Therefore, we can assume that Jesus did not go to Damascus personally even though it was part of the Decapolis.

In addition to the overt references to the Decapolis cities, Jesus made many other visits to the eastern side of the Jordan River that were only identified by a subtle notation such as “He crossed over” or by reference to a city, river, or some other geographical feature on the eastern side. These are identified and briefly discussed in the Booklet at the end of this book. Some of the most important are discussed below.

Bethany beyond Jordan

Visit to the Village of Bethany

This village in Jordan, directly across the river from Jericho, is near the crossing used by Joshua and the place where Elijah ascended to heaven. It is near John the Baptist’s cave and the place where Jesus was baptized. It is also mentioned in Mark 10 in connection with several other important events in the life of Jesus.

The chapter begins by telling us that Jesus traveled from Galilee to Judea by crossing over the Jordan River—his typical pathway for this journey as discussed previously in this chapter. He was confronted by some Pharisees who asked about marriage and divorce. After answering them by confirming the sanctity of marriage, some children came toward him but were stopped by the disciples. However, Jesus said that the children should be brought to him and added, “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” Then a man came running to him and asked what he should do to inherit

eternal life. Jesus then recited a list of commandments that should be observed, and the man replied that he kept them all. Then Jesus told him that he lacked one thing—he should sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor. But the man left in sadness because he had great possessions. Then Jesus talked to his disciples about the difficulty of having possessions and entering heaven saying, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” He then said that, however, with God all things are possible. Jesus continued to counsel with the disciples, and they crossed over the Jordan and came to Jericho. (Mark 10:46)

They then came to the villages of Bethpage and Bethany (not the same Bethany as over Jordan but on the back side of the Mount of Olives). Jesus then triumphally entered Jerusalem the following Sunday.

Although not mentioned in Matthew, Mark, or Luke, the gospel of John (11:1—44) relates another miracle that happened on this trip—the raising of Lazarus. In the Book of John this occurred in the Bethany near Jerusalem but Clement, an early Church Father, said that there was actually only one Bethany site involved in the story and it was the site beyond the Jordan. Clement sites as his authority a version of the Gospel of Mark in which a woman asked Jesus to raise her brother who had died. Jesus raised him and then stayed at their house for six days and taught the young man. After that, the scripture says, Jesus returned to the other side of Jordan. Note that this “secret” version of Mark has Jesus staying in the place for enough time to be ritually cleaned from having contact with a tomb or corpse. The question arises, “How reliable is this Secret Gospel?” Many scholars have doubts about its authenticity, but some recent studies and tests have caused others to accept the possibility of it being authentic.¹²⁶ In any case, many of the events related in Mark clearly occurred in Jordan, and, perhaps, all of them although the traditional site for the raising of Lazarus is a tomb that is located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

Other New Testament References to Non-Judean Visits

Arabia

- Galatians 1:17—“nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.” This verse, written by the Apostle Paul, leads us to a discussion of other cities on the eastern side of the Jordan River that were visited by other New Testament figures. Very little has been written about Paul’s journey to Arabia, probably because the only reference to it is the verse in Galatians.

The first question is, Where was Arabia? The Greek geographer Strabo defined Arabia Felix as the entire Arabian peninsula. But first century Jews, like Paul, were more likely to have considered Arabia to be Arabia Petrea or Arabia of the Nabateans. In Paul’s time Arabia Petrea was most of modern Jordan. Most likely, he was trying to make converts in Jordan and ran afoul of the Nabatean king, Aretas. This is suggested by the statement in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33 wherein it says that Aretas was pursuing him in Damascus and to escape Paul was lowered in a basket through a hole in the city wall. Evidently Aretas felt that Paul was disturbing the peace.

The Jews and Nabateans had been enemies since the days of Herod the Great. To calm things, Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, married the daughter of the Nabatean king but divorced her in order to marry his brother’s wife, Herodias. (Remember the story of John the Baptist.) The Nabatean king attacked Galilee in a revenge raid. Therefore, Paul’s presence (thought to be about 34 A.D., just after his conversion on the road to Damascus) was at a very difficult period for relations between the Jews and the Nabateans. Hence, Paul soon left Arabia.¹²⁷ At about that time, however, the gospel of Jesus was announced to the world, including the Arabs, on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:11.

Syria

- Matthew 4:24-25 — “The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and he healed them.” Syria was likely the entire Roman province of Syria that included modern Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine.

Flight from Jerusalem

Pentecost

By the time of Passover in the third year of Jesus’ ministry, the number of believers had grown to be in the thousands. This large number was apparent on Palm Sunday when a huge crowd lined the streets of Jerusalem to welcome him and shout his praises. There were many believers in Palestine and also in Jordan. Some have speculated that the number in Jordan was more than in Palestine.

The death of Jesus later in that week may have frightened some of the believers away, but then, 50 days later on Pentecost, we are told that 3,000 people from many different countries believed in the words of the apostles (which each person understood in their own language) and were baptized that day. We are also told that these converts remained faithful.

The Bible continues the story of the apostles who preached and performed miracles in the area around Jerusalem. Presumably, this resulted in many more people who believed and were baptized. The Jerusalem group became large enough that the apostles needed a local leader and as reported by the 3rd century historian Eusebius, they appointed James, the brother of Jesus, to be the bishop of Jerusalem.

Pella and Beyond

When the tensions became very high between the Jews and the Romans just before the start of the First Jewish-Roman War (in 66 A.D.), the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem and surrounding areas were, like all of the local population, in danger of being massacred by the Romans. Sometime before the destruction, the followers of Jesus, in Jerusalem and Galilee, fled to the other side of the Jordan River and sought refuge in Pella, one of the Decapolis cities. These events were recorded by Eusebius, the fourth-century historian. He said that the believers were instructed to leave by a revelation.¹²⁸

The choice of Pella would have been logical. There were already many believers living on the eastern side of the Jordan River, especially in the Decapolis cities where Jesus had visited, preached, and healed. Also, the eastern side of the river was relatively calm because the several Jewish factions that were causing trouble for the Romans were only sparsely present on the eastern side. Jordan had been a refuge for Jesus to escape, temporarily, the turmoil of the western side and it continued to be a refuge for his followers.

Archaeological work has examined the Pella area and found a series of interconnected caves in the walls of a wadi that is located about a mile south of the main city center of Pella. These caves showed evidence of occupation for many years, probably dating to the first century, at least. Some of the evidence suggests the people were followers of Jesus. Furthermore, some early Christian scholars in the second and third centuries came from Pella, suggesting that a Christian colony existed there.¹²⁹

The desert on the eastern side of Jordan may have also been a place of refuge for those who wanted even more security and isolation than would be afforded in Pella. The Ministry of Tourism of Jordan has recently

opened to tourists some caves in the eastern desert of Jordan that have evidence of occupation and Christian worship and date to the first century A.D.



Figure 59: Remote Christian cave church and home in eastern Jordan

All the World

After the ascension of Jesus, the apostles went into all the world (Mark 16:19-20, Matthew 28:19-20). The locations that the apostles went to are mostly assigned based on fragmentary accounts and tradition. Even with these uncertainties, the locations illustrate the immediate widespread impact of Jesus’ teachings.

Teaching Locations of the Apostles

Apostle	Location
Peter	Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Asia, Rome
Thomas	Parthia, Syria, India
Andrew	Scythia, Russia, Asia Minor, Greece
James (son of Zebedee)	Killed by Herod Antipas
John	Ephesus, Asia Minor
Philip	Carthage, North Africa, Asia Minor
Bartholomew	Armenia, Ethiopia, Southern Arabia
Matthew	Persia, Ethiopia, Asia Minor
James son of Alpheus	Syria
Simon, the Zealot	Persia
Matthias (replaced Judas)	Syria
Thaddeus	Parthia
Paul	Asia Minor, Greece, Malta, Spain, Rome

Principal Cities of Christianity

Shifting from Jerusalem to Political Capitals

For almost 250 years following the time of Jesus, the believers in his teachings were generally located in relatively small groups centered in major metropolitan locations. They met in homes for weekly services and tried to help each other as they could. These small congregations were coordinated by four major centers, each with a bishop as the leader, and each having a different function. Jerusalem was the first of these centers as it was the governing ecclesiastical city and the homeland of most of the apostles and a large group of adherents. It was the location where the apostles began their ministry. However, with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 66-70 A.D. and the migration of many believers out of Judea and Galilee to Pella, the ecclesiastical center of the religion moved to Antioch, a city in Syria and the headquarters of the Roman authority over the Levant. This is where Paul dwelt and the city from where he launched his later missions. The believers were first called Christians in Antioch as recorded in Acts 11:26.

After some years and with the missionary efforts of the apostles, other cities became important for the new Christian Church. Because of the political power of Rome and the death of Peter and Paul in that city, Rome became a major center in the latter part of the first century A.D. Alexandria had a large Jewish population and many there were converted to the Christian gospel. Some of those were intellectuals who taught in the great library. These became important Fathers of the Church who shaped Christian doctrine, often by combining it with Greek philosophy. Perhaps the most well-known of these scholars were Clement of Alexandria and his student, Origen. They lived at the beginning of the 3rd century.

When Constantine came to power at the beginning of the 4th century, he established Constantinople as the headquarters of the Roman Empire. Rather than reduce the ecclesiastical importance of the city of Rome, he simply designated Constantinople as a co-capital of Christianity. Each of these cities had a bishop and these began to assume the responsibility of naming and controlling other bishops in surrounding areas. Eventually the bishops in Rome and Constantinople became more powerful than any other bishops. In Rome the bishop began to be called pope (derived from “father” in Latin) and in Constantinople the bishop there was called patriarch (derived from “father” in Greek).

Unity and then Division of the Roman Empire

General Persecution in the Roman Empire

From the death of Jesus to about 300 A.D. the Roman Emperors occasionally persecuted the believers in Jesus but usually ignored them. The persecution generally came either because the emperors were angry at the troublesome Jews and felt that the Christians were just another Jewish sect or because something bad had happened in the empire and the emperor wanted to have a group to blame for the problem. (This latter reason was the cause of Nero’s persecution as a reaction to the burning of Rome.) In general, however, the emperors were much more concerned about invasions of their territory by hostile groups on the empire’s periphery like the Germans, Picts, and Parthians.

The situation changed dramatically with the ascension of Diocletian as the Roman emperor. Even though, or perhaps because, Diocletian divided the empire into four administrative areas, he wanted to unite the empire’s many ethnic and religious minorities. He therefore rescinded Christian and other minority religions’ rights of worship and declared that all must comply with traditional pagan religious practices including an order that all inhabitants must sacrifice to Roman gods. Failure to comply could result in execution. The compliance with this law varied across the empire—weakest in Great Britain and Gaul, and strongest in the eastern provinces, including Syria and Jordan.

Palestine is the only region for which an extended local perspective of the Diocletian persecution exists. Eusebius was a resident in Caesarea, a city on the Mediterranean coast in Palestine, and wrote mostly about his friends and their lives before the persecutions as well as giving descriptions of the actual martyrdoms. He related that a series of edicts were issued to ever tighten the restrictions and enforce their adherence. He described how one official seemed to delight in using different methods to kill the people, ranging from drowning to gladiator contests, to burning alive, to being exposed to a beast, and others. Some people were executed for showing sympathy for those already killed.

Scholars differ significantly in their assessment of the number of Christians that were killed during the Diocletian persecution. Priests told many martyrdom stories throughout the Middle Ages to build faith and to increase support for the church. Modern scholars believe that the number of killings was greatly exaggerated and point to the continued growth of Christianity following Diocletian as proof that many Christians remained after Diocletian. Perhaps modern author Stephen Williams summarized the situation best when he wrote, “even allowing a margin for invention, what remains is terrible enough...[W]e live in an age which has experienced similar things and knows how unsound is that civilized smile of incredulity at such reports. Things can be, have been, every bit as bad as our worst imaginings.”¹³⁰

Constantine

In the approximately 20 years between the end of Diocletian’s reign and the ascension of Constantine as sole emperor, there were many claimants to the Roman imperial throne and many civil wars. At the end of these wars only Constantine and Maxentius remained of the claimants. Their armies met at the Milvian Bridge, just outside Rome. The story of the battle (some of it legend) states that Constantine and his soldiers had a vision before the battle where they saw a Christian symbol, the Chi (X) Rho (P), in the sky. These two letters in the Greek alphabet were taken by Christians from the first two letters of Christ in Greek and also represented His crucifixion and resurrection). This was interpreted as a sign that the army should paint that symbol on their shields and fight the battle in the name of the Christian God.



Figure 60: The Chi-Rho Christian symbol

Constantine won the battle of the Milvian Bridge and, from that time forward, he favored the Christian religion over all others even though he did not formally become a Christian until just before he died. His mother became a Christian in 312 A.D. shortly after the battle at Milvian Bridge.

Constantine built a new capital city for the empire on the banks of the Bosphorus in modern Turkey at a site previously called Byzantium. This city, called by Constantine, New Rome, was later named Constantinople. It was built as a Christian city with many churches and other Christian architecture. He also gave tax advantages to Christian clergy and required non-Christians to pay for the new city. People converted by the hundreds. This led to the closure of many pagan temples because of lack of support.

He also adopted some Christian practices such as eliminating death by crucifixion (as a sign of respect for Christ's death) and using hanging instead. Sunday was declared to be a holy day and markets were banned and public offices were closed on that day. Constantine wanted to use Christianity to unite the people of the empire (similar to Diocletian but with Christian principles). However, differences in doctrines propounded by the Church Fathers (early Christian scholars) led to wide and sometimes bitter disagreements and disputes, especially about the nature of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in 325 A.D., Constantine assembled the Christian bishops into a council that was held at the city of Nicaea, a few miles south of Constantinople. After much discussion, the majority of bishops agreed on one position regarding the Godhead. It was derived mostly from Greek philosophy reflecting the rise of Plato's teachings in Roman intellectual circles.¹³¹ A creed was created to articulate the majority position and Constantine then began to enforce the creed as the only correct doctrine. He even persecuted and sometimes killed those who taught otherwise.

Constantine gave his mother, Helena, access to imperial funds and asked her to visit the Holy Land and identify locations and relics that were important to Christians. In A.D. 326 to 328 she visited the Levant and there she identified several important sites including the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the place of ascension, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and a wooden cross that she declared to be the True Cross of the crucifixion. She also visited a monastery in the Sinai desert and declared a nearby mountain to be the Mountain of God. Several of the places and items she identified are now disputed.

Post-Constantine Christianity in the Empire

After Constantine the number of Christian adherents continued to grow throughout the Roman Empire. All succeeding Roman emperors except one were Christians. In 380 A.D. the emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire. This step ensured that the emperor had final control and power over the church and its hierarchy. The emperors could choose the popes and patriarchs or, as became the custom later, ratify the election of the pope and patriarch. (When elections began rather than appointments, the pope's major responsibility was to be bishop of Rome and he was elected by vote of the Christian adherents in the city of Rome. Election by cardinals came much later.)

Divided Empire

Even though Constantine had reversed the administrative division of the empire done by Diocletian, the differences between the Latin-speaking west and the Greek-speaking east grew and made governance of the entire empire difficult. The division of the empire into a Greek east and a Latin west was made to help with administration. Gradually the problems with dual centers of power (Rome and Constantinople) became intolerable, including rival claims and wars between dual emperors, and the empire was formally split in 395 A.D. Both halves continued to refer to themselves as the Roman Empire, but to eliminate confusion, historians have referred to the Latin (Rome-based) half as the "Roman" Empire and the Greek (Constantinople-based) half as the "Byzantine" Empire (after the name of the place on the Bosphorus where Constantinople was built).

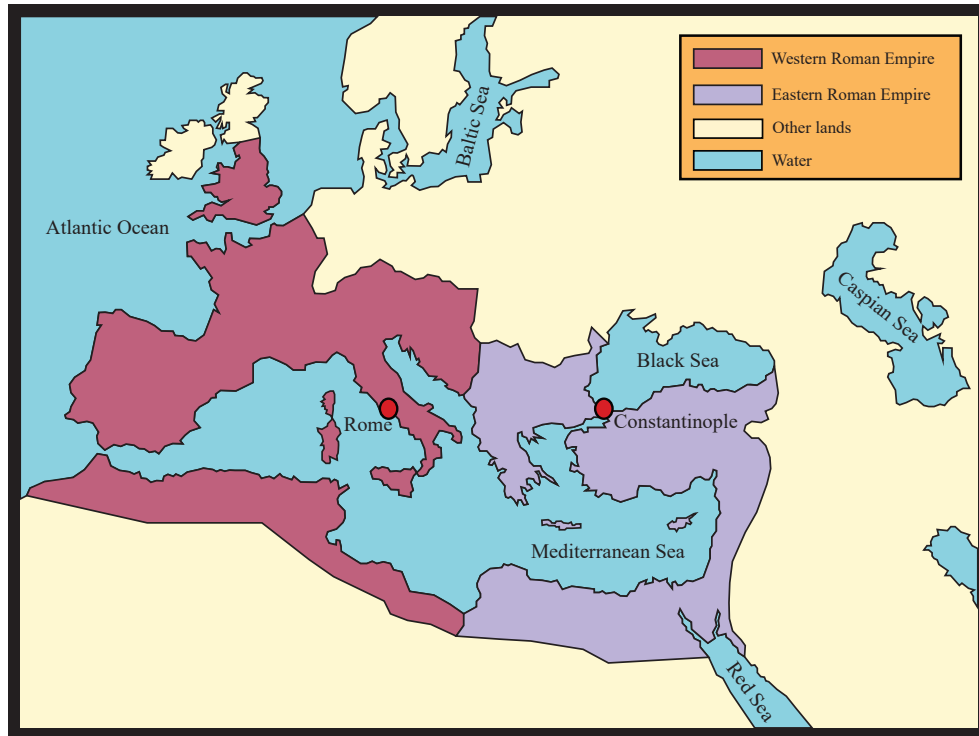


Figure 61: Division of the Roman Empire in 395 A.D.

Fall of the Roman (Western) Empire

Around 400 A.D. the Huns, a tribe originating from central Asia, attempted to invade the Eastern Roman Empire but were repulsed by the strong defenses in that part of the empire, especially the strength of the city of Constantinople, and by a payment in gold by the Eastern Roman Emperor. The Huns then turned to the west and confronted the Vandals, a Germanic tribe that had settled in Dacia (Romania). Throughout the period from 300 to 400 A.D., Germanic tribes were invited to enter the western part of the empire to serve as mercenaries in the Roman army. The Romans had become rich land-holding farmers and merchants and were no longer willing to serve in the army. The Vandals were one of these mercenary tribes. The Hun attack forced the Vandals to flee westward and they settled in southern Gaul (France). The Huns intended to invade Italy and sack Rome, but the leader of the Huns, Attila, died and the invasion of Italy was cancelled. The Huns then pushed further west and entered southern Gaul. There the Huns were confronted by a combined army of Romans and Visigoths, another one of the Germanic tribes that were brought into the Roman Empire to be mercenaries. The Huns were defeated and withdrew to the northeast, settling in modern Hungary.

Many years previous to their battle with the Huns, the Visigoths had been given permission to live inside the northern boundary of the Roman Empire along the Danube River. Dissatisfaction with their arrangement over the cost of food and living conditions angered the Visigoths, and in 410 A.D. they marched southward and entered Italy. They continued to the city of Rome and sacked it. After the rampage, the Visigoths came to a truce with the Romans, agreed to again be mercenaries in the Roman army, and moved westward into Gaul (France) where they encountered the Vandals. The Visigoths forced the Vandals to move out of Gaul and into Spain. The Visigoths stayed for a few years in France where they met and defeated the Huns.

After settling into housing in France, the Visigoths were driven out of France by Clovis, the king of another German tribe—the Franks who had invaded France and established a local monarchy. The Visigoths moved into Spain and forced another confrontation between the Visigoths and the Vandals. Again, the Visigoths prevailed, and the Vandals were forced to flee to North Africa where they settled. Because of the poor

treatment they had received from the Visigoths and the Romans, the Vandals invaded southern Italy (by crossing the strait from North Africa) and marched on the city of Rome. In 455 they sacked Rome. This was the second sack of Rome by Germanic tribes. (The Vandals were obviously angry over their repeated forced moves.)

Shortly thereafter, another Germanic tribe, the Ostrogoths, saw the confusion in the Western Roman Empire and they also invaded Italy. By this time the emperor of the Western Roman Empire had moved the headquarters out of Rome—first to Milan and then to Ravenna, a city on the eastern shore of Italy that gave better transportation and communication with Constantinople. In 476 A.D. the Germanic troops captured Ravenna and forced the emperor to surrender. Before surrendering, the emperor sent his ring and other evidences of power on a ship to the emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire. This moment ended the Western Roman Empire and is called by historians the “Fall of the Roman Empire.” Note, however, that only the Western Roman Empire fell. The Eastern Roman Empire survived for another 1000 years and was called the Byzantine Empire.

Fragmented Europe

The Byzantine emperor (who then became the only Roman emperor) withdrew what was left of the Roman army in Europe and deployed it along the eastern boundary of the Byzantine Empire to fight an invasion by the Parthians. In the absence of the Roman army, all of Europe came under the control of various Germanic tribes and any semblance of centralized government disappeared. There were only local tribal kings. These kingdoms have persisted (largely) to today and have given rise to many of the countries of Europe.

The Christian church operating out of Rome became the only organization that could coordinate policies and practices throughout Europe and the pope in Rome became the most powerful leader in the west. Theoretically he was still under the authority of the emperor in Constantinople, but difficulties in communication and travel allowed the pope in Rome to operate quite independently. However, the influence of the Byzantine emperor is seen in the Greek names of several early popes who were appointed and/or approved by the Eastern Roman Emperor. The western church became known as the Roman Catholic Church and the church in Constantinople became the Eastern Orthodox Church.

An early Byzantine emperor, Justinian, designated five areas of authority for Christianity and these were the five major cities that dominated early Christian thinking and governance. The cities were Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. Each was headed by a patriarch and all but Rome continue within the Orthodox Church. Rome, of course, became the center of the Catholic Church and the designation of patriarch was changed to its Latin equivalent that is rendered as pope in English.

Byzantine Empire

Occasionally an aggressive Byzantine emperor would try to exert his will in the west. For example, after only a few years following the fall of the western empire and after the Romans defeated the Parthian invasion, the Byzantine emperor Justinian redirected his army to the west and he defeated the Vandals in North Africa and reestablished a Byzantine government there, responsible to him. The victorious army then crossed over into Italy and successfully drove the Ostrogoths out and reestablished Italy as a Byzantine province with Ravenna as the provincial capital reporting to Constantinople. Justinian even went to Ravenna and built several churches with lovely mosaics showing him, his wife, and their court in some of the churches. After his return to Constantinople, he asked his general to return from Italy and, without a strong leader, the Italian contingent of the army surrendered when they were attacked by another Germanic tribe, the Lombards. From that time onward, various Germanic tribes maintained control over all of western Europe.

Byzantine Christianity

From the 4th century when the Roman empire was divided to the 15th century when Constantinople fell, the Byzantine Empire maintained its political dominance over the eastern half of the empire although, beginning in the 7th century when Islam rose to power, the Byzantine Empire steadily lost territory and, in the end, had control over only the city of Constantinople and its immediate vicinity. Then, in 1453, even Constantinople fell to the Turks.

The Eastern Orthodox Church, headed by the patriarch in Constantinople, maintained its governance over the eastern half of the Roman Empire and became the dominant religious entity throughout the territory. However, perhaps because of the loss of Byzantine political power or because of the multiple centers of religious control that were established by Constantine, the governance of the Eastern Orthodox Church became less centrally controlled than the Roman Catholic Church. In the eastern church the patriarchs of the various centers (Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch) became equal in power and formed a governing council. Eventually this governance group was increased and the leaders of national churches in countries such as Armenia, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia became part of the governing body.

Early Church Growth in the Levant

When Constantine adopted Christianity, the population of Byzantine Palestine and Jordan grew rapidly. New buildings were constructed at a dizzying pace, trade increased, the economy flourished, jobs were plentiful especially for skilled craftsmen and artists, and agriculture was extended to new areas. Archaeological surveys of the region indicate that four times as many people lived in the area as during biblical times.¹³² The Christians in the Levant saw themselves as the original Christians and they were proud of that heritage. The Orthodox Church thrived. In Madaba, a small town southwest of Amman, there were 14 churches. In Jerash (Gerasa), a Decapolis city, there was one church in the fourth century and grew to 12 in the sixth century.¹³³ Most churches were decorated with mosaics (both walls and, especially, floors). Today, these are some of the best artifacts that assist in understanding the Byzantine Christian era.

Mosaics

Mosaic floors, made of numerous tiny colored stones called tesserae (singular, tessera) were the “carpets” in ancient villas, churches, palaces, mosques, and synagogues. Often the floors were donated by patrons, whose names are preserved in inscriptions. Some floors date from the early Greek period, sometimes showing nude figures of Greek gods, some also from the Roman period, but most mosaics are Byzantine.¹³⁴ The greatest single concentration of Mosaics is in Madaba, Jordan, including a group of monasteries in the nearby area around Mount Nebo.

By far, the most famous of these mosaics is the Madaba Map. It is on the floor of a church in downtown Madaba. The scope of the map was the Promised Land as defined by Numbers 34:1-12. The map was originally rectangular, measuring about 35 feet wide by 15 feet in length. It used an estimated 2 million tesserae in at least eight different colors to portray the cities, landscape, fauna, and flora of the region. Unfortunately, the map is only partially preserved; an estimated third of the original has been lost.

East is at the top of the map, corresponding to the biblical view of space. The south is toward the right and north to the left. The map probably extended from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to Jordan’s desert borders on the east, and from Phoenicia in the north to the Nile delta of Egypt on the southern part of the map. The map illustrates cities in a realistic manner, even showing some important buildings, and

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emphasizes the area around Madaba, probably because that is where it was made. Specific biblical sites within this region followed the writing of the fourth-century Church Father, Eusebius of Caesarea, who composed the *Onomasticon*, a gazetteer of biblical place names and their locations. The *Onomasticon* was intended as a travel guide for pilgrims.

Jerusalem lies at the center of the map and is at a larger scale than the rest of the cities. It is so accurate that it can be followed even today as a guide in locating various Byzantine buildings and streets. The map fills Jerusalem with churches and has little evidence of historical buildings and no indication of the Jewish temple, probably reflecting Byzantine views of its non-importance. Christian sites in the area are noted.

In the portion of the map shown below, note the Dead Sea with a ship and the Jordan River with fish, where some are headed toward the sea but those closer to the sea are headed away.



Figure 62: Portion of the Madaba Map

(https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=Madaba+Jordan&search_type=usertyped&asset_id=363388602)

The discovery of the Madaba Map is an interesting story. After the mosaic was constructed in the 7th century, the city of Madaba was destroyed by an earthquake in 746 and the town was abandoned. In the 1880s a dispute between two tribes of Christians, living in Kerak, Jordan, was brought for resolution before a magistrate of the Ottoman Empire, who controlled Jordan in that time. He decided that the best solution was for one of the tribes to move to a new location. Knowing that Madaba was previously a strong Christian center that had been abandoned, the magistrate gave the city to one of the tribes and they moved. While in Madaba, the people began to restore the churches and to explore other archaeological sites. In that process

they discovered the Madaba Map (and many others). They built churches over the ruined sites and tried to save the mosaics as best they could.



Figure 63: Madaba Map as seen today within the church of Saint George

Mount Nebo is about 10 miles from the city of Madaba and is the location of a group of monasteries built in the early Byzantine period to honor this place where Moses viewed the promised land. An early pilgrim, Egeria (381-384 A.D.), visited the area and gave a report that is interesting reading.

We set out and came to the foot of Mount Nebo; it was very high, but mostly possible to ascend on the donkeys, though there were some steeper parts where we had to dismount, and it was hard going.

On reaching the mountain-top we came to a church, not a very big one, right on the summit of Mount Nebo, and inside, in the position of the pulpit, I saw a slightly raised place about the size of a normal tomb. I asked about it, and the holy men replied, "Holy Moses was buried here—by angels, since the Bible tells us 'No human being knoweth his burial.' And there is no doubt that it was angels who buried him since the actual tomb where he was buried can be seen today. Our predecessors here pointed out this place to us, and now we point it out to you. They told us that this tradition came from their predecessors."

Soon we had had the prayer and the other things which were usual in a holy place, and we were about to leave the church. Then the presbyters and holy monks who were familiar with the place asked us, "Would you like to see the places which are described in the Books of Moses? If so, go out of the church door to the actual summit, the place which has the view, and spend a little time looking

Chapter 10: Christian Era

at it. We will tell you which places you see.” This delighted us, and we went straight out. From the church door itself we saw where the Jordan runs into the Dead Sea, and the place was down below where we were standing. Then, facing us, we saw Livias on our side of the Jordan, and Jericho on the far side, since the height in front the church door, where we were standing, jutted out over the valley. In fact, from there you can see most of Palestine, the Promised Land and everything in the area of Jordan as far as the eye can see.¹³⁵

Another interesting location not too far from Madaba is Umm ar-Rasas. This was a large Byzantine village that was abandoned in which several mosaics were found. One, the largest intact mosaic in Jordan, has been protected with a roof and is impressive both in size and art. There is a nice museum to give background and other helps for the tour of the area.

Only a few hundred feet away from Um ar-Rasas is a stylite tower. This place was used by monks in the Middle Ages as a place of mortification of their bodies. A monk would ascend the tower and stay there for days or weeks, sometimes with little or no drink or food. Some would even stand on one leg for extended periods and go through other tortuous acts to show their faith and/or repentance.



Figure 64: Stylite tower at Umm ar-Rasas

Collapse of the Byzantine Empire

In the 7th century, the Byzantine Empire began to lose territory to invaders. The first successful invasion was from the Persians in 603 A.D. and that began a series of wars that lasted to 628 and exhausted Byzantine resources even though the Byzantines won the war and drove the Persians from the area. To celebrate the victory, the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, visited the Holy Land and on that trip, he combined visits to both sides of the Jordan River which he united into a confederation with Palestine (west of the river) retaining its name and the area east of the river being designated as Jordan.¹³⁶

Then, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the Muslim invasions resulted in a loss of Byzantine's richest provinces—Egypt and Syria (including Jordan and Palestine). At the end of the 7th century, north Africa was also lost to the Muslims.

Iconoclasm

In the 8th century an aggressive Byzantine emperor forced a change on the Eastern Orthodox Church and tried to impose the same change on the Roman Catholic Church. This change was the elimination of any image that might serve as an object of worship. He felt that the long tradition of icons in the Orthodox Church and the use of statues in the Catholic Church were violations of the commandment to not worship idols. The Orthodox Patriarch complied with the order and across the areas under his authority, including the Levant, churches began to destroy icons and to deface other images in churches, such as those in mosaics. This process became known as iconoclasm.

A curious feature of iconoclasm occurred in Jordan and Palestine. As with other areas, the region's Byzantine churches were often decorated with depictions of plants, animals, ordinary human beings, and holy figures such as Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the disciples, and saints. During the iconoclasm period, most of these images were defaced but it was gently done. Those who obliterated the images typically removed the tiles with great care, scrambled them together, and reinserted them into the pavement—preserving the mosaic while erasing the images. One mosaic in Ma'in, Jordan, is particularly interesting. The image-destroyers transformed a bull into a tree but left the animal's hooves intact. (See below.) In another case a lion was changed to flowers and the artistic quality was retained. At Umm ar-Rasas in Jordan, the undamaged fish in a mosaic in the Church of St. Stephen was left intact and was clearly visible to the image-destroyers who obliterated other images close by. On the other hand, very few images decorating secular buildings were damaged in Jordan or Palestine.¹³⁷

The ban on images continued for several years until, in the mid-ninth century, the ban was lifted, largely at the insistence of the faithful who loved the images.



Figure 65: Example of "gentle" iconoclasm (<https://www.baslibrary.org/images/bsao0205045131jpg>)

In the Catholic Church, the pope ignored the order to ban images and openly defied the emperor. The pope also decided to further assert his independence by naming a new, European-based, Roman emperor who would be a direct challenge to the authority of the Byzantine emperor. Therefore, on Christmas day in 800 A.D., the pope crowned Charlemagne, the king of the Franks and conqueror of most of Europe, as the Holy Roman Emperor. This title not only challenged the Byzantines, but it proclaimed that the European emperor was holy, that is, appointed by and under the authority of the pope. This primacy of the pope over the kings of Europe continued for many years and was not successfully challenged until the Reformation in the 16th century.

Stronger Byzantine emperors in the 9th–11th century expanded the empire, but that expansion and recovery ended in 1071 when the Seljuk Turks attacked the empire and took possession of most of Asia Minor. Throughout all this period, the city of Constantinople was a secure fortress, but that changed when the Fourth Crusade sacked the city in 1204. This occurred because a disgruntled member of the Byzantine royal family showed the Crusaders a way to enter the city secretly. From that point onward, the Byzantine Empire was merely a local power in the area surrounding Constantinople.

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Finally, in 1453, Constantinople was attacked by the Ottoman Turks. By this time gunpowder and canons had given the siege army sufficient fire power to blast through the mighty triple walls of Constantinople and the city fell. This Ottoman victory was the end of the Byzantine Empire.

The Orthodox churches in key countries like Egypt (called the Coptic Church), Armenia, Ethiopia, Syria, Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia, and others had long-since developed considerable independence under their own patriarchs. The Russian Czar had married a Byzantine princess and, when Constantinople fell, the title of Caesar by which the emperor was still known, was transferred to Russia and became, in Russian, Czar. Therefore, in some sense, the Roman Empire lasted until the Russian Revolution in 1917.

Chapter 11: Muslims and Crusaders

Origins of Islam

Arabs

The Islamic world began with Mohammed, a well-liked young man living in the city of Mecca in the early 7th century. He was an Arab—an ethnic group that were descended from Abraham through sons other than Isaac, especially Ishmael. The Arabs occupied lands east of the Jordan River as far east and south as the entire Arabian peninsula and north to Mesopotamia. The Arabs were mostly nomadic desert herders (Bedouins). These desert nomads were relatively untouched by the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines because they provided little economic value for trade and their lands were too sparsely populated to have military or tax importance.

In addition to the desert nomads, many Arabs, including Mohammed, were merchants who traveled the various trade routes of the Middle East, especially the King's Highway. This road was, for many years, controlled by the Nabateans, an Arab tribe. The other important trade route for Arabs was the Incense or Spice Road that led from the southern shores of the Arabian peninsula to Aqaba where it met the King's Highway. This latter route not only carried the important spices frankincense and myrrh, but it also was the route to Egypt and Europe for spices from Indonesia, the Spice Islands, and other Asian locations. The sea route to these Asian lands was controlled by Arabs, chiefly from Oman. The Omanis distributed the goods by traveling along the Spice (or Incense) Road and by sailing up the Red Sea and the Arabian or Persian Gulf.

Since Mohammed lived in Mecca and it sat astride the Incense Road, we can logically assume that when he went to work for a widow in Mecca, Khadijah, who owned a trading company, that part of their trade was spices. Mohammed became an expert merchant who was renowned for his honesty. He was impressive as an individual and eventually married Khadijah.

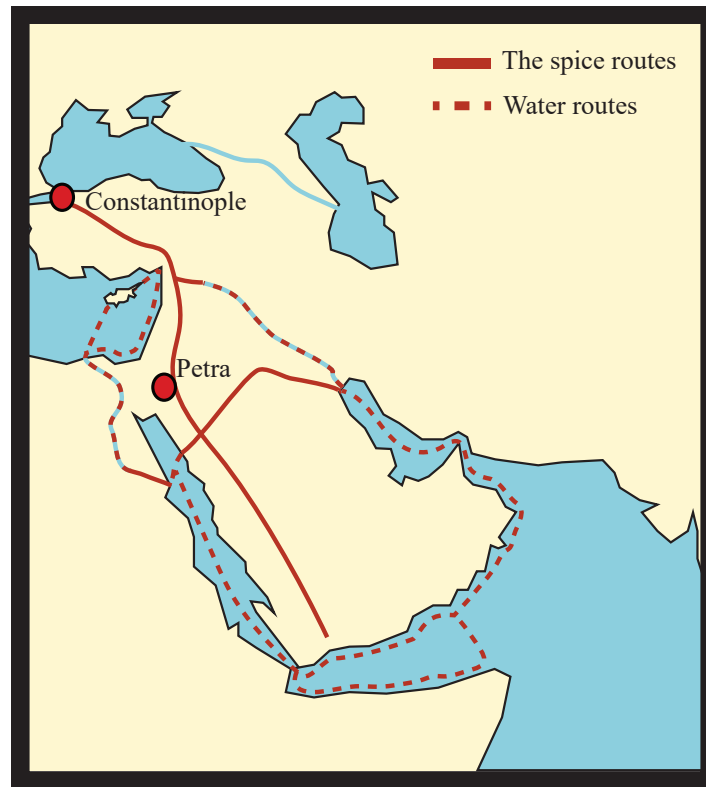


Figure 66: Incense or Spice Road

Mecca was also a major Arab religious center. Once a year Arabs would visit Mecca to worship the many pagan gods found inside and around the holy place called the Kaaba, a building that housed a stone that fell from heaven and led Adam and Eve to build an altar. The small building was refurbished by Abraham and Ishmael. It was the holiest place in the world for most Arabs.

Calling of Mohammed

Mohammed was a religious young man and often went into a cave in a mountain near Mecca to pray and meditate. On one of these occasions, he was visited by the Angel Gabriel who called him to be a prophet and dictated some words of Allah (God) to Mohammed. This was the beginning of the Islamic holy book—the Qur'an. Mohammed was also told that the Jewish and Christian religions had strayed from God's true path and a restoration of the original religion as practiced by Abraham was needed. Mohammed was to be the prophet to start that restored religion. He began to tell others what he heard from Gabriel and several, including Khadijah, were converted to the belief in the one true god, Allah. However, because Mohammed preached against idol worship, the leaders of Mecca (Quraysh) became afraid that the new religion, soon to be called Islam and the believers to be called Muslims, would cause the idols to be smashed and the money made from the annual visits of the Arab people would stop. Therefore, the leaders of Mecca decided to kill Mohammed.

Mohammed had a reputation for being creative and a problem solver that he earned as a young man when he solved a problem in the Kaaba when the rock fell from its platform during an earthquake. The local tribes all wanted to have the honor of replacing the rock and were arguing. Mohammed heard them and volunteered a solution—place the rock on a blanket and let each tribe hold a corner while the rock was placed on the platform, thus enabling all of them to jointly replace the rock. When he grew older, his reputation for problem solving was further enhanced by his expertise as a merchant and his ability to supervise a caravan.

***Hegira* and Interactions with Jews and Christians**

Therefore, Mohammed received an invitation from the people in Yathrib, a city about 250 miles northeast of Mecca, to help solve a problem between the tribes in their city. Sensing the dangers in Mecca from the potential conflict of his teachings and the Quraysh, Mohammed led his followers out of Mecca to the city of Yathrib (now known as Medina) and there he continued to receive the word of Allah from Gabriel and to define the new religion. This move is called the *hegira*, and it marks the first year of the Islamic calendar.

Mohammed learned much from the Jewish colony in Yathrib and from the Christians who lived there. Some of the Christian and Jewish practices, such as praying in the direction of Jerusalem and teachings (such as the belief in a day of judgment) were incorporated into Islam.

Much of the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) and some of the Christian scriptures (New Testament) were understood by Mohammed to be true although parts were thought to be corrupted or incomplete. Prophets like Abraham, Noah, Lot, Moses, and Jesus were given great respect. Some major differences in belief such as the Christian belief in the death and resurrection of Christ and the Jewish belief that only Jews were chosen by God were declared to be untrue. Therefore, the Christians and Jews in Medina were largely unresponsive to Mohammed's message. This led to a distancing of Islam from Christianity and Judaism, as was seen in Islam's change in prayer orientation from Jerusalem to Mecca and from worship on Saturday to Friday. Mohammed also instituted practices that were foreign to both Christianity and Judaism such as the *hajj* (a visit to Mecca and participation in a special ritual that is an obligation for Muslims if they are able). Other Christian and Jewish practices, like fasting, were retained but modified in the way they were done.

Problems in Medina

The followers in Medina had little emotional or financial support from the surrounding population and were struggling to obtain the necessities of life. Mohammed began to raid caravans of the Quraysh (those tribes in Mecca that had rejected and threatened the life of Muslims, including Mohammed) to obtain money for the needs of his followers. This was a traditional Arab practice, but one that was not appreciated by surrounding tribes and visiting merchants. This began an Islamic policy of activism in the name of religion, similar to earlier action by Jews against the people in Canaan when Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land and, later, by the crusaders against people in the Holy Land. Some of Mohammed's harshest critics were the non-believers (especially Jews) in Medina and the people of Mecca who suffered because of the caravan raids.

When Mohammed tried to conduct a *hajj* to Mecca, he was turned away. This angered the Muslims, but a truce was signed with the people in Mecca. However, the truce was soon breached, and the Muslims marched on Mecca and captured the city. Idols were smashed and the Kaaba became the holiest site in Islam. Through a series of miraculous events, the leaders of Mecca soon converted to Islam and accepted Mohammed as their leader.

Sunnis and Shi'ites

This was a time in history when groups increased their wealth, power, and sometimes religion through warfare and the Muslims believed that the time was right for them to expand their territory. Mohammed directed some Islamic warriors to attack other Arab tribes within the Arabian peninsula—converting them and also incorporating them into a larger and more unified Arab nation. These attacks were largely successful and, within a few years, most people in Arabia had converted to Islam and were followers of Mohammed.

However, Mohammed died in 632 A.D. and the leadership of Islam became a dividing issue for the Muslims. The majority of followers supported Mohammed's close associates to be the leaders and a series of caliphs (principal religious leaders) took control over the religion. These first four caliphs were all of the same tribe and the first three were related to Mohammed's wives (he had 12 wives) while the fourth caliph was Mohammed's nephew, Ali, who married Mohammed's daughter, Fatima.

The people who followed the first four caliphs were called Sunni. Other followers believed that the leadership should be descendants of Mohammed's family and therefore believed that Mohammed's nephew, Ali, should be the leader of the religion. These people were called the Shi'ites. Over time the two groups have grown apart with the Sunnis believing in a simpler religion with less ritual. The Shi'ites (Shia) have more ritual and observe different holy days. Most of the Shi'ites live in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. The Muslims who live in Jordan, Palestine, and Arabia are mostly Sunni. Muslims outside the Middle East are also mostly Sunni.



Figure 67: Location of most Shi'ites

Sadly, the question of Islamic leadership was often solved with violence. Three of the first four caliphs were assassinated over the approximately 30 years in which Islam was ruled from Medina. This first group of leaders has been named the Rashidun Caliphate.

Expansion of Islam

Conquering the Levant

While Mohammed was building the religion in Arabia, the Byzantines who controlled the Levant, were under attack by the Persians who successfully captured much of the area. The Byzantines were able to

gradually rebuild their army under a succeeding emperor and defeat the Persians in a series of battles. Therefore, after ruling for 15 years, the Persians were forced out of the Levant and withdrew to Iraq.

Within a decade of the Byzantine reconquest of the Levant, a small army of Islamic soldiers entered Jordan and confronted the Christian army at Mu'tah, near the city of Kerak. The Muslim force of 3,000 engaged the Byzantine army of 200,000 and soon the Muslims fled the battlefield.

Shortly thereafter, the first successful battle by Muslims outside of Arabia was in Iraq where a newly-formed and larger Muslim force confronted the Persian army that had recently been driven out of the Levant. The Muslims were successful in capturing all of Iraq and within a short period most of the Arabs in Iraq converted to Islam. (After about 100 years, a family from these early converts took control of the religion and launched a caliphate centered in Iraq (Baghdad), but much happened before then that will be discussed first.)

After the success in Iraq, a second, separate, Muslim army was sent toward Damascus. But the second army proved to be too small to combat the Byzantine forces in Syria. This second Muslim army waited in Syria until the first army solidified the Islamic position in Iraq, and then the first Muslim army marched to Syria and combined with the second army and Damascus fell to the Muslims. Just as with Iraq, the people of Syria were converted to Islam. (About 30 years later, a group of Syrian followers began a new caliphate that ruled from Damascus, and this will be discussed later.)

A third Muslim army began battles in southern Jordan and, this time, won most of the battles as they advanced along the King's Highway. Eventually the three Muslim armies all arrived at the Yarmouk River, the northern border of modern Jordan, and there the Muslim army of about 40,000 met the Byzantine army of about 70,000. After a difficult 6-day battle, the Muslim army was victorious, and the Byzantines fled the area. The Muslims had taken control over Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. This new territory was added to the lands of the Arabian Peninsula previously conquered and was governed by a single caliphate from Medina.

At the time of the battle at the Yarmouk River, the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, was staying in Antioch, Syria. When he was told of the loss at the Yarmouk River, he was devastated and blamed the defeat on his own sinful behavior. (He had an incestuous marriage). Upon the counsel of his advisors, he left aboard a ship for Constantinople with the True Cross that had been recovered from the Persians and was being stored in Syria. When he arrived at Constantinople, he was informed that he had neither the forces nor the money to try and recover the Levant and Mesopotamia. He therefore withdrew his armies from all the Muslim-occupied areas in the Levant and concentrated them in protecting Egypt and Anatolia (modern Turkey). The area of Jordan, along with the rest of the Levant, was securely in Muslim hands.

By the mid-7th century, all the major cities of the Levant except Caesarea and Jerusalem were occupied by invading Muslim armies, some without a fight. Caesarea refused to surrender, and a siege was established. Although it was able to hold out for a considerable time by receiving support by ship from Constantinople, Caesarea finally succumbed and was taken.

Seeing the fate of other cities, the Christian patriarch of Jerusalem decided to open the gates of the city and it was occupied by Muslims without a struggle. However, the patriarch refused to formally surrender except to the current caliph, 'Umar (or Omar) who was in Medina. Therefore, the caliph traveled to Jerusalem and went to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher where the patriarch invited him to enter and pray. Omar politely refused so as to not set a precedent and thereby endanger the church's status as a Christian holy site. Instead, he prayed on the outside in the courtyard and accepted the surrender.¹³⁸ He also ascended the temple mount (called the Noble Sanctuary or *Haram al-Sharif* by Muslims). The first mosque built in Jerusalem was named for Omar.

Effects of Muslim Occupation

The Muslim presence in the Levant was, initially, most evident in architecture in Jerusalem. The city quickly became a beehive of building activity transforming it into a Muslim city with the crowning gem of the activity located on the temple mount/noble sanctuary—the Dome of the Rock. The large and beautiful building was built around a large stone that Muslims believe was the place from which Mohammed ascended on his horse (called Buraq) into heaven during a vision that was given to him. The building was intentionally decorated in lavish gold and blue tiles to compete in beauty and grandeur with the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulcher, also in Jerusalem. But the Dome of the Rock is more than mere competition. It is a positive statement of the Muslim truth of the “unity of God and the Prophecy of Mohammed,” as stated on its walls in permanent script. It was, in essence, a statement of Islam’s full power. It is also possible that the Dome of the Rock was built to symbolize the renewal of Solomon’s temple in contrast to the Christian belief that the temple site should remain desolate until Christ’s second coming and the Jewish belief that the rebuilding of the temple would coincide with the coming of the Messiah.¹³⁹



Figure 68: The Dome of the Rock (<https://www.baslibrary.org/sites/default/files/bsba3204037001.jpg>)

On the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, not far from the Dome of the Rock, is the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This mosque was built contemporaneously with the Dome of the Rock. In contrast to the Dome of the Rock that has survived intact since it was built, the Al-Aqsa Mosque has been rebuilt several times, mostly because it sits on the southern edge of the mount on land that was essentially fill dirt and was subject to large movements during earthquakes, whereas the Dome was built on rock. Interestingly, in each of the rebuilds of the mosque, the same enormous wooden beams—mostly cedars of Lebanon and cypress—were used to support the roof beams and also span the central nave and support the roof directly. Some scholars believe

that these beams were used in the original Temple of Solomon because they show marks of having been used in earlier constructions and they have decorations that were described in the Old Testament. Carbon dating of some of the beams has placed them to the ninth century B.C.—the time of Solomon—and some to the second century B.C.—the time when the temple was refurbished.¹⁴⁰

Even though the Byzantine emperor strengthened the defense of Egypt, the Muslim invasion of Egypt began just a year after conquering Jerusalem. After many battles over three years' time and reinforcements from Medina, the Muslims were successful in conquering Egypt and converting much of the population, although a large Christian group remained unconverted. (These are the Coptic Christians.)

The Umayyad Caliphate

Throughout this expansion period, the leadership of Islam continued to be beset by rivals claiming the caliphate and by some assassinations of leaders. After the deaths of the first three Califs, Ali (Mohammed's nephew and son-in-law) became the caliph. This was the dream of the Shia, but even he had opposition and was assassinated.

Ali was succeeded by a member of the Umayyad clan (some of the early Syrian converts) who moved the caliphate from Medina, where it had been since the death of Mohammed, to Damascus. The Umayyads, who were Sunnis, ruled Islam from 661-750 A.D. and in that time, they greatly expanded the Islamic Empire by capturing lands across northern Africa and taking Spain. They also expanded eastward and conquered Persia and India.

The Umayyads expanded trade throughout their territory and built caravan stops along the principal trade routes where they included bath houses, eating and sleeping accommodations, and other facilities for travelers. They built hunting complexes and palaces in the Jordanian desert where Umayyad leaders could go for a retreat. These are collectively known as the Desert Castles and today show fine artistry and ingenuity.

This vast Islamic Empire was multiethnic and multicultural. Outside of Arabia, Byzantine (Orthodox) Christians remained the majority of the population in the Levant and Hindus the majority in India even though the political power was in the hands of Muslims. In Spain the population was divided—Christian, Jew, and Muslim. The Umayyad policy was to allow all of these groups to practice their own religion, but non-Muslims had to pay a tax.

The Christian majority was especially important in the Levant where they referred to themselves as the original Christians and gave stability to the area because of their long religious history and guidance from both local leaders and Constantinople. Relationships between the Muslim leaders and the people were generally friendly. The area was mostly peaceful, and trade flourished although there continued to be disputes between the Muslim Bedouin tribes and the Byzantine Empire around the periphery of the Levant area.

In southern Europe the Muslims crossed the Pyrenees Mountains in 714 A.D. and entered southern France but were stopped in their advance and forced to retreat back into Spain.

The Abbasid Caliphate

In the mid-eighth century a group led by the Abbasid family in Iraq (some of the early converts) overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate and moved the headquarters of Islam to Baghdad. This move reduced the importance of Jordan because it moved the center of Islam further away. Jordan languished for many years. The Umayyads had begun to create a strong cultural identity for Islam and during the Abbasid Caliphate the

cultural uniqueness and creativity was further strengthened. The city of Baghdad became the intellectual center of Islam and of the world. (Europe was in the Dark Ages and China was struggling with internal wars. India looked to Baghdad for intellectual leadership.) The libraries and universities of Baghdad preserved Greek teachings, translating them into Arabic, and expanded upon Greek knowledge. Math and science flourished as can be identified today when we consider the words in those disciplines like algebra and alcohol that begin with “al” indicating an Arabic origin. Art and literature reached new highs with works like *The Rubaiyat* and *Arabian Nights*. This was the Golden Age of Islam.

The Abbasids made little attempt to expand their empire and it soon began to fragment. Just a few years after taking control in Baghdad, they were forced to cede control of Spain to the existing Umayyad ruler whose family continued to rule. However, this Muslim leadership in Spain came under constant pressure (military battles called the reconquest) from Spanish Christians over many years. (The famous El Cid was the leader of the Christian army in one of these battles.) After about 400 years, the Muslims were forced to abandon their capital at Cordoba and were squeezed into an ever-smaller area until they only occupied Granada in southern Spain. Still, the beauty and creativity of the Islamic culture were evident in the beautiful palace of the Alhambra in Granada. Finally, however, the Christian rulers, Ferdinand and Isabella, in 1492, succeeded in taking possession of the entirety of Spain.

The Abbasids also lost control over North Africa, Sicily, the Levant, and western Arabia (Hijaz) to a Muslim group, the Fatimids, over the period from 960 to 1100. The Fatimids were a Shi'a group that traced their lineage back to Mohammed's daughter, Fatima, and her husband, Ali. Eventually the center of their caliphate became the newly founded city of Cairo. The Fatimids will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Persia and India were lost to Muslims from Central Asia, called the Mughals who controlled much of India even into the time when Britain took over the administration of the Indian subcontinent.

The Abbasid political control continued to shrink until it was a small island around Baghdad. Their age of cultural excellence ended with the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258.

Religion Under the Muslims

The religious mixture throughout the Muslim Empire varied by area and by time. In Jerusalem most of the people were of a single religion—Christian. This was the result of the near complete expulsion of Jews and other religions by Romans in Jerusalem and then conversion of the Romans to Christianity after Constantine. Outside of Jerusalem the mixture was mostly Christians with a Jewish minority because of inward migration over many years after the Jewish-Roman wars.

The eastern side of the Jordan River had a large Christian population even before Constantine but many other groups—Jews, Samaritans, Hellenes (pagans), and Arabs—lived and thrived along the trade routes and within the Decapolis cities. (Even during the times of Greek control and during Roman control, the eastern side had interacted strongly with surrounding tribes and groups, so the population was always multi-ethnic.) Christians did not become the majority east of the river until the sixth century when Byzantine power was high. Yet even then and after the Muslim invasion, the area remained a mixture of religions. A map of the area made after Muslim control and recently discovered in Palestine shows the location of churches and synagogues. The religious places were intermingled, suggesting that Christians and Jews lived together peacefully. The ratio of churches to synagogues was about three-to-one, a surprisingly small number that confirmed the continued presence of both groups and, presumably others, while still under Muslim authority.¹⁴¹

Another example that showed a continuation of Christian life in the Holy Land was discovered in the summer of 1986 when a team of Italian archaeologists excavated several Christian churches in Jordan at Um

ar-Rasas, a site not too far from Madaba (where the sixth-century mosaic map of the Holy land was found). Set in the floor of one of the Um ar-Rasas churches were panels depicting cities in Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt. The cities included Jerusalem, called the Holy City, Neapolis (Nablus), Caesarea, Gaza, Philadelphia (Amman), Madaba, Alexandria, and others. The church included two dated mosaics, one dedicated in 756 A.D., and a second dedicated in 785 A.D. These are over 140 years *after* the Muslim conquest of the area. The mosaics show that in this period when Muslims were firmly in control, Christians were able to construct a new church and had the wherewithal and artistic skill to design and construct a complex and sophisticated mosaic floor.¹⁴²

However, some changes did occur as a result of the Muslim/Arabic governance. The population began to adopt Arabic, the language of the conquerors, as a language of everyday life and even for Christian worship and scholarship as shown by some writing of “scholarly activity” of the monks at some monasteries in the 8th century. Even some monastery services were “beginning to be conducted in Arabic.”¹⁴³

Difficulty in Jerusalem

In 975 the Byzantine emperor invaded and successfully captured Jerusalem and most of Palestine, Jordan, and the Levant. However, after only a few years, a coalition of Fatimid Arabs from Egypt and Seljuk Turks from northern Iraq united and drove the Byzantines from the area and reclaimed sovereignty for the Fatimids. The Fatimid caliph began a persecution of the Christians and Jews living in the Levant, especially in Jerusalem. The persecution also involved the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, churches, synagogues, torah scrolls, and other religious artifacts. Although the Fatimids realized their error and rebuilt the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the troubles between religions made Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem difficult and temporarily forbidden.

This religious intolerance could not have happened at a worse time. A wave of religious fervor, anticipating the possible coming of the Messiah at the turn of the millennium, was sweeping Europe. This increased religiosity was severely frustrated by the stoppage of pilgrims who wanted to visit Jerusalem during this special time. The Muslim destructions of holy sites and restrictions of travel caused widespread anger and resentment. Furthermore, in France, England, and Germany recently installed new royal houses were solidifying their control over their countries and were anxious to demonstrate their adherence and enthusiasm for the Christian religion. The Fatimids were seen as religiously intolerant and that caused an underlying anger toward all Muslims.

The Seljuk Turks, a Kurdish tribe, became dissatisfied with their allies, the Fatimids, and broke their alliance. This may have occurred because of the religious intolerance of the Fatimid caliph. The Turks marched against the Fatimids in the northern part of their territory and defeated them, gradually taking control of Fatimid lands in Iraq, Syria, and Palestine and establishing a new caliphate. This was the first non-Arab caliphate and was called the Ayyubid Caliphate. (This caliphate will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter.)

The expanded territory controlled by the Seljuk Turks included Jerusalem, taken in 1075. The Turks suppressed a revolt in Jerusalem that arose when the Fatimids were collapsing and the local population sensed a chance to be independent. This suppression of the revolt resulted in a bloodbath in Jerusalem in 1077. The Turks also expanded their territory against the Byzantines taking cities in northern Mesopotamia and Syria. These combined events—loss of Byzantine territory and reclosing of Jerusalem to pilgrims because of the revolt—led the Byzantine emperor to send envoys to Europe where they met with the pope and requested assistance from the western Christians in retaking lost Byzantine land and guaranteeing access to Jerusalem.

Responding to the call for help, the pope convened a conference in 1095 and gave a rousing call to arms for a crusade to conquer the Holy Land. To further encourage participation in the undertaking, the pope granted forgiveness of sins to all crusaders. Several younger members of French noble families also saw this as an opportunity to establish kingdoms where they could be the rulers. (They could not be rulers in their own countries because their older brothers had the rights to rule.)

All of these events laid the foundation for the Crusades. Historians differ on the total number of crusades and on the names and numbers of the crusades. The most common count is eight numbered crusades and several unnumbered ones that, for various reasons, did not reach the Holy Land and/or were given special names because of their unique populations.

Crusades

Crusade Fervor in Europe

The call for crusaders spread quickly across Europe led by people like Peter the Hermit, a French Catholic priest who had tried to visit Jerusalem previously but was prevented by the Seljuk Turks. He preached the call to arms widely and the response was immediate, especially in France and Germany. Peter was commissioned by the pope with concurrence from the Patriarch of Jerusalem, to lead an armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He launched the crusade from Cologne, Germany in April 1096 with an army of 40,000, mostly peasants, perhaps because they could arrange their affairs and leave quickly. This group was called the Peasants Crusade.

They marched across Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. In their fervor, they began to kill Jews, blaming them for the death of Jesus, with a death toll reaching several thousand. In some cities they also stole and looted to get food and other supplies. About 10,000 of the pilgrims abandoned the crusade because of hunger, being jailed, being killed, or disillusionment. When they reached Constantinople, the Byzantine emperor couldn't feed or accommodate the remaining, substantially large army of peasants, and he immediately shipped them across the Bosphorus into Turkish territory where the Turks began to skirmish with them. Peter returned to Constantinople to seek the emperor's help but in his absence the pilgrims were ambushed and slaughtered or enslaved. The survivors returned home. Historians consider this Peasants Crusade a prelude to the actual crusades that followed.

Crusader Successes

The **First Crusade** was the most successful and the only one to have a long-term effect on the Holy Land. This crusade was led by nobility, generally second and third sons, and was well organized. The army of about 100,000 was composed mostly of French knights and common soldiers supplemented with Italians and Normans. These crusaders were often referred to as the Franks because of French predominance, especially in leadership.

The crusaders assembled in Constantinople and, with the help of the Byzantine navy, captured several cities in Turkish-controlled Anatolia (modern Turkey) and gave some of the land to the Armenian Christians who were temporary allies. They continued on to Edessa, near the border of Turkey and Syria, captured it and made this city one of the capitals of the four Crusader States. A French prince was installed as the ruler. (Note that they did not turn over control to the Byzantine emperor even though the crusade was supposedly being organized, in part, to restore Byzantine lands. This omission led to some long-lasting Byzantine resentment of all the crusades.)

Chapter 11: Muslims and Crusaders

The army continued on to other cities that were made capitals of other Crusader States—Antioch (modern Turkey, south of Edessa)—Tyre (modern Lebanon), and—Jerusalem. Parts of the army were left to guard each of the capital cities, thus reducing the number that could be used to capture new cities and control areas outside the principal cities. Therefore, when they reached Jerusalem in 1099, there were insufficient troops to completely blockade the city. They tried a direct assault, but it was unsuccessful. After receiving supplies and reinforcements from Genoa and when told of a Turkish army approaching from Egypt, the crusaders again stormed the city to try and take possession before the reinforcement Muslims arrived. A determined effort on the northern wall resulted in a breach and the defenders panicked and ran, thus allowing the attackers to open the gates and complete the conquest of the city. A slaughter of Muslims and Jews ensued, at least for the remainder of the day. The Byzantine Christian population of the city had been expelled by the Turks before the siege began and thus was spared from the slaughter.

The Kingdom of Jerusalem was established under a Frankish king. Troops soon began to foray out from the city and successfully conquered the surrounding territory. They were able to conquer all of modern Israel and Palestine along with major portions of Jordan, Lebanon and much of Syria and some of Turkey and Iraq.

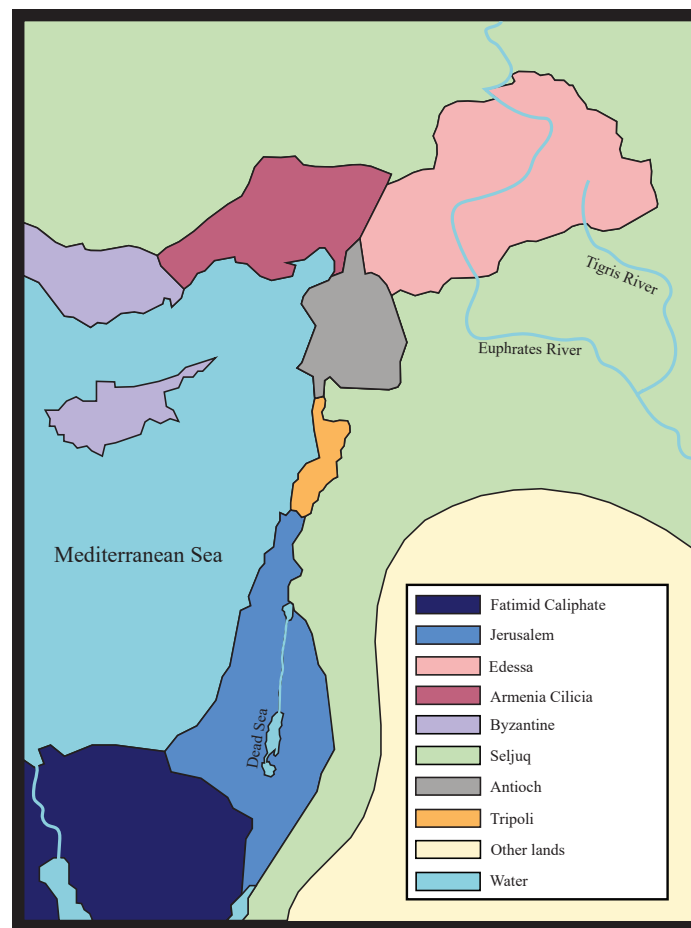


Figure 69: Crusader kingdoms after the First Crusade

With the Holy Land essentially secure, about half of the crusader army returned home to Europe. The remaining troops began the task of refurbishing the city of Jerusalem, establishing secure routes for pilgrims, and guarding trade routes and strongholds within the Christian territories.

Inside Jerusalem the crusaders immediately began to “Christianize” the city. They removed Muslim symbols, converted the Dome of the Rock into a church complete with an iron cross on the top, put a decorative

marble wall around the rock, and installed an altar. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was made the headquarters/palace of the king of Jerusalem until another location was prepared. The mosque then became the headquarters of the Knights Templar, a military-religious brigade that guarded the temple mount and became an elite fighting unit. Another religious fighting order, the Order of Saint John or the Hospitallers, built a hospital for the care of pilgrims and began to police the roadways to ensure safety for the pilgrims who began to visit. A third elite religious unit, the Teutonic Knights, was organized later when German crusaders came in force. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was refurbished and expanded, and many other churches built marking the supposed locations of events in the life of Jesus.

Outside Jerusalem, the crusaders built castles to guard the pilgrim pathways and the trade routes. Generally, these castles were built on high places to make attacking catapults and trebuchets less effective. A good example is the castle at Kerak that overlooked and guarded the King's Highway in the southern part of Jordan. This castle was easily defended and served as an administrative center for Jordan. The crusaders built over 100 castles—some elaborate and large like Kerak, and some just two-story towers with 16-foot thick walls overlooking various roads scattered throughout the territories. An example of a crusader tower can be seen on the hill overlooking the city of Amman.



Figure 70: Kerak castle

The precariously short-handed crusaders received reinforcements from Europe throughout the 11th century. Some of these were really pilgrimages with armed escorts, while others engaged in some fighting when they reached the Crusader Lands, but few of the reinforcements remained for more than a short period.

The largest and most organized of these reinforcement groups has been called by historians the **Second Crusade**. It was called by the pope who asked Bernard of Clairvaux, a famous monk and poet, to travel throughout Europe and preach the crusade and grant the same indulgences as the First Crusade. Two European kings—Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany—answered the call. The German group arrived first at Constantinople and, without waiting for the French, proceeded into Turkish territory where they were nearly totally destroyed by a Seljuk army. The French finally arrived at Constantinople, met and combined with the surviving Germans, and proceeded into Turkish lands with good initial success. However, when trying to capture the city of Damascus that had fallen to the Turks, they were defeated when Turkish reinforcements arrived. The French then withdrew and returned to Europe never reaching Jerusalem.

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While on the crusade, the wife of the French king, Eleanor of Aquitaine, had an affair with her uncle, one of the German nobility, and then, when her marriage was annulled, she went home and married the English king Henry II a month later. This marital difficulty may have distracted the focus of the French king adding to his desire to quickly return to Paris.

During the 12th century while the undermanned crusaders tenuously held on, the Christian leadership in Jerusalem was in disarray when the king, stricken with leprosy died young and was followed by his nephew who was a child. The nephew's death was followed by confusion and competing claims to the throne. The following king was fiercely anti-Muslim and prone to over-reactions.

Taking advantage of the Christian chaos, the Seljuk Turks captured Edessa, Damascus, much of the northern part of the Levant, and many of the lands east of the Jordan River, but not the King's Highway as it was successfully defended by Kerak Castle. However, the Turks were able to pass by the castle on the desert side and enter Egypt where they defeated the Fatimids and took control over the southern portion of Fatimid territory including Egypt and North Africa. The Seljuk Turkish leader who accomplished much of this expansion was named Saladin (*Salah-ad-Din* in Arabic), a powerful and dynamic leader.

The Turkish army returned north and applied pressure against the crusaders at various locations. This caused the king of Jerusalem to assemble the largest army possible in hopes of defeating Saladin and regaining the lost crusader territory. Saladin crossed the Jordan River into Palestine and camped a few miles south of the Sea of Galilee at a place called the Horns of Hattin. There he waited for the crusader army hoping that he could lure the crusader king out of Jerusalem and meet him on open ground. Informed of the Turkish location, the crusaders rushed north to give battle (just as Saladin hoped). The tired and thirsty crusaders arrived at the battle site and were engaged by the much larger Turkish force on land chosen by the Muslims. Saladin's army was victorious and destroyed the crusaders, executing most of those taken captive and chasing the remainder all the way to Jerusalem.

After a siege of about two weeks, Jerusalem was conquered by the Seljuk Turks in 1187, just 88 years after falling to the crusaders for the first time. All of the remainder of the Crusader States were taken by Saladin within three months with the exception of Tripoli and Antioch which were well-fortified, coastal cities that could withstand extended sieges.

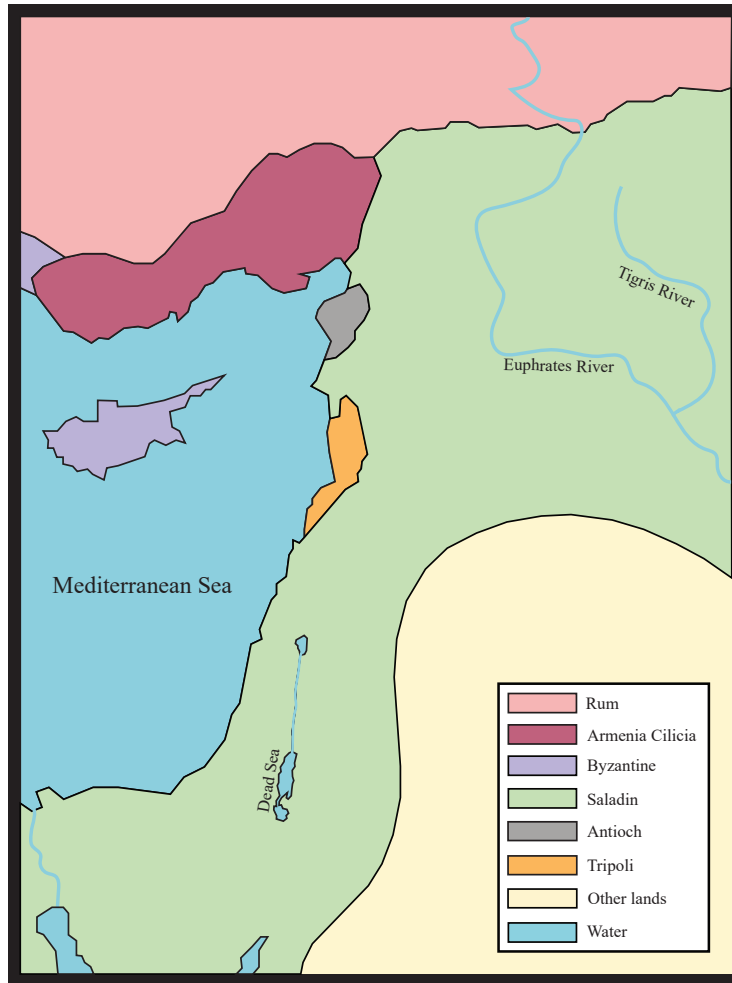


Figure 71: Saladin territory after the fall of the Crusader Lands

Attempts to Regain Jerusalem

The loss of the Crusader Lands shocked and saddened Europe. A new pope urged another crusade to retake the Holy Land for the Christians. The call for the **Third Crusade** was answered by three kings—Richard I (the Lionheart of England), Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, and Phillip II of France.

The Germans left first, arrived at Constantinople, and pushed into Anatolia where they defeated the Turks. However, Frederick drowned while in Anatolia and many of his troops left for home. The remaining Germans waited for the arrival of the English and French who they joined and continued toward Jerusalem.

The combined crusader army was victorious in several places as they moved southward. The French king departed to attend matters in Paris and Richard then assumed sole command of the army. After capturing Jaffa, the port city west of Jerusalem, the crusaders turned toward Jerusalem. When they came within sight of Jerusalem, they were forced to retreat back to Jaffa by the Muslim defenders under Saladin.

A disagreement arose among the crusader leaders on whether a siege or a direct assault should be the next step. This conflict split the crusader army and caused delays. Finally, they concluded that they did not have the forces to capture Jerusalem. King Richard and Saladin entered into a treaty wherein Jerusalem would remain in the hands of the Muslims but that safe passage for all pilgrims would be guaranteed. The crusaders were also allowed to retain the coastal cities that had been captured by the 3rd Crusade. A 10-year truce was established. Neither Richard nor Saladin were happy with the treaty, but both were in weakened positions.

Saladin had spent much money and lost many troops in the battles against the crusaders. Richard had to deal with a threat from his brother, Prince John, who was laying plans to oust Richard and take over as king of England. After signing the treaty, Richard left immediately for home.

The **Fourth Crusade** did not get to the Middle East. When it arrived at Constantinople, the crusade was caught up in a power struggle between the Byzantine emperor and his nephew who was also the brother-in-law of one of the crusader kings. The nephew offered the crusaders 10,000 troops, 200,000 marks, and the reunion of the Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church if the crusaders would overthrow the emperor. Hearing of the plot, the emperor fled when the crusaders entered the city, but he orchestrated an external resistance that required the crusaders to stay in the city until the nephew's promised payments could be realized. In the ensuing chaos the nephew was murdered and a new emperor was installed. He refused to honor the promises and so the crusaders sacked the city. Many of the residents were killed and, it is said by some experts, the city of Constantinople never fully recovered.

The **Fifth Crusade** decided that the traditional crusade route through Constantinople was too long and dangerous. Therefore, this crusade embarked toward Egypt with the assumption that by capturing Egypt the path to the Holy Land would be better. They landed in Egypt and surrounded a major city on the Nile Delta. Peace payments were offered and after much discussion and disagreement, a settlement was refused by the crusaders. In the interim, the city was abandoned, and the Muslim troops were concentrated at a nearby fortress. The crusaders occupied the abandoned city and, having achieved what many believed was their purpose, they left for home. The remainder of the crusaders attempted to attack the Muslim fortress, but the sultan flooded the battle area and made attacking impossible. Discouraged by this situation, the remaining army withdrew and sailed for Europe.

The **Sixth Crusade** was mostly a diplomatic exercise with a crusader army sent to ensure compliance. Frederick II of Germany, the Holy Roman Emperor, made promises to the pope that he would leave on a particular date and remain in Jerusalem as the King of Jerusalem for at least two years. However, Frederick contracted the plague and was delayed leaving and missed the promised date. He assured the pope that he would still go on crusade, but the pope could only see Frederick's failure to keep his promises and Frederick was excommunicated. Wanting to keep his promises as best he could, Frederick left for Jerusalem as soon as he recovered. When he arrived in Acre, Frederick discovered that the Muslims were in the midst of a civil war. Frederick and the sultan (local Muslim ruler) entered into negotiations and came to an agreement that for Frederick's support in the civil war, the crusaders would be allowed to occupy Jerusalem, Frederick would be recognized as king, and there would be a 10-year truce. After staying in Jerusalem for one month, Frederick left for Europe, came to an agreement with the pope, and was reinstated as a Catholic. Jerusalem remained in crusader hands for four years. After that it was again captured by the Muslims.

The **Seventh Crusade**, headed by Louis IX of France, also sought to capture Egypt with the hope of negotiating a trade of Egypt for Jerusalem. The sultan mistakenly believed that the invasion would occur in Syria and that is where the bulk of the Muslim army was stationed. When the crusaders landed in Egypt, they put the port city, Damietta, under siege. The sultan rushed to relieve the Egyptian port city, but the city commander had abandoned the city and allowed the crusaders to occupy it. When the Muslim troops from Syria drew near to the city, the crusaders went out to meet them. The Muslims defeated the crusaders and captured most of the army. They were released to return home only after a huge ransom was paid.

The **Eighth Crusade** was the second launched by Louis IX of France. It was directed toward Tunis as the landing place with the object of capturing Egypt and then trading for Jerusalem. However, upon arrival in Tunisia, Louis contracted dysentery and died, thus ending the crusade.

Chapter 11: Muslims and Crusaders

Over time the Muslims continued to put pressure on the crusader enclaves along the coast until, by the end of the 13th century only Acre remained in crusader control, and it was finally conquered in 1291. In the 14th century the Mongols attacked Baghdad and the northern part of the Islamic Empire fell. Egypt had earlier come under Mamluke rule, as will be discussed in the next chapter, and it continued for some time as the center of Islamic thought and power

Chapter 12: Non-Arab Muslim Dynasties

Ayyubids

Origins

An overview of the formation of the Ayyubid Dynasty was given in the previous chapter with the discussion of the victory of Saladin's Seljuk Turks over the Fatimids in Egypt and Northern Africa, but a little more background is appropriate in telling the story of Jordan under the Ayyubids. The Seljuk Turks were Sunni Muslims of Kurdish origin who lived in the mountainous region of northern Syria, southern Turkey, and northwestern Iran (modern Kurdistan).

Creating the Sultanate

Saladin led the Kurdish army against the Byzantines and captured land in Anatolia (Turkey) and Syria. He conquered the Fatimids in Egypt and was proclaimed the first Sultan of Egypt in 1174. (Note: A sultan is a political officer of the highest rank and can be compared to a king. A caliph is the religious leader of Muslims who may or may not also be a political leader). Saladin quickly expanded the Egyptian Sultanate to include most of the Levant (including northern Iraq), southern Anatolia, the Hijaz (western Arabia), Yemen, Nubia (Sudan), and northern coastal Africa. He was the Muslim commander when the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other crusader states were captured. The empire he created was then called the Ayyubid Sultanate. Over the years, the capital of the sultanate moved from Cairo to Damascus to Aleppo to Hama (Syria) depending on the ruler.

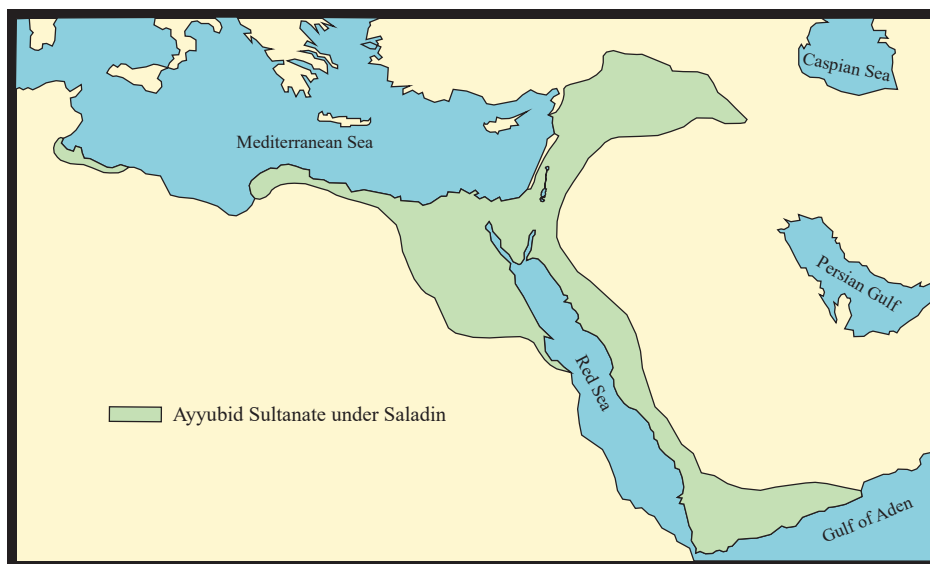


Figure 72: Ayyubid Sultanate under Saladin

Ayyubids in Jordan

The re-unification of Jordan and the Levant with Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the spice-rich areas of Arabia under a single leadership brought back the old trading patterns that had been neglected under the Abbasids. With that trade came renewed prosperity to Jordan, a key location for the success of the trade. The principal

crusader castles in Jordan—Kerak and Shawbak—were taken over by the locals and staffed with members of the Ayyubid army for protection.

A well-preserved and lovely castle built during the Ayyubid period is at Ajloun. It was built in the mountains about 20 miles west of Jerash in the Gilead region. This castle, built in the crusader style, was constructed under the guidance of Saladin's brother, just after the reconquest of the Holy Land and was added to over several years. Although located a few miles from the King's Highway, it still could influence and, perhaps, control the traffic along the route.

As a hilltop castle, it also served as a location to assist in communicating messages from one region to another through long-distance light signals. It was part of the light relay system used to announce key moments such as the beginning of the month of Ramadan and the ending of each day's fast during the holy month. It was also used to signal trade along the King's Highway and warn of military dangers.

When I have visited Ajloun with friends, I have often asked them to point out the many interesting and effective defensive features of the castle that would have prevented its overthrow from a direct assault. There are many including very steep sides on a hill making a direct approach difficult, a mote and drawbridge, two large portcullis gates, crooked entry paths between the gates with sharp turns to slow horses, holes above the gates where hot oil can be poured, slant-sided windows where archers can shoot through narrow openings but over a wide range of angles, and a general maze of halls and corridors to confuse attackers who make it past the other defensive obstacles.



Figure 73: Ajloun castle in central Jordan

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Along the trade routes *caravanserais* were again established (rebuilt) to accommodate merchants and pilgrims to Mecca and general traders. These rest stops provided food, water, housing, fodder, animal exchanges, and supplies of various kinds. New products, such as sugar, were introduced to both locals and distant markets and Jordan became a center for milling and refining the new luxury food that was highly

sought in the Middle East and in Europe. (Most of the sugar was grown and refined in the Jordan River Valley where water was plentiful and the temperature higher than in the highlands.) Other Jordanian products like olives (whole and oil), fruits, nuts, vegetables, and grains were sold throughout the Middle East and sometimes into Europe.

After Saladin's death in 1193, the Ayyubid Dynasty began to gradually fall apart. Local leaders (emirs) asserted their independence in Syria, Yemen, the Hijaz, and parts of Mesopotamia. Even the area around Kerak Castle in the south of Jordan asserted its independence. In Egypt the sultan was overthrown by his mercenary generals, called the Mamluks when he lost the city of Damietta to the Seventh Crusade. Even though the Ayyubid dynasty was relatively short at about 80 years, its influence was important. The crusaders were expelled, the old trade routes were revived, and new prosperity ensued. The previous Shia regime in Egypt was replaced by Sunnis and Egypt has remained Sunni since then.

Mamluks

Rise to Power

As previously mentioned, the Mamluks were mercenaries in the Ayyubid army in Egypt who rebelled against the government and took control of Egypt and, over time, all of the Ayyubid empire. Mamluk means slave, which indicates that the Mamluks were brought to Islamic lands as slaves. They were originally from several different areas including Anatolia, lands to the east in central Asia, Caucasians (from Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary), and even further into Europe. These people had, for various reasons, been slaves to conquerors and taken into the conqueror's territory. They were then captured by the Muslims and taken to their headquarters. The Mamluks became slaves of all types of duties including common household workers, government bureaucrats, and others. Over time they were put into the army, and some rose to high rank. The large military class among the Mamluks became the most important of these groups historically.

The use of Mamluks in the military began under the Abbasids in Baghdad but spread to other Islamic centers, especially when the Abbasids were conquered by other Islamic groups like the Fatimids. For example, the Fatimids in Cairo liked to use Mamluks in the army and began a system where Mamluks, often from Circassia (a portion of southern Russia at the eastern end of the Black Sea) ran the army. The Circassians (also called Burjj) were often purchased as young men, taken to Cairo, and raised in a military barracks with little outside contact. They became highly proficient in fighting and military tactics. A powerful Mamluk group became the leaders of the Fatimid army and were transferred to the Ayyubids when they took over from the Fatimids. When the Ayyubid dynasty began to fail, the Mamluks in Cairo overthrew them and began their own dynasty in 1250, centered in Cairo. The northern part of the Ayyubid empire was able to resist the Mamlukes and survived for a time under Ayyubid control.

The Mamluks built several unique and creative buildings in Cairo. One was the dome of the Mosque of Sultan Qaythay. This dome was made of copper and involved an intricate geometric pattern that was amazing for the time.



Figure 74: Dome of the Funerary Complex of Sultan Qaytbay

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Invasion of the Mongols

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Mongols from central Asia united under Genghis Khan and his descendants to capture China, central Asia, eastern Europe as far west as the gates of Vienna, and southeastern Asia including Turkey, Iran, and much of the Middle East. The major Mongol victory in this area was over the Ayyubid Empire with its headquarters in Baghdad.

The capturing of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 weakened Islam in general. The Mongols continued their westward march from Baghdad to Aleppo and then turned southward to capture Damascus. These two Mongol victories proved to be fatal for the northern part of the Ayyubid Dynasty. Syria became a vassal state of the Mongol Empire. Further Mongol excursions to the south resulted in battles at Ajloun and Salt in Jordan and then battles at Jerusalem, Hebron, Ascalon, and Gaza in Palestine. In Gaza the Mongols heard that the great khan (the worldwide Mongol leader) had died. That event required the leaders of Mongols everywhere and many of their troops to return to Mongolia for the appointment of the new Khan.

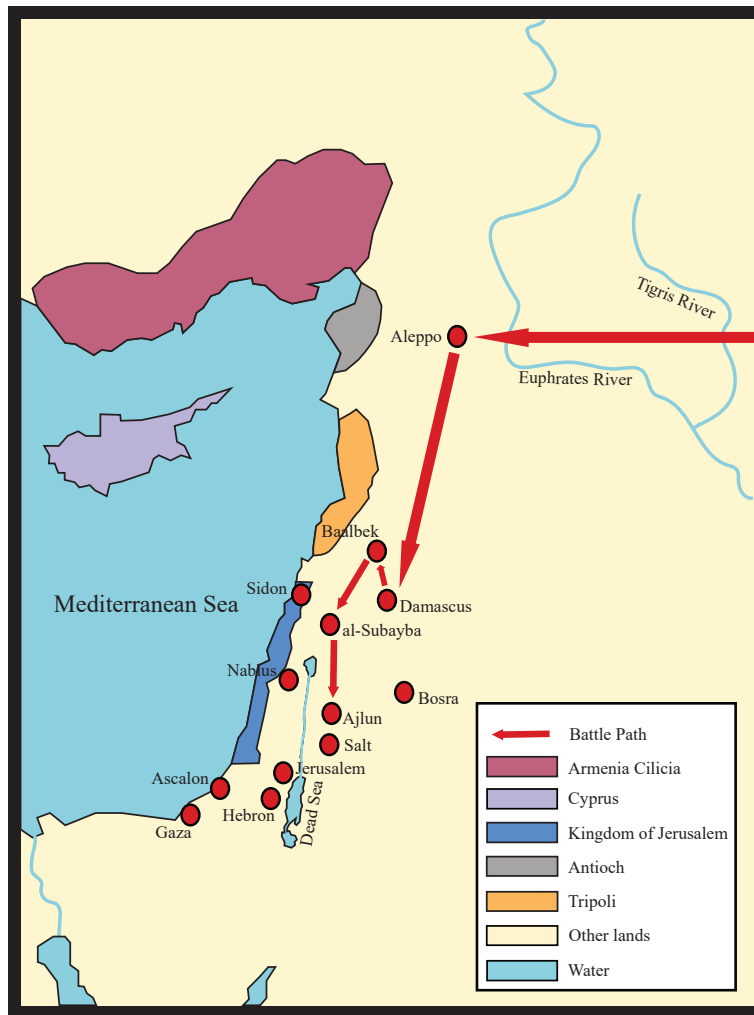


Figure 75: Mongol invasions and battles in the Levant

Mamluk Victories

The trip to and from Mongolia took five years and, in that time, the Mamluks, who had taken control in Egypt, fought against the diminished Mongol army and recaptured the lands controlled by the Mongols in Palestine and Jordan. Upon the return of the Mongols to the Middle East, a battle was held at Ain Jalut, just south of the Sea of Galilee in the Jezreel Valley. The Mamluk army was joined by a crusader army from their enclave at Acre and, together, they destroyed the Mongol force. This battle was the first time the Mongols had been decisively defeated and their advance permanently stopped anywhere in the world. It is also interesting to note that this battle is thought to be the first time that a hand cannon was used in warfare. Its principal use was to frighten the horses.¹⁴⁴

With the defeat of the of the Mongols, the Mamluks moved northward and took control over the northern portion of the Ayyubid empire that was headquartered in Damascus and Aleppo. Another attempted expansion by the Mongols was met by the Mamluks and resulted in another Mamluk victory. Thereafter, the Mongols signed a treaty with the Mamluks.

The Mamluks were also able to defeat various crusader armies that attempted to take Jerusalem by first taking Egypt or Tunisia and then trading for Jerusalem. Hence, under the Mamluks a period of relative peace ensued in all the Levant. Other areas in the Muslim world such as the Hijaz, Yemen, and North Africa, were under separate, local, rulers but they often also used Mamluks as leaders of their military.

Mamluks in Jordan

The stabilization of the Levant by the Mamluks and the reconsolidation of the north with the south resulted in another era of prosperity in Jordan. Again, the trade routes between the two large population centers—Mesopotamia and Egypt—were reactivated. Important stops within Jordan along the King’s Highway included Zarqa, Amman, Hisban, Madaba, Dhiban, Kerak, Shawbak, Ma’an, and Aqaba. Other towns like Ajloun and Salt became administrative centers.



Figure 76: Trade routes during Mamluk period

The population increased and that led to a revival of rural Jordan. Some archaeological evidence for the rural revival includes an increase in pottery factories in rural communities, the improvement of roads into rural areas, an increasing sophistication in stonework (ceramics and glass), and the increased work on flint tools. Homes were improved during the Mamluk period including the presence of plastered basins and covered drains. The presence of an increased amount of copper coins indicates greater commerce and wealth in rural areas through increased participation in a market economy. Archaeologists also found an intensification of irrigation.¹⁴⁵ Jordan also supplied horses, camels, and sheep to the empire. Iron was mined and smelted in the hills of Ajloun and copper was still mined (revived) in Faynan. Salt from the Dead Sea was also a source of income to the region.

Plague in the Levant

The stability and growth experienced in the early 14th century came to an end with the Black Death (Bubonic Plague epidemic) of the 1340s. The estimated demographic losses in Greater Syria (1/3-1/2 of the settled population), may have been much less in the territory that became Jordan, which was less densely settled, had no true ‘cities’, and had relatively small garrisons. Nonetheless, it had a palpable impact on the region’s economy. The collapse of the sugar industry in Jordan was, in great part, the result of labor shortages and financial neglect of the local mills and water systems following the plague. An Egyptian historian from the

period describes, furthermore, the widespread destruction of livestock, as the pestilence affected animals as extensively as humans.

Exacerbating the problems that ensued from the Black Death, and a century of repeat epidemics, were years of drought, civil war, and the financial collapse of the Mamluk state. The immediate impact in the territory that became Jordan was the decline of village life in most regions, neglect of fields, and imperial disengagement from local infrastructure, defense, and public services. The abandonment of many villages in the central and southern plains and desert fringes by the 16th century, and their replacement with more ephemeral settlements located in the hills, near springs, and on the edges of plateaus, is one of the most important legacies of this rural decline.¹⁴⁶

Ottoman Turks

Turkish Power and Focus

In 1516 CE, the Mamluks were defeated by the Ottoman Turks. Jordan, along with the entire Levant, became part of the Ottoman Empire and remained so for the next 400 years. The four centuries of Ottoman rule (1516-1918) were a period of general stagnation in Jordan. The old trade routes were less important under the Ottomans because the economic focus of the empire was centered in Constantinople (later Istanbul) and not Mesopotamia and Egypt. Goods from Asia were transported along the Silk Road directly from China to Constantinople or from Southeast Asia (spice area) by ship to the Persian/Arabian Gulf or the Red Sea and then overland to Constantinople.



Figure 77: Trade routes to Constantinople

The Ottomans actually had control of much of the Levant even before the final Mamluke collapse in the 16th century. Under the Ottomans the Levant was divided into Vilayets (provinces) and within those were smaller divisions called Sanjaks (military districts).

Chapter 12: Non-Arab Muslim Dynasties

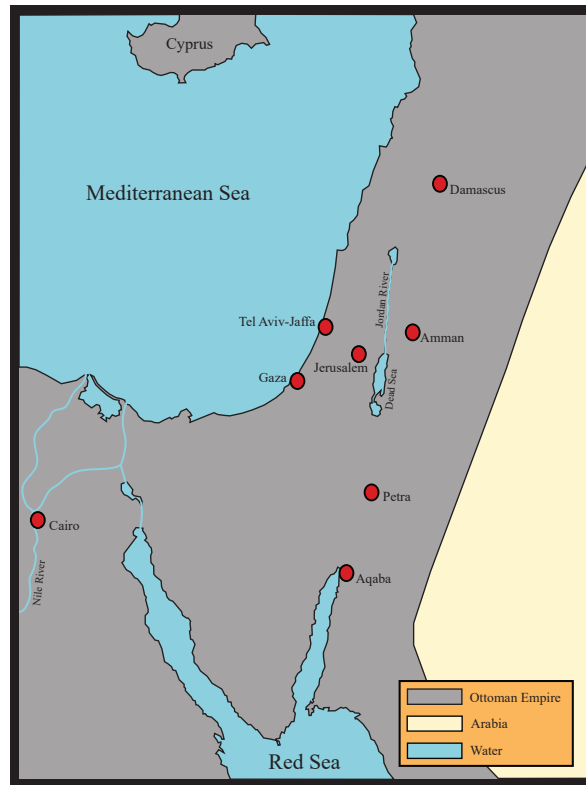


Figure 78: Levant under the Ottomans

Much of the attention of the Ottoman rulers was expansion into Europe, the Hijaz, and North Africa and not in the Levant. Numerous battles were fought as the Ottomans advanced through the Balkans, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. Under Suleiman the Magnificent the Ottoman Empire reached its greatest extent in the 16th century. The advancing Turks were finally stopped at the outskirts of Vienna by a combined European army led by the Holy Roman Emperor in 1683. Sea battles against Venice also raged during the late Middle Ages requiring much Ottoman attention. The deciding victory by the Venetian navy was at Lepanto (off southwestern Greece) in 1571 and was the largest naval battle in history to that point.

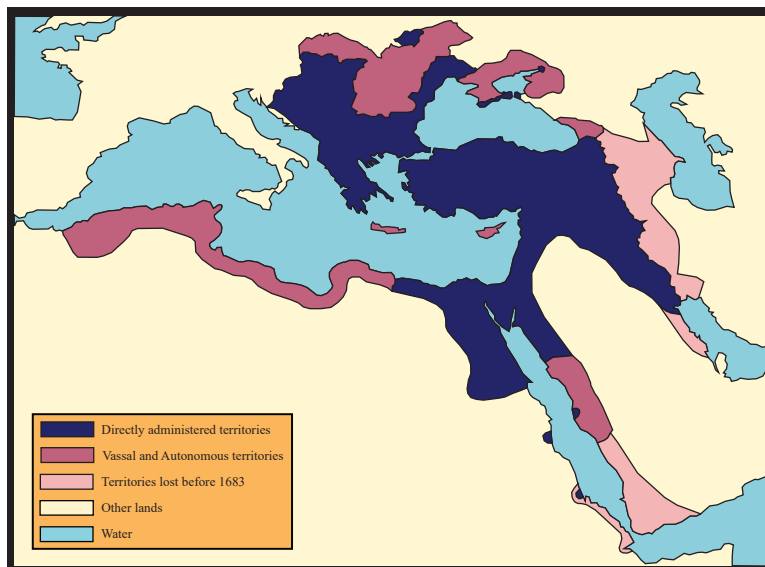


Figure 79: Ottoman Empire at its greatest extent

In the interior of the Arabian peninsula, two tribes joined forces to block Ottoman expansion there. The tribes were the Al Saud and the religious leader, Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab, and his followers. This alliance began what eventually led to the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Ottomans were primarily interested in Jordan in terms of its importance to the pilgrimage route to Mecca. They built a series of square fortresses in the desert to protect pilgrims from the desert tribes and to provide the pilgrims with sources of food and water. However, the local Ottoman administration was weak and could not effectively control the Bedouin tribes. The Bedouins remained masters of the desert and much of Jordan, continuing to live much as they had for hundreds of years.

Decline in Jordan

Over the course of Ottoman rule, many towns and villages were abandoned, agriculture declined, and families and tribes moved frequently from one village to another. This occurred because of the lack of involvement of the Ottoman government in Jordan and the continued insistence of high taxes. There was even a brief invasion by the Wahhabi forces in 1803 that wrested control of Jordan from the Ottomans. In 1812 the son of the Egyptian Pasha (Ottoman local leader) reasserted Ottoman control and drove the Wahhabis (a group of conservative Muslims who were influential in Saudi Arabia) out of Jordan. However, just 16 years later, the Pasha's oppressive policies led to a Peasants' Revolt in the area and rule from Egypt ended and reverted directly to Constantinople. However, the neglect that characterized Ottoman rule returned and the population of cities dwindled further and the people became increasingly scattered into desert Bedouins. The only towns that survived were transportation centers like Salt, Irbid, Jerash, and Kerak. These, however, experienced repeated raids from the Bedouins and that diminished their population and kept them poor.

The Ottomans also used the hajj as a political tool. For Shia from Iran, the Ottomans closed the most direct route (across the Arabian peninsula) and forced them to travel through Damascus and along the King's Highway to Aqaba and then south to the holy sites. Likewise, Mughals from India and adherents from Indonesia were not allowed to sail into the Red Sea but were also directed along the overland hajj route through Damascus and Jordan.¹⁴⁷ To help with the hajj travel, the Ottomans built the Hijaz railroad in the early 1900s. This linked Istanbul with Medina and brought some employment to Jordan during the construction phase. However, the railroad was never completed all the way to Mecca, perhaps because of the continued revolts from Bedouin tribes that the Ottomans suppressed with great cruelty and difficulty.¹⁴⁸

Population continued to dwindle until the late 19th century when Jordan received several waves of immigrants. Syrians and Palestinians migrated to Jordan to escape over-taxation and feuds, while Muslim Circassians and Chechens fled Russian persecution to settle in Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Turkey. As was the case in the past (Patriarchal times, Moses and the Israelites, Christians in Roman times), Jordan became a place of refuge.

During the Ottoman period, most schools, hospitals, baths, wells, orphanages and, of course, mosques, were built with a particular religious function in mind. The Hijaz railroad from Medina to Mecca was a useful tool for ferrying Ottoman armies and supplies into the Arabian heartland. Because of this, it was attacked frequently during the Great Arab Revolt of World War I.

Decline of the Ottomans

During the long period of territorial stagnation throughout the Ottoman Empire following the cessation of expansion in the 16th century, the Ottoman military fell behind its European rivals and in the late 18th and early 19th centuries it began to suffer a series of military defeats and loss of territory including Greece and

Chapter 12: Non-Arab Muslim Dynasties

several Balkan states. Ottoman Turkey became known as the “sick man of Europe.” The shrunken Ottoman Empire expanded only over the Levant and Hijaz at the beginning of WWI.

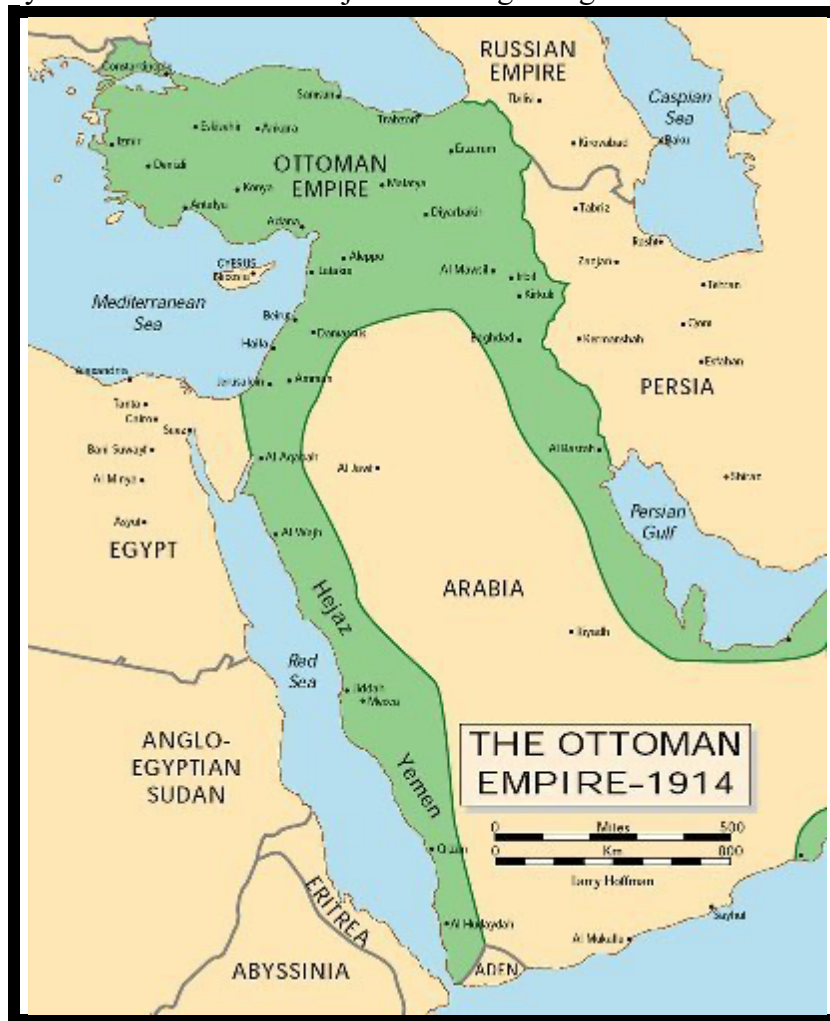


Figure 80: Ottoman Empire at beginning of WWI

A group called the Young Turks staged a revolt in 1908 that resulted in a constitutional monarchy. After losing more Balkan wars, the monarchy fell, and the Young Turks took over the government in 1913 under the guidance of Kamal Ataturk. The government declared itself to be secular (no state religion) although a vast majority of the people within the empire were Muslim. The government allied with Germany at the onset of diplomatic maneuvers on the eve of World War I and when the Ottomans were defeated in WWI, the victors in the war forced the dissolution of the empire and negotiated the status of former Ottoman lands outside of Turkey. These negotiations will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 13: WWI and WWII

Causes of 20th Century Disasters

The “Great” (Unnecessary) War

For the major countries of Europe, World War I was an unnecessary disaster that led to another disaster—World War II. The root of the problems that led to WWI began when the European nations, especially England, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Ottoman Turkey, decided to form empires. The period of empire building had been going on since the days of foreign exploration (although some empires were holdovers from the Middle Ages) but reached its height of activity during the late 19th century. The economic and military advantages of empires seemed logical in those days of industrialization and all of those countries (and a few others) were determined to create realms that would bring them prosperity and power. They often competed with each other for unclaimed territories (especially in Africa) and tried to expand even against other empires. These European empires based their economy on using their colonies as places to exploit for mineral wealth, sources of raw materials to supply the home country’s manufacturing, and markets for the finished goods. The home countries therefore saw their empires as both economic necessities and sources of pride.

By the late 19th century, some of the empires, the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian in particular, had existed for hundreds of years and were beginning to fall apart. Border disputes between the Ottoman and Austrian Empires raised tensions and further contributed to the difficulties these two empires had in holding their territories together. Fearing further losses of territory and noting the strong industrial and military buildup of England and Germany, the big European countries were drawn into two competing camps, each with signed mutual defense and protection treaties. The groups were: England, France, and Russia (called the Triple Entente) against Germany, Austria, and Turkey (called the Triple Alliance). (Italy and not Turkey was part of the Triple Alliance before the WWI started, but Italy dropped out of the alliance and Turkey joined when war began.)



Figure 81: Treaties formed before WWI

Balkan Trouble and the “Domino Effect”

The region where most of the conflict was occurring at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries was the Balkans. The Ottomans had lost control over several states in the area and Austria was benefitting, even to incorporating the formerly Ottoman-owned Bosnia into the Austrian Empire. To solidify their acquisition, Archduke Ferdinand of the Austria-Hungarian Empire decided to pay a state visit to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. As he and his wife were riding through Sarajevo in an open car, a young anarchist from Serbia, a neighboring ethnic region, shot the Archduke and his wife, killing both of them.



Figure 82: Archduke Ferdinand and his wife on the day of the assassination

The Austrian government was outraged and immediately blamed Serbia, who they suspected of backing the assassin. Austria issued an ultimatum with several demands for Serbia to comply. Serbia did not accept all the demands by the end of the time allotted and Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia had strong religious and political ties to Serbia and, along with Serbia, declared war on Austria. Germany declared war on Russia because of the Triple Alliance. France and England declared war on German because of the Triple Entente. Within days, all of Europe had declared war and each country began to mobilize.

Germany felt highly threatened by the Triple Entente because it had enemies (France and Russia) on two sides and not enough population or war industry to support a two-front war. Therefore, even before the war started, Germany developed a plan to solve the dangerous situation. They decided that if war began, they would immediately attack northern France through Belgium (to avoid the massive French fortifications along the German-French border). This early and massive attack was intended to quickly conquer France and remove it from the war, thus allowing Germany to fight the Russians and use France as a buffer fortress to prevent England from landing on the mainland of Europe. The Germans believed that they had time to conquer France before worrying about the Russians because the Russians were notoriously slow in mobilizing their army.

Fighting WWI

Invasion of France

Immediately after declaring war, Germany implemented its plan. The German advance through Belgium and northern France was initially very successful. However, two unexpected occurrences forced the Germans to modify their plan. The first was the surprisingly rapid mobilization of the Russians. This compelled Germany to divert several divisions to the eastern front to confront the Russians and thus weakened and slowed the westward attack into France. The second unexpected event was the rapid movement of the French army from their pre-war position along the German-French border, called the Maginot Line, to engage the Germans

invasion in the north of France. This rapid French redeployment would not normally have been possible because the French would have depended on trains to move the troops, but the number of trains was severely limited, and the train lines went from the German border to Paris and then to the north where the Germans were attacking. All of these transfers would have taken so long that the Germans would have time to overrun Paris. However, with ingenuity, the French army moved quickly because the French government recruited hundreds of Paris taxicabs to transport the troops from the German border on the east directly to the area north of Paris where the Germans were advancing.



Figure 83: Paris taxi cabs shuttling troops to the front

Trench Warfare

The German army was stopped short of Paris and both sides began to create trenches to hold their positions. The trenches eventually stretched from the North Sea to Switzerland and defined the western front of the war. The war on the western front became stagnant with little movement of the trenches even though huge battles were fought and thousands died. The troops would emerge from their trench, dash across the area between the trenches (called “no man’s land”) and face slaughtering machine gun fire from the opposite trench.



Figure 84: Allies and various fronts/thrusts in WWI

Russian Disaster

On the eastern front, the Germans were more successful. They were able to advance quickly against the Russians and gain considerable Russian territory. The Russian government came to realize that their army was ineptly led and terribly under equipped but there seemed to be no way to replace the army officers with more capable commanders. The Russian tradition of using individuals of the minor nobility as the officers regardless of whether or not they had military training or capabilities was so entrenched that better officer candidates would have to be found and trained—a lengthy process. Furthermore, the limited manufacturing capabilities within Russia meant that providing sufficient modern weapons for the army was impossible. Additionally, significant feelings of discouragement within the army contributed to their losses. Therefore, the Russians simply tried to overwhelm the Germans with massive numbers of troops, even though some had no weapons.

The Czar believed that if he took control over the army and personally led them in the field, they would be reinvigorated and win the battles. Against the advice of his court, Czar Nicholas II went to the front in a dramatic gesture and led the Russians against the Germans. His presence did little to change the situation and the number of Russian casualties mounted. The people blamed the Czar for their losses and, to make matters worse, his extended absence from the capital worsened the political chaos that was developing within Russia. Clearly the Russians were losing the war on the eastern front.

In the face of a static situation on the western front and a strong advance by Germany on the eastern front, Italy dropped out of the war (eventually to enter on the side of England and France) and the Ottomans (Turkey) entered the war on the side of Germany and Austria. The British forces (including many of the Commonwealth nations like Australia and New Zealand) attacked Turkey and, somewhat surprisingly, lost several important battles to the Turks. (This was unexpected in light of the dwindling power of the Ottoman Empire, but the Turks had renewed energy because of a takeover by the “young Turks,” a radical and vigorous group of secular revolutionaries led by Kamal Ataturk.

Arab Revolt

Origins of the Revolt

The desire for ethnic independence that was present in many of the colonies in many of the empires became evident quickly in the Middle East where Arabs sought independence from the Ottoman Empire. This Arab uprising has been called the Arab Revolt. The rise of Arab nationalism began in the early 1800s in the Levant with moderate demands against the Ottoman sultan for limited autonomy, greater use of Arabic in schools, and changes in peacetime conscription of Arab young men into the Ottoman army. These demands were heard but not acted upon.

The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 within Turkey resulted in the Ottoman government becoming more centralized in exerting its power over the empire and more pro-Turkish. These Young Turk positions directly opposed the Arabs' wishes and angered the Arab leaders. In 1913 the Arab leaders from several Arab areas met in Paris and formulated a united demand for greater autonomy and equality within the Ottoman Empire including the use of Arabic in schools, and peacetime service of conscripts only within their home territories. However, the Turks saw these demands as revolutionary and arrested and tortured several Arab nationalist figures in Damascus and Beirut. That set the stage for an armed revolt, but lack of equipment and manpower slowed the Arab effort.

Seeing an opportunity to weaken the German/Turkish presence in the region as well as to defend their own interests, the British decided to support and coordinate with the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans. The British had already taken a strong position in the Middle East when they financed and took control of the Suez Canal and took a strong overseer (protectorate) position in Egypt even though Egypt remained nominally an Ottoman colony.

With the outbreak of the war and the Ottoman Empire joining the side of German and Austria in 1914, Great Britain grew worried about continued access to the Suez Canal. This strategic situation now seemed threatened by the Ottomans who had control of nearby Jordan and Palestine. Additionally, the British perceived an even higher threat because the Turks had recently built the Hijaz Railway from Damascus to Medina and that allowed rapid movement of troops throughout the Levant and the Hijaz.

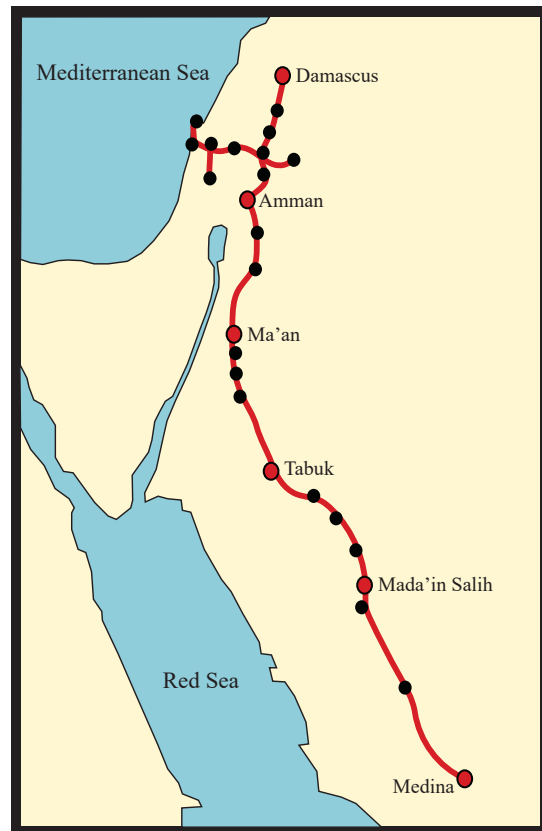


Figure 85: Route of the Hijaz Railway

Britain Backs the Arab Cause

To counter the threat of loss of the Suez Canal and access to India, Britain asked Herbert Kitchener, Consul-General in Egypt, to contact the Arab leaders and arrange a joint effort to both protect the Suez Canal and to drive the Ottoman Turks from the region. The leaders of the Arab effort were the Hashem family led by Hussein, the king (Sharif) of the Hijaz. (A sharif is a Muslim ruler or magistrate who is usually a descendant of Mohammed.) A message from Kitchener to Hussein trying to convince him to work with Britain stated that Great Britain would “guarantee the independence, rights, and privileges of the Sharifate [the Hijaz] against all foreign external aggression, in particular that of the Ottomans.” In spite of these guarantees, Hussein remained reluctant to cooperate with the British. He was not, however, hesitant to begin the war for independence against the Ottomans.

Fighting in the Hijaz

The formal uprising between Arabs and Ottomans began in June 1916 when two of Hussein’s sons, Ali and Faisal, led an attack on the Ottoman garrison in Medina. Hussein had about 50,000 men under arms but fewer than 10,000 rifles. The Arabs were defeated in this battle.

The British then sent a delegation of army officers, including a junior officer, T.E. Lawrence (called Lawrence of Arabia), to meet with the Arab leaders and to determine what was needed to advance the stalled revolt. In the early 1910s Lawrence had been an archaeologist in Iraq and had also conducted a survey of likely archaeological sites in the Negev and surrounding territory. Actually, the intent of doing an archaeological survey was merely a ruse to get Ottoman permission to be in the area. The real purpose was to collect military data because Great Britain anticipated that war would occur.¹⁴⁹ The British felt that these

experiences qualified Lawrence for the task of coordinating with the Arabs and would receive Arab acceptance.

Lawrence met with Hussein but described the Sharif as inflexible. He also met with Faisal and was impressed, calling him “open and malleable, efficient and ambitious.” Lawrence thought that Faisal would “bring the Arab Revolt to full glory.” Faisal in return found Lawrence to be well-connected, faithful, and capable of supplying the guns and gold needed to win the revolution. Faisal invited Lawrence to join his army and supplied him with fine Arabic robes, camels, and freedom of movement. Faisal and his army readily accepted Lawrence’s advice on military strategy.¹⁵⁰

The Arabs then attacked the Ottoman garrison in Mecca and the battle raged for over a month in the streets. Again, the Arabs had greater numbers but were not as well armed as the Ottomans. Finally, the Arabs were victorious in Mecca when the British sent well-armed Egyptian troops into the battle to assist the Arabs. Simultaneously, another of Hussein’s sons, Abdullah, led an attack against Taif (a city east of Mecca). Initially it settled into a siege but with the help of Egyptian artillery, he was able to take the city. The city of Jeddah (a coastal city west of Mecca) was then attacked and successfully taken with the help of Egyptian naval bombardment.

The other cities in the Hijaz, except Medina, were soon taken and the questions then arose of how to protect their gains from counterattacks and how to drive the Ottomans from the rest of the Levant. The Arabs began attacks on the Hijaz Railroad and other guerilla-style attacks on supply trains and isolated Ottoman garrisons. Lawrence then convinced Hussein and Faisal that an attack on Aqaba was needed to secure the only remaining Ottoman port on the Red Sea and prevent any resupply from behind as the Arab army planned to move into Jordan and on to Syria. Controlling Aqaba would also provide a supply site for the Arabs and the British army that would simultaneously be traveling northward through Palestine with intent to meet the Arabs in Damascus.

Lawrence and his Arab company of only 40 men began their trek across the Arabian desert toward Aqaba with the idea of recruiting additional troops from among the desert tribes that occupied the desert area. The movie, *Lawrence of Arabia*, portrays the many difficulties and near-death situations that were associated with this desert crossing. The film was shot in Wadi Rum, a desert area of southern Jordan just north of Aqaba that was part of the territory crossed in the campaign. After two months of desert travel, the Arab army attacked and captured the Ottoman port of Aqaba.

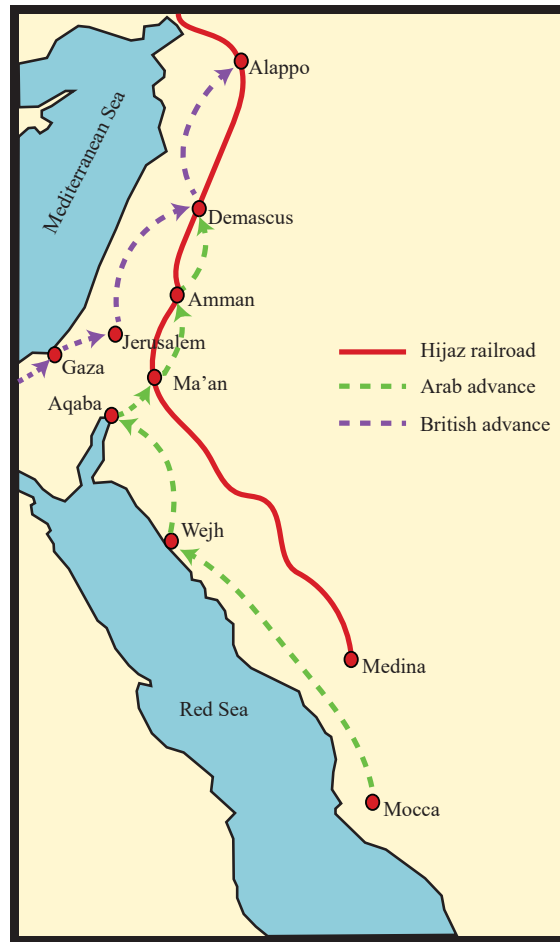


Figure 86: Lawrence's pathway during the Arab Revolt

Arab Movement after the Aqaba Victory

The Arab army and Lawrence then began their movement northward through Jordan. British intelligence stated that most of the tribes east of the Jordan River had sided with the Ottomans. They had been bribed for their loyalty and the tribes wanted to fulfill their promises in accepting the money. They were also afraid of reprisals from the Ottomans should the Arab Revolt fail. Therefore, the journey northward for the Hashemite army was difficult and, on occasion such as at Kerak, was delayed by extensive fighting against local tribes and some lost battles. In the end, however, Lawrence was able to gain support from desert tribes and overcome these defeats and delays. During the drive northward, Lawrence spent some time resting at desert forts that were built by the Nabateans, Ayyubids, and Mamluks. Lawrence likely went to the desert forts both for security and, perhaps, to convince the local Bedouins to join him. (I have visited these forts and found them quite interesting both historically and from a technology viewpoint.)

As the Arabs were progressing north through Jordan, the British army was moving northward through Palestine. The Arab army arrived in Damascus before the British and took possession of the city. However, the technologically inexperienced Arabs had difficulty with some of the modern equipment in Damascus including the running of the utilities. The citizens in Damascus were angry and distraught. Within a few days the British army also arrived in Damascus and observed the difficulty the Arabs had in operating the equipment used in the utilities of the city. With some delayed cooperation, however, the city was put back in running order.

This victory completed the Arab involvement in the war although the British continued northward toward northern Syria and Turkey. The Ottomans subsequently withdrew from the Middle East.

Conclusion of WWI

Russian Withdrawal from the War

In 1917 two major events changed the course of WWI. The first was the Russian Revolution in which the Bolsheviks (Communists) took over the Russian government and withdrew Russia from the war. This revolution was assisted by Germany when they transported Lenin from exile in Switzerland to Russia. The Germans promised to stop all fighting on the eastern front as soon as Russia withdrew from the war.

The Bolsheviks took control of the Russian government in November 1917 and killed the Czar and his family shortly thereafter. A peace treaty was signed between Germany and Russia ceding to Germany some of the territory in Poland and Russia that Germany had taken during the war.

Germany began moving troops from the east to the west with the expectation that the additional troops would tip the balance of the trench war in their favor.

Entry of the Americans

The second event of 1917 that had a major effect on the war was the entry into the war by the United States. However, the Americans were not prepared for war and the process of assembling an army and training them took many months. The American troops did not arrive in force until late 1917, about the same time as the German redeployment from the eastern front.

The Germans and the Allies fought throughout most of 1916-1918 along the western front with little territorial advantage to either side. Huge battles were fought at Verdun (the longest of the war) and at the Somme (the most deadly of the war) and, later, at the Marne and again at the Somme, and again at the Somme. (The repeated battles at the same locations emphasize the lack of movement of the front throughout the period.)

Armistice

Gradually, the added military manufacturing strength of the United States and the limited population of Germany began to be major factors in convincing the Germans that a long-term victory could not be achieved.

Therefore, in November 1918, Germany asked for an armistice. This was granted and both sides began to send their soldiers home. In particular, German troops were evacuated from France and Belgium where most of the fighting had occurred. The armistice was a cessation in fighting, but no surrender occurred. Since most of the fighting had occurred outside their territory, most of the German population believed that Germany had won the war or, at least, fought to a stalemate.

A peace treaty conference was arranged for both sides and all other interested parties were to meet in Paris (Versailles) to work out the details of the peace agreement.

Versailles Peace Treaty

Woodrow Wilson's Solution

Seventy nations gathered in Paris to negotiate the treaty ending WWI. Most countries sent their foreign ministers and their diplomatic teams. However, as a surprise to many, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States attended the conference personally. President Wilson believed he had developed the ideal peace plan (called the Fourteen Points) that was based on free trade, open agreements, and democracy (which implied self-determination). He assumed that other countries would agree with him, not only because of the benefits and fairness of the ideas but also because America's entrance into the war had been the key to ending the war.

However, Britain and France had other ideas. They did not immediately assert these plans because they didn't want to anger or offend the American president, but they waited for the right moment to propose them. A hint of their intentions was, however, immediately apparent when they insisted on excluding Germany and its allies from the peace talks. They demanded that the peace terms be worked out by the "victors" and that Germany be forced to simply sign the agreement. Therefore, from the beginning, Germany was angered. However, it was forced to agree because the western allies maintained a crippling blockade of Germany for eight months after the cessation of fighting until Germany signed the peace treaty. Some authorities estimate that 100,000 Germans died of hunger during this post-war blockade.

In the end, the terms of the treaty were formulated in a closed session by Wilson, the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, and the British Foreign Minister, Lloyd George. Speaking frankly in the 145 private meetings, the three men came to two main compromises—German reparations were insisted upon by France and formation of the League of Nations was insisted upon by the Americans.

Most economic experts said that the terms of the reparations were both economically repressive for the Germans and also impossible to meet given the tattered nature of Germany's post-war economy. Nevertheless, with memories of their own payment of reparations following the Franco-Prussian War only 40 years previous, the French insisted on punitive reparations that they believed would result in a long-lasting deterrent to future German aggression. In addition, as part of the final treaty, the Germans were required to formally accept blame for causing the war.

President Wilson insisted on the formation of the League of Nations because he saw this organization as the vehicle to ensure future peace and settlement of international problems. However, when Wilson submitted the Versailles Treaty to the United States senate for approval, so many senators saw the League as an invasion of the sovereignty of the United States, that approval was impossible. Wilson tried to build public support by touring the United States and speaking in favor of the treaty. Unfortunately for Wilson, a stroke he suffered during the speaking tour left him so impaired he was unable to continue the tour and the Versailles treaty was never approved by the United States, nor did the U.S. join the League of Nations.

Negotiations in Paris

While the treaty with Germany was being negotiated in Versailles, many other issues were also being negotiated by other groups meeting in various locations around Paris. Since three great empires—the Austro-Hungarian, the German, and the Ottoman—had ended as a result of the war, the status of the territories and colonies of these empires needed to be decided. The disposition of the Ottoman Empire was of particular importance to the Arabs.

From the Arab point of view, the status of the Levant and Hijaz was already decided when the British promised Sharif Hussein that the Arabs would have a united homeland. Only the details needed to be worked

out such as the precise boundaries of the new nation and who would be the king. The original proposal by the Arabs was to create a united Arab state including all of the Levant, Mesopotamia, and the Arabian peninsula.



Figure 87: Original Arab proposal for the Arab Nation

Feisal was in Paris and was using his status as the military leader of the Arab Revolt to promote himself as the logical choice for king. The British War Office, including Lawrence of Arabia, generally supported Feisal's position.

Sykes-Picot Agreement

However, the British and French foreign ministries had privately signed a secret agreement (called the Sykes-Picot Agreement) that defined their mutual spheres of influence in the Levant. It partitioned the area giving control of Syria, Lebanon, and Kurdistan to France and Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan to Britain. Clearly the Sykes-Picot Agreement was in conflict with the British-Hussein agreement. In Paris and with the French and British foreign ministries in control, the Sykes-Picot was deemed to be the superior document. Today, experts see this moment as a turning point in Arab-Western relations because Britain had reneged on its promises and could not be trusted. This falsity has led to much resentment among the Arabs and other groups such as the Kurds whose agreements with the British war office were also ignored.



Figure 88 Sykes-Picot Agreement

As the Sykes-Picot Agreement was implemented in practice, a framework for what is known as the mandate system was imposed in the years following the war. These mandates set up governments in some of the former Ottoman lands headed by locals, but which remained under the direction and control of Britain or France. Obviously, this was not independence. Therefore, near the end of 1918, the Hashemite Emir, Faisal, set up a separate and independent Arab government in Damascus. For a brief duration, Faisal assumed the throne of Syria and his elder brother Abdullah was given the crown of Iraq by the independent Iraqi representatives. However, shortly afterward, France forcibly removed King Faisal from the throne to which he had been elected by the General Syrian Congress in 1920.



Figure 89: The Middle East protectorates after WWI

Hashemite Rulers

The British divided Transjordan (modern Jordan) into three local administrative districts, with a British “advisor” appointed to each. The northern region of Ajloun had its administrative center in Irbid, the central region of Balqa was based in Salt, and the southern region was run by the “Moabite Arab Government,” based in Kerak. The regions of Ma’an and Tabuk were incorporated into the Kingdom of the Hijaz, ancestral home of the Hashemites. Recognizing the determination of Emir Abdullah to unify Arab lands under the Hashemite banner, the British proclaimed Abdullah ruler of the three districts, collectively known as Transjordan. Confident that his plans for the unity of the Arab nation would eventually come to fruition, the emir established the first centralized governmental system in what is now modern Jordan on April 11, 1921. Emir Abdullah soon succeeded in loosening the British mandate over Transjordan with an Anglo-Transjordanian treaty. On May 15, 1923, Britain formally recognized the Emirate of Transjordan as a state under the leadership of Emir Abdullah. In May 1925, the Aqaba and Ma’an districts of the Hijaz became part of Transjordan.

Meanwhile, King Faisal I assumed the throne of the Kingdom of Iraq. The Hashemite family ruled Iraq until King Faisal’s grandson King Faisal II and his immediate family were all murdered in a bloody coup by Nasserist sympathizers led by Colonel Abdel Karim Qassim in 1958.

The Hashemites suffered another major blow in 1925, when King Ali bin al-Hussein, the eldest brother of Abdullah and Faisal, lost the throne of the Kingdom of the Hijaz to the Saudis, a rival Arab tribe. The loss, which was brought about by a partnership between Ibn Saud and followers of the Wahhabi sect (a strongly conservative religious group intent on maintaining traditional values as they saw them). The mutual

cooperation led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and ended over one thousand years of Hashemite rule in Mecca.

Arab League

In Transjordan Emir Abdullah wanted to unite the several tribes that formed the majority of the population of the newly formed nation. He also wanted to protect the country from external aggressors and to police and guard the internal highways as well as enforce other laws. He believed that forming an elite military-police unit would help to accomplish these goals. With British financial support a small unit of 150 men were brought together under a British commander. Most of the troops were from the Chechen community that had migrated into the area in the 1800s to escape persecution by the Russians. The unit was soon expanded to 1000 men, many of whom had served in the Ottoman army. The new force was named the Arab Legion. It was still led by British citizens in the employ of the Transjordanian government and became one of the finest fighting units in the Arab world. Later the leadership was transferred to Jordanian nationals.

Full Independence

Emir Abdullah realized that true stability could only be accomplished by establishing legitimacy through representative institutions. Hence, as early as April 1928 he proposed a constitution that provided for a parliament that consisted of some elected and some appointed members. Elections were held in February 1929 with 21 total members, seven of whom were appointed. It was given advisory powers consistent with a monarchy.

Between 1928 and 1946 a series of Anglo-Transjordanian treaties led to almost full independence for Transjordan. While Britain retained a degree of control over foreign affairs, armed forces, communication systems, and state finances, Emir Abdullah was in charge of the administrative and military machinery of the regular government. In March 1946 Abdullah negotiated a new Anglo-Transjordanian treaty, ending the British mandate and gaining full independence for Transjordan. In exchange for providing military facilities within the country, Britain continued to pay a financial subsidy and supported the Arab Legion. Two months later, in May 1946, the Transjordanian parliament proclaimed Abdullah king, while officially changing the name of the country from the Emirate of Transjordan to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Germany after WWI and the Beginning of WWII

Territorial Loses

After WWI Germany changed from a monarchy to the democratically elected but politically fragile Weimer Republic. The borders of Germany were altered to give Germany's neighbors buffer zones of protection and to reverse land gains made by Germany in previous wars. In some of the areas designated for loss, the people were given a chance to vote on whether to remain with Germany or to leave and several voted to stay Germans. This led to a patchwork of countries and territories in central Europe. In total, Germany lost 13% of her territory and 12% of her population.

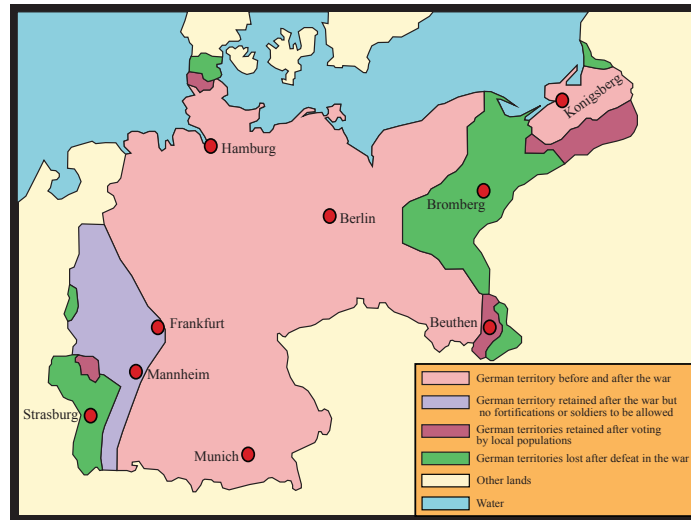


Figure 90: German land losses following WWI

Perhaps the greatest losses were not land but industrial capability. Germany had rapidly industrialized and was a major manufacturing rival to England and the United States before WWI. After the war, Germany lost all of her colonies (and their raw material supply), 48% of iron production, 16% of coal production, and significant food production from the loss of land. The major industrial area of Germany, the Rhineland, was demilitarized and carefully watched and briefly occupied by France.

Economic Problems

These production problems and the imposition of massive reparations resulted in near total collapse of the Germany economy. Hyperinflation drove the value of the German mark to near zero as evidenced from the 1924 exchange rate of one trillion marks to one dollar. People were being paid daily and would immediately go shopping to buy needed food and other commodities before the prices rose.

The story is told of a German family that had an American visitor in 1923 who kindly tipped the German family's cook a dollar in gratitude of the nice meal. The family met that evening with the cook, and they decided that they should set up a trust fund with the dollar and ask the bank to administer and invest the dollar.¹⁵¹

Political Problems

The assassination of the German foreign minister by right-wing radicals seemed to break the confidence of the general German public. Their hope for a stable country following the war ended. Therefore, Germans from all economic levels began to flee the German mark and seek secure investments in goods that held value like diamonds, safe real estate, and works of art. Soon, almost any hard good was deemed superior to currency. People began to hoard items like soap, safety pins, and anything containing metal. Pearl Buck, the author of famous books on China, was in Germany in 1923 and she wrote, *"The cities were still there, the houses not yet bombed and in ruins, but the victims were millions of people. They had lost their fortunes, their savings; they were dazed and inflation-shocked and did not understand how it had happened to them and who the foe was who had defeated them. Yet they had lost their self-assurance, their feeling that they themselves could be the masters of their own lives if only they worked hard enough; and lost, too, were the old values of morals, of ethics, of decency."*¹⁵²

Chapter 13: WWI and WWII

In this environment, Hitler sensed an opportunity. He gave the people someone to blame for their troubles—Jews and Communists. He claimed that these groups had “stabbed Germany in the back” at the end of WWI and were still causing problems because they were key groups who controlled the money. He also said that Germany could become great again by eliminating all people in Germany who were not of the Aryan (pure German) race. Not all Germans agreed with him, but enough did that he was elected to the government and, little by little, he gained power. His hoodlum followers destroyed Jewish shops and threatened many others. Eventually Hitler’s party became a significant force in the parliament and Hitler was made chancellor. He then imposed dictatorial powers and began his program of race purification.

Hitler in Power

Once in power, Hitler began to build the industrial and military might of Germany in spite of the post-war restrictions, and this helped the economy to recover. Germans saw Hitler as a problem solver and a dynamic force who was willing to stand up to oppressive foreign demands. Just five years after becoming chancellor, Hitler felt confident enough in Germany’s military power that he demanded return of part of Czechoslovakia (Sudetenland) to Germany and then invaded all of Czechoslovakia when he was appeased.

A year later he invaded Poland and incited WWII. He said the Germans needed greater “living room” and that Poland was where it would be found. This also reclaimed some of the land lost at the end of WWI and he was seen by many Germans as a defiant mover who would right the wrongs of WWI.

War in Europe

Little fighting by Germany outside Poland occurred for several months after the initial invasion. (Russia had invaded eastern Poland and Finland while Japan was fighting China in Asia.) Hitler tried to negotiate a peace settlement with the British, hoping that they would be persuaded to retract from the war that had been declared. However, Britain held firm in their resolve.

In April 1940, seven months after the invasion of Poland, the Germans attacked Norway and Denmark. This event triggered an immediate response by Great Britain and France to try and support the Scandinavian nations. British and French troops moved into the areas near Scandinavia.

In May 1940 Germany entered Belgium and France, just as they had done in WWI except that this time they were able to capture Paris, force a French surrender, and nearly trap the British and French armies in Europe. The British army was evacuated at Dunkirk (France) by recruiting all types of ships to ferry the army to Britain. By the end of 1940, after Italy joined the war as a German ally, Germany controlled most of continental Europe.



Figure 91: Status of Europe in WWII

Through 1942, 1943, and 1944, fighting continued between the Allies (chiefly Britain and its Commonwealth, France, Russia, and the United States) against the Axis powers (chiefly Germany and Italy) in North Africa, Italy, Greece, and Russia. Germany had much initial success.

Over time the Allies stopped German advances and began to drive Germany backwards, especially in North Africa, Italy, and Russia. In June 1944 the Allies landed at Normandy on the northern coast of France and began to recapture mainland Europe. In June 1945 the Western Allies and the Russians converged on Berlin to complete the recapture of Europe and end the war there.

WWII in the Pacific

Japan as a Power in Asia

Japan was a country with strong aspirations to become the leading nation in the Far East. They had defeated the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War in the early 1900s and therefore believed that with strong industrialization they could dominate Asia and compete favorably in global markets. However, Japan is an island nation with limited natural resources. It does not have the raw materials needed to sustain a strong manufacturing-based economy. To remedy that situation, Japan looked to model Europe and saw that England, also an island nation with limited resources, had developed a worldwide empire of colonies from which the mother country could extract raw materials at favorable prices. In addition, the far-flung empire gave Britain locations for military installations that were needed to maintain the empire and to exert the power that Japan felt was also needed to emerge as a leading country.

Japan decided to sign a development agreement with a country in Europe to obtain the expertise necessary for developing this empire and manufacturing economy. They felt that Britain would see Japan as a competitor, so the industrial agreement was signed with Germany, a country that had been recently formed (in 1871) from a cluster of medieval states and in just a few years had become both the second leading manufacturing country in Europe, and the second most powerful navy in Europe, just behind Britain in both categories. Germany was also developing a worldwide empire that Japan admired. Therefore, Japan modeled its development on Germany.

Asian Empire

Japan began its quest for empire by annexing Korea in 1910 and then followed with an invasion of China in 1937. This invasion was condemned by the United States and as a result the U.S. began to impose a series of ever-harsher trade restrictions on Japan. These restrictions failed to deter Japanese military actions in China, but they greatly alarmed the military government then running Japan. To protect itself, Japan signed a military and economic treaty with Germany and Italy, thus forming the Axis Powers. Japan believed that it could take advantage of the war in Europe to further expand its Asian empire.

Japan thought that rapid attacks and occupation of the lightly-guarded Pacific islands as well as other countries in Southeast Asia would result in achieving its empire ambitions and that the European and American nations, who were occupied in the European war, would soon forget these distant colonies. That may have been true because many of these colonies were scheduled by their protectorate countries, to receive total independence within the next few years.

Pearl Harbor

However, Japan's big mistake was to attack the United States directly by bombing Pearl Harbor in 1941. This act immediately united the American people and gave them the will and the determination to carry out a full-blown war against Japan and to enter the European war as well. As Japanese Admiral Yamamoto said of the attack on Pearl Harbor, "*I fear what we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve.*"

Japan had initial success in capturing Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. As American industry began to increase its ability to manufacture war materials and train soldiers and sailors, a dual-front effort in the Pacific (army moving north from Australia and navy moving west from Hawaii) proved effective in recapturing the countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Over time, the Allies were able to recapture all the lost territories and in August 1945 the United States dropped two atom bombs on Japan and the war was over.

World War II in the Middle East

Jordanian Involvement in Iraq

Although no battles of WWII were fought in Jordan, the Arab Legion was involved with Britain in a coup that was staged in 1942 against Iraq who was assisted by Germany, Italy, and German-controlled France (called Vichy France). Iraq, a British protectorate after WWI, had been given independence in 1932 as a constitutional monarchy under King Faisal II. A provision in the independence agreement stated that Britain had access to the petroleum reserves within Iraq. Many Iraqis resented this provision as they felt it retained British control over the country.

By 1937 Britain had withdrawn all British troops but had retained two airbases in Iraq, one near Basra in the south and the other near Fallujah, west of Baghdad near the center of the country. In September 1939 after the German invasion of Poland, the Iraqi government, along with most other British allies, broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. After a change in government in Iraq, the new prime minister, Rashid Ali, took an anti-British stance and secretly contacted German representatives seeking to solidify relations. In January 1941 amid an environment of revolt, Rashid Ali resigned as prime minister and was replaced by Taha al-Hashimi with a change in governmental directions back to being friendly with Britain. Then, in April 1941 a coup led by four Iraqi generals (called the Golden Square) ousted al-Hashimi and reinstalled Rashid Ali. The monarchy was not overthrown but a new regent was installed. This alarmed King Faisal II who fled with his family to a safe refuge. The Golden Square arrested pro-British citizens, planned to eliminate concessions with Britain, and maintain diplomatic ties to the Axis powers.

In light of these changes in the Iraqi government, Britain sent troops from India to reinforce the airbases and guarantee safety for pro-British citizens. Before the troops from India arrived, the Iraqi forces occupied the plateau overlooking the airbase near Fallujah and stationed troops at bridges and other key locations. The Iraqis sent a message to the base commander telling him that military exercises would not be tolerated. The base commander replied that any interference in normal base activities would be considered an act of war. After several other communications between the parties failed to calm the situation, the base commander sent air strikes against the troops on the plateau—the location that threatened the safety of people on the base. Within minutes, the Iraqi army responded by shelling the base.

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On May 8th a unit of the Arab Legion was dispatched to Iraq with the object of lifting the siege on the air base near Fallujah. The Legion arrived at Ar-Rutbah, a fort guarding the main entry road from Jordan to Iraq. After several days of bombing and some reinforcements by the British army units from the air base with armored cars, the Iraqi forces abandoned the fort, and the Arab Legion took possession. Prime Minister Ali contacted Germany and requested assistance. Germany sent orders to the Vichy French (who controlled Syria) to release German materials that had been stockpiled in Syria. Within a few days, about 100 German and about 20 Italian aircraft had been moved into Iraq along with a small group of German soldiers. The British air force immediately attacked these aircraft and made a significant reduction in their usable number. British attacks were also conducted within Syria.

With the base near Fallujah secure, the Arab Legion was then sent to the north of Fallujah to protect against local Iraqi reinforcements reaching the base. The Legionnaires dominated the tribal country north of Fallujah to such an extent that the local Iraqi population agreed to no longer support the rebellion. The British air force used this lull in action to intensify their bombing of German aircraft in Iraq and Syria. Meanwhile the troops from India had landed at Basra and secured many of the key locations. Having secured Basra, the Indian forces moved toward Baghdad along both the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers. On May 27 the forces entered Baghdad. Faced with the British advance, the government of Rashid Ali collapsed, and the leaders fled to Persia and then on to Germany. The next day the mayor of Baghdad met with the British commander and an armistice was signed.

At the end of WWII, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon governments were controlled by locals. Palestine was still a British mandate.

Chapter 14: Formation of Israel and Palestine

Diaspora of the Jews

Jewish Persecution

When the Jews were expelled from Judea by the Romans following the Jewish wars of the 1st and 2nd centuries, they fled mostly to other countries in the Middle East, to North Africa, and to Europe. In those places they often congregated in neighborhoods (called ghettos) by choice so that they could more easily practice their religion, but also by force where the governments of the resident countries could monitor them.

During most of the initial centuries of their diaspora, the Jews were seen as foreigners of a different faith when religion was the most powerful force in peoples' lives. Many restrictions were placed on Jews including not being able to own land, perhaps because of their "foreign" status. Therefore, Jews often became bankers and shopkeepers. These occupations often led to resentment of the Jews as they dealt with money and people distrusted those holding the purse strings. Occasionally, as in 1181 in France and 1290 in England, countries would decide to "purify" themselves and the Jews were expelled from those countries and forced to find another place to live. Often, the new locations were in Germany, Poland, and Russia. As a result, over many centuries, these countries of central and eastern Europe became gathering places for Jews.

The financial disaster within Germany in the 1920s and the strong financial and intellectual presence of the Jews in that country proved to be a ripe opportunity for Hitler to gain political power by blaming the Jews for Germany's problems. Hitler's call to do something to solve the "Jewish problem" along with promises to make Germany great again were viewed favorably by many Germans. He was elected as vice chancellor and then became chancellor and head of the German government. He immediately began to take action against the Jews by having his thugs destroy their shops and synagogues, exclude Jews from professions, and deny them access to public education. In spite of many bureaucratic hurdles, Jews by the thousands began to flee Germany.

Safe Havens?

But where should they go? This was a time when many countries felt strongly that their national heritage should be maintained. Most countries were, of course, identified with a particular tribe or ethnic group, even to having their country named after that group (such as France after the Franks, Germany after Germans, England after the Anglos, and Denmark after the Danes). Even the United States, which began as a land of immigrants and had no particular founding ethnic group (except indigenous natives) was leery about allowing large numbers of "foreigners" into the country. This was partly due to the very large number of immigrants, including millions of Jews from central and eastern Europe, that entered the United States in the last two decades of the 19th century and the pre-WWI years of the 20th century.

When Hitler's persecution began, the Great Depression was deepening in the United States and jobs were difficult to obtain. Immigration quotas were set for many groups, but a large number of Jews were able to immigrate to the United States and they proved to be valuable contributors to American culture. Still many other Jews were unable to escape Nazi persecution.

British Mandate of Palestine

Zionism

An organized nationalist movement for Jews called Zionism was begun by Theodor Herzl in 1897 when he suggested that the time was right for Jews to return to their spiritual homeland. The few Jewish immigrants before the German persecutions of the 1930s purchased land in the normal manner and caused little alarm among the residents of Palestine, the place that Jews perceived as their homeland. However, the increase in immigration as a result of Hitler's persecutions caused the Palestinians to worry that they would be drowned in a flood of Jewish people and lose their own country. The Palestinians complained to the British who had been given a mandate to supervise Palestine in 1922 by the League of Nations.

Balfour Declaration

A problem immediately arose for the British in acting on the Palestinian request to slow or stop the Jewish migration. The British mandate had included support for the Balfour Declaration, a letter written to a prominent British Jew, Lord Rothschild, promising to support a Jewish home in Palestine provided that "nothing should be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." This letter was written in the midst of WWI when Britain was searching for financial support for the war and the Rothchild bank and Rothchild family were important possible donors and keys to other Jewish interests.



Figure 92: The Balfour Declaration

Britain established a commission of inquiry, which investigated the situation in Palestine. This commission was called the Hope Simpson Enquiry and in 1930 it recommended simply that Britain limit the immigration of Jews by imposing restrictions. It recognized that Palestine had limited capacity to absorb new residents. When the migration rate increased in the 1930s, about 60,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine in 1935, the

Peel Commission was established in 1936 to investigate the causes of the unrest in Palestine (a six-month long general work stoppage by the Arabs). The Peel Commission recommended that Palestine be partitioned, the first such formal recommendation. This recommendation was condemned by the Palestinians and their neighboring Arab countries. They called for Britain to keep their promises and grant Palestine full independent nationhood as they had previously done in Transjordan and Iraq. The Peel Commission plan was also rejected by the Zionist Congress, in part because the Zionist leaders hoped to take over all of Palestine while others felt that the land distribution was flawed.

Jordanian Reaction

Although the strict terms imposed on Transjordan since 1921 prevented Emir Abdullah of Transjordan from establishing official contacts with Palestinian Arabs under the British mandate, he nonetheless gave refuge to Palestinian leaders and political activists. He constantly warned the British against earmarking Arab lands for a Jewish national home and allowing increased Jewish immigration to Palestine. He also intervened at various levels on behalf of the Palestinians, while warning of impending disaster should a diplomatic solution to the problem not be found. His predictions fell on deaf ears.

Jewish Reaction

To pressure the British to agree with the Jewish position, Jewish militants established the *National Military Organization (Irgun)* in April 1931. This organization believed that violence was appropriate, even required, to achieve the Jewish goals.

As the Jewish population in Palestine increased sharply during the 1930s, fighting between Jews and Arabs increased also. Both sides blamed the British, who failed in their attempts to reach a settlement acceptable to all. Some 3,000 individuals—including 2,200 Palestinian Arabs, 547 Palestinian Jews, and 126 British government soldiers—were killed during the conflict.

WWII Hiatus

The conflict in Palestine was muted by the onset of World War II, during which both sides cooperated with the British. Transjordan's Arab Legion also joined the side of the Allies, helping the British and the Free French drive the Vichy forces from Syria. At the end of the war, about 90% of the Palestinian population were Palestinian Arabs.

Holocaust

The Nazi Holocaust against Jews resulted in 6 million Jewish deaths along with millions of other people. Additionally, many Jews and other peoples were forced into labor camps and displaced as refugees. After the war the Allies offered to assist these people to return to their homes, but many Jews refused or were unable to return to their previous residences and sought to immigrate to Palestine. This huge number of potential immigrants overwhelmed the British and severe restrictions were put in place to limit the number of refugees.

Jewish Reaction to British Limitations on Migration

However, the Jews were determined, in large part because they had no other place to go as well as their belief that Palestine was their home by divine mandate. Moreover, most countries had closed their doors to the Jewish refugees. When a ship with immigrants would arrive in a Jewish port, the British practice was to divert the ship to Cyprus (a British protectorate) where the Jews were housed in refugee camps. The

Chapter 14: Formation of Israel and Palestine

internment was benign, but the people were tired of being in “jail” and public opinion around the world was clearly on the side of allowing Jewish migration to Palestine. Jewish authorities tried many schemes to force the British to allow Jews to enter Palestine. One of the most famous was to simply fill a ship with Jewish refugees and then hold a hunger strike until the port was opened. This story and the following events in Palestine is depicted well in the movie *Exodus*.

Beginning in 1944, Jewish militant groups started attacking British immigration offices in Jerusalem and other cities. They also attacked and destroyed railway tracks throughout the country. Jewish militants attacked a British police station in Jerusalem on November 27, 1945, resulting in the deaths of eight British government policemen and one Jewish militant. These Jewish armed bands attacked British government facilities in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Jaffa resulting in the deaths of ten British government personnel and later killed seven British government soldiers near Tel Aviv on April 25, 1946.

Perhaps the most egregious of all the attacks was a bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946, resulting in the deaths of 41 Palestinian Arabs, 28 British citizens, 17 Palestinian Jews, and five other individuals. This was clearly a terrorist action as it claimed innocent lives as well as British soldiers. The Jewish militants, known as the Irgun, claimed that by giving warnings of an impending attack, they moved this action outside the realm of a terrorist action, but the world and many Jews living in Palestine thought otherwise.



Figure 93: King David Hotel after bombing

These attacks continued and finally the British high commissioner declared martial law in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem and some 20,000 British troops launched a military offensive against Jewish militants, but martial law was lifted just three months later.

Partition

On August 31, 1947, the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) proposed that Palestine be partitioned into Jewish and Arab states. After rejecting several other plans, the UN General Assembly approved the partition proposal on November 29, 1947. It called for separate Jewish and Palestinian states with Jerusalem as a neutral site under UN administration. More than half the territory, including the valuable coastal strip, had been allotted to the Jews, who only owned about 6% of the land at that time. The Arabs were shocked, and conflict was inevitable. The Jews were delighted as they now had a firm place under their control that they could gather to.



Figure 94: UN partition plan

Arab Reaction to Partition

Prior to the UN General Assembly's decision to partition Palestine, King Abdullah of Jordan proposed sending the Arab Legion to defend the Arabs of Palestine. Reacting to the passing of the partition plan, he announced Jordan's readiness to deploy the full force of the Arab Legion in Palestine. An Arab League meeting held in Amman two days before the expiration of the British mandate concluded that Arab countries would send troops to Palestine to join forces with Jordan's army.

After the UN vote, both Jews and Palestinians began to attack each other. Some 850 Palestinian Jews were killed by Arabs between December 1947 and March 1948 and 254 Jews were killed by Palestinians. The

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British Mandate under the League of Nations was terminated on May 14, 1948, and David Ben-Gurion, the chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, formally declared the State of Israel.

State of Israel

Immediately after the proclamation of the state of Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq sent troops to join with Jordanian forces in order to defend the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. However, the Arab attacks were uncoordinated, and each army took orders from its own commanders. The Jewish forces were able to exploit the political and military differences among the Arab armies and the Arabs were forced to discontinue their military efforts.

Contrary to popular belief, Israel held a distinct manpower advantage over its adversaries. By the end of May 1948, Israel fielded a mobile army of 25,000 front-line troops, a number that would grow to nearly 80,000 by the end of that year. The Arabs had no reserve forces and were hampered by a UN arms embargo which left them perpetually short of ammunition. In addition, many Israeli soldiers had seen combat action during World War II. The Jewish militias exploited their military advantage to consolidate control over their allotted areas, as well as to entrench themselves in some strategic areas allocated to the Arabs of Palestine.

Chapter 15: Jordan After the Palestine Partition

Jordan in the 1950s

Palestinian Union

As a result of the war at the time of the partition and the huge influx of Israelis who took Palestinian farms and houses, Palestinians fled to safer locations, most of them going to Jordan. With the sovereignty of Palestine undecided since the UN did not immediately recognize Palestine as a country, many Palestinians believed that union with Jordan was of vital importance to the preservation of Arab control over the “West Bank” territories that had not fallen to the Israelis. Consequently, in December 1948, a group of Palestinian leaders and notables from the West Bank convened a conference in Jericho, where they called upon King Abdullah of Jordan to take immediate steps to unite the two sides of the Jordan River into a single state under his leadership.

On April 11, 1950, elections were held for a new Jordanian parliament in which the Palestinian Arabs of the West Bank were equally represented with Jordanians. Thirteen days later, parliament unanimously approved a motion to unite the two banks of the Jordan River, thus expanding the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in order to safeguard what was left of the Arab territory of Palestine from further Israeli expansion.



Figure 95: Kingdom of Jordan with added West Bank

The Kingdom of Jordan then included nearly one and a half million people, more than half a million of whom were refugees evicted from Jewish-occupied Palestine. All automatically became citizens of Jordan, a

right that had first been offered in December 1949 to all Palestinians who wished to claim it. Although the Arab League opposed this plan, and no other Arab government followed Jordan's lead, Jordan offered the possibility of normal life for many people who would have otherwise remained stateless refugees.

Death of King Abdullah

After the merger of Jordan and the West Bank, King Abdullah traveled regularly to al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem to participate in Friday prayers. On Friday, July 20, 1951, the Jordanian monarch set off for prayers in the company of his grandson Prince (later King) Hussein. As they approached the mosque, a lone Palestinian assailant stepped forward and killed the king. The killer also fired a shot at the young Prince Hussein, but the bullet ricocheted off a medal on his chest. The assailant was immediately shot dead. An investigation of the shooting discovered that the shooter had been recruited by a group that was active during the war following partition and were dissatisfied with the result. Ten conspirators, some of whom had fled to Egypt, were tried for the crime by the Arab League and executed.

In his autobiography, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, King Hussein wrote of the experience:

Following the martyrdom of King Abdullah, the Jordanian throne passed to Crown Prince Talal, the late king's eldest son. King Talal assumed the monarchy on September 6, 1951. Due to health reasons, however, King Talal abdicated the throne less than a year later, on August 11, 1952, in favor of his eldest son Prince Hussein, who had been made heir apparent on September 9, 1951. During his tenure, King Talal initiated the development of a new, liberalized constitution. This document made the government collectively, and the ministers individually, responsible before parliament. It was formally ratified on January 1, 1952.

According to the Jordanian constitution, Prince Hussein could not assume kingly duties until he reached the age of eighteen by the Muslim calendar. Therefore, a Regency Council performed his functions until he came of age and assumed his constitutional powers on May 2, 1953. The smoothness with which the reins of power were transferred through Abdullah, Talal, and Hussein was remarkable, indicating the extent to which King Abdullah had succeeded in putting the Jordanian monarchy in constitutional order.¹⁵³

Pan-Arabism

The 1950s were a period of tumultuous political upheaval throughout the Arab world. Much of this turbulence was attributed to popular dissatisfaction caused by the creation of the state of Israel, the loss of a large part of Palestine in 1948-49, and anger at the western nations for creating this situation. Popular discontent led to support for several radical pan-Arab ideologies.

The Ba'ath (Renaissance) Party originated in Syria in the late 1940s under the leadership of two Damascus schoolteachers. It championed the immediate political unity of all Arab states under the slogan of "Unity, Freedom, and Socialism." While gaining a degree of popular support throughout the region, the party eventually gained power in Syria and Iraq through military coups. Feuding branches of this pan-Arabist party remain in power today in Syria.

Nasser and the Suez Crisis

One of the key players in the Arab political arena during the 1950s was Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Coming to power in 1954 after participating in the 1952 Free Officers' coup which overthrew King Farouk, Nasser possessed charisma and oratory skills that enabled him to rally the Arab masses. Nasser's

brand of pan-Arabism, broadcast via radio throughout the Arab world, especially appealed to the displaced Palestinians. His popularity was boosted enormously after the Suez Crisis of 1956 in which Nasser defied western powers and Israel and appeared to be able to unify the Arabs and reconquer Palestine.

The Suez Crisis began when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal that was previously controlled by English and French concerns. He also prohibited Israel from passing through the canal. This strong behavior was appealing to the Arabs. Britain and France sought a military solution that involved Israel, but that solution was opposed by the United States and the Soviet Union. When Israel invaded the Suez with British-French support, the U.S. then demanded a ceasefire and a withdrawal of British, French, and Israeli troops. The U.S. proposal was approved by the UN and a United Nations Emergency Force was sent to the canal to ensure compliance. Britain, France, and Israel complied but with resentment towards the U.S. and difficult diplomatic relations for a few months.



Figure 96: Israel's furthest advance during the Suez Crisis

Nasser, the Ba'ath Party, and others continually tried to compete for leadership of the pan-Arab movement. Essentially, the "unity" proposals of Nasser and the Ba'athists consisted of one state seeking to impose its domination over the others.

Jordanian Response to the Suez Crisis

Under pressure from Nasser and other Arab leaders, King Hussein dismissed the British commanders of the Arab Legion in 1956 and abrogated the Anglo-Jordanian treaty of 1957. This action did not offend Britain as they realized the pressure being applied to Hussein. Public opinion in Jordan was strongly against Britain because of the Suez Crisis. In the midst of this situation, a parliamentary election in Jordan resulted in the election of the Nationalist Socialist Party (an Arabist party) that advocated closer relations with China, the Soviet Union, and Egypt.

In December 1957 an elderly supporter of Hussein was assaulted on the street in Jordan with acid thrown in his face. A few days later five people were arrested by the Jordanian military for anti-regime activities and a cache of arms was discovered. A series of bomb explosions, one of them outside the home of the governor of Amman, a strong pro-regime figure, continued the violence within Jordan. Given this level of trouble, Hussein was led to declare martial law.

In the midst of these problems, some nationalist army units surrounded Amman and claimed it was a normal military exercise. King Hussein was suspicious that this was the beginning of a coup to overthrow him and unite with Egypt. The king ordered the commander to withdraw. The nationalist-oriented unit returned to their base but then riots broke out in the barracks between royalist troops, mostly Bedouins loyal to King Hussein, and the Nasserist-style Arab nationalists. The 21-year-old king went personally to the army base and negotiated an end to the violence. Simultaneously, a Syrian army unit started to move into Jordan but turned back when they encountered Jordanian forces loyal to the king. This resulted in the Socialist/Arabist parliamentary government in Jordan being forced to resign as they were clearly in agreement, if not in cooperation, with the Arabist rebels.

Crisis of 1958

These disruptions to Jordan's stability were followed by a succession of internal upheavals including the confession of a young soldier who stated that he had been recruited to kill Hussein by throwing a grenade at Hussein during a public ceremony. These events culminated in perhaps the most serious threat to King Hussein's early reign—the crisis of July 1958.

Previously, in February 1958, Egypt and Syria merged to form the United Arab Republic and, in response, Jordan and Iraq formed the Arab Federation, a competing federal union of two monarchical states. Five months later, Iraq's monarchy was overthrown by a military coup by pro-Nasserite officers. The new Iraqi government dissolved the Arab Federation and executed the Iraqi royal family and the Jordanian prime minister who was visiting at the time.

Hearing that a coup in Jordan from Nasserite troops was being planned, King Hussein asked for support from Britain and the U.S. At that moment the U.S. was sending troops to Lebanon, at the request of the Lebanese government, and so only Britain was in a position to respond. Britain airlifted 4,000 soldiers to Jordan to support the Hashemite monarchy. The presence of the British military seemed to calm the people and the situation defused, although two bombs exploded in Amman and the people arrested admitted that they were working for the Syrian government. To meet British sensitivities, the sentences of death for the conspirators were commuted by Hussein to life imprisonment. The British troops remained for several months until the United States pledged to support the throne of the Hashemites in Jordan and provide the country with \$40-to-\$50 million as an annual subsidy, replacing the British subsidy. The position of Hussein was further strengthened by a UN resolution that called on all Arab states to respect the borders of other countries and to refrain from any interference in internal affairs.

The revolution and downfall of the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq would not be the end of relations between Iraq and Jordan. The Iraqi coup plotters who had ordered the execution of the Hashemites were themselves later overthrown and killed in the 1960s, perhaps easing the path to reconciliation with Jordan. In 1975, Jordan turned away from their traditional economic relationship with Syria and instead looked to Iraq as a major trading partner. Iraq offered Jordan a stronger economy through subsidized oil, a large market for Jordanian goods, and greater employment opportunities. With Iraq's financial aid, Jordan made some economic gains.

Jordan in the 1960s

Economic Vitality

Having weathered the tumultuous radicalism of the 1950s, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan entered the decade of the 1960s with renewed hope and confidence. The 1960s proved to be promising years, as the economy started to take off. The industrial backbone of Jordan's modern economy—the potash, phosphate, and cement industries—were developed during this time. In Zarqa, east of Amman, an oil refinery was constructed. The country was linked by a network of highways, and a new educational system was introduced to the Kingdom. In 1962, Jordan constructed its first national university, Jordan University, on the outskirts of Amman.

Early in the 1960s Jordan witnessed higher rates of economic growth than most other developing countries. A thriving construction industry provided job opportunities for Jordanians, while tourism from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the many West Bank attractions provided the Kingdom with a wellspring of foreign exchange income. The economy was further boosted by remittances from Jordanian expatriates who left to work in the countries of the Arabian Gulf. The progress the Kingdom underwent during these years gave rise to a new middle class of educated Jordanians keen on building their country. As this group of professionals grew in number and talent, Jordan became more stable.¹⁵⁴

Creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization

In early 1963, Israel announced its intention to divert part of the Jordan River waters to irrigate the Negev (*Naqab* in Arabic). This diversion into the desert between Israel and Egypt would weaken Jordan by taking water from its major water source. In response, Arab leaders decided at a 1964 Cairo summit to reduce the flow of water into Lake Tiberias by diverting some tributaries in Lebanon and Syria. To prepare for defense in case of an Israeli military response to these diversions, a joint Arab force was created. The United Arab Command was composed of Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese elements, and was headed by Lieutenant-General Ali Amer of Egypt.

Another outcome of the Cairo summit was the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Concurring with other Arab leaders, King Hussein recognized the need for an organization of this kind which could coordinate Palestinian efforts. His only concerns were that the PLO should cooperate with Jordan and that its military activities should be under the strict control of the United Arab Command, lest they should inadvertently drag the Arabs into a war with Israel for which they were unprepared.

The mid-1960s also saw the rise of independent Palestinian guerrilla groups (known in Arabic as the *fedayeen*), the most notable of which was Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement. The Ba'athist Syrian government encouraged *fedayeen* raids into Israel—not from Syria, but from Lebanon or Jordan. The Israeli reprisals to these raids were very harsh and Jordan was forced to reign in the guerrillas. For this, Jordan was attacked by the Arab press in Cairo and Damascus.

Responding to a *fedayeen* raid in November 1966, Israel launched a major attack on the West Bank border village of Samu, rounding up villagers and destroying their houses. A Jordanian armored column hastened to repel the attack but was overwhelmingly defeated by the Israelis' superior firepower. Instead of serving as an alarm warning of the dangers of uncoordinated military raids, the tragedy gave further grist to the opponents of the Hashemite Kingdom who argued that the regime was responsible for what had happened at Samu. Radio broadcasts from Egypt, Syria, and Iraq prompted rioting in major Jordanian cities.

Arab-Israeli 1967 War

Problems continued between the Israelis and the Arabs and in June 1967 as the United Nations Emergency Force was withdrawing from the area, the Egyptian president closed the Straits of Tiran (the waterway at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba). This disrupted shipments to the Israeli port of Eilat and the Jordanian port of Aqaba.

Israel launched a series of pre-emptive strikes against Egyptian airfields and other military targets, especially in the Sinai Peninsula. Egyptian forces were taken by surprise and nearly the entire Egyptian air force was destroyed on the first day, giving Israel command of the skies. In response to the Israeli attack, Jordanian forces launched an offensive into Israel, but were soon driven back when the Israeli forces counterattacked into the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem. Syria entered the war after five days by shelling Israeli positions in the north from the Golan Heights. After a defense of Arab East Jerusalem, the outnumbered and outgunned Jordanian army was forced to retreat to preserve the Jordanian heartland on the east side of the Jordan River against the Israelis.

When the final UN cease-fire was imposed on June 11 (six days after the first attack), Israel stood in possession of a significant amount of Arab land, including the Egyptian Sinai, Syria's Golan Heights, and the West Bank, including Arab East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

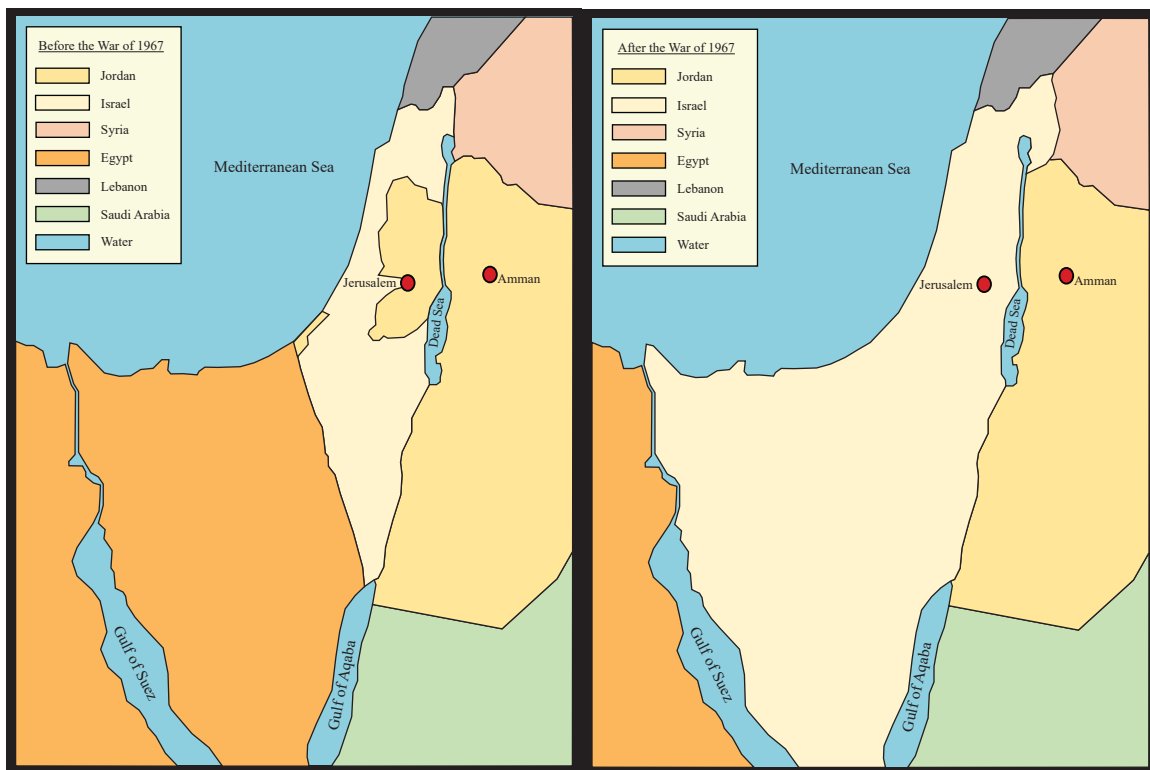


Figure 97: Israel territory before (left) and after (right) the 1967 war

All of the Arab combatants signed a peace agreement after six days of fighting. Hence, this war is called the Six-day War or the 1967 War. During the war, 300,000 Palestinians and 100,000 Syrians were displaced. Most of the Palestinians settled in Jordan. (Another example of Jordan as a land of refuge.) Jordan's economy was devastated. About 70% of Jordan's agricultural land was located in the West Bank, which produced 60 to 65% of its fruits and vegetables. Half of the Kingdom's industrial establishments were

located in the West Bank, while the loss of Jerusalem and other religious sites devastated the tourism industry. Altogether, areas now occupied by Israel had accounted for approximately 38% of Jordan's gross national product. Despite the economic devastation wrought by the war, Jordan continued to fulfill its previous administrative and financial responsibilities for the West Bank. It continued to pay the salaries and pensions of civil servants, while administering religious endowments and educational affairs.

New Attitude toward Israel

The war caused a shift in several Arab governments' attitudes toward Israel from questioning Israel's right to exist to acceptance of Israel's permanence but with a focus on boundaries. UN Resolution 242 was accepted by Jordan and Egypt and contained the idea of "land for peace" in which most of the lands captured in the Six-day War were returned with the agreement by the Arabs of Israel's right to exist. This is an example of the shift to a focus on boundaries.

Fedayeen Problems in Jordan

Between 1967 and 1970, the government of Jordan employed political initiatives to work for the return of Arab lands lost in the 1967 War. Simultaneously, radical Palestinians moved their camps from the West Bank to Jordan and began a series of terrorist attacks on Israel that were perceived by Israel as being joint Jordanian-fedayeen coordinated. In March 1968, Israeli forces carried out a reprisal attack on the Jordan River Valley village of Karama, where they began destroying the village homes with dynamite. Israel wanted to punish Jordan for their perceived involvement. The attack on Jordanian land sparked a strong artillery response from the Jordan armed forces and the Israel forces withdrew after 15 hours with heavy losses to the invading Israeli troops. King Hussein saluted the Jordanian army and the *fedayeen* of Fatah, who also took part in the battle, by declaring that "we have reached the point where we are all *fedayeen*."¹⁵⁵ Clearly, the king was in agreement with the original principles of the group.

The attack resulted in a UN resolution that condemned Israel for violating the cease-fire line and its disproportionate use of force and calling on all countries in the Middle East to respect the rights of others "to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries." The battle gained wide fame within the Arab world and the fedayeen received strong support from the residents of Jordan. This public response encouraged the *fedayeen* and they began acting as a state within a state. This marked a change in the focus of the group. Because they disregarded local laws, this resulted in a general environment of anarchy. Moderate Palestinian leaders were unable to rein in extremist elements, who ambushed the king's motorcade twice and perpetrated a series of spectacular hijackings. Forced to respond decisively in order to preserve his country from anarchy, King Hussein ordered the army into action.

On September 17, 1970, the Jordanian army surrounded cities with significant *fedayeen* presence and began shelling Palestinian refugee camps where the *fedayeen* were located. The conflict reached a crisis point in September when some 200 Syrian tanks, camouflaged rather unconvincingly as Palestinian Liberation Army tanks, crossed into Jordan. The Syrians were bereft of air cover, however, and Jordanian aircraft forced a Syrian retreat within three days.

Under pressure from other Arab countries, King Hussein halted the attack with the understanding that the *fedayeen* would comply with Jordanian laws and regulations. However, Hussein struck again when compliance was lacking and over several days drove the *fedayeen* forces into a wooded area near Ajloun where the Jordanians captured 2,000 of the radical Palestinians. The Jordanian army allowed the Palestinian troops to leave for Lebanon via Syria. Later, the *fedayeen* participated in the Lebanon civil war.

In March 1969, King Hussein held talks in Washington with American President Richard Nixon, in which he proposed the renewal of a six-point Arab peace plan along the lines of Resolution 242. The next year, the United States sponsored the so-called Rogers Plan that embodied this plan. Although Jordan and Egypt publicly accepted the plan, its rejection by Israel, Syria, and the PLO doomed the plan to failure.

Jordan in the 1970s

Unity in Jordan

Following the problems with the *fedayeen*, Jordanian domestic policy aimed principally at promoting national unity among the Jordanian population. This desired unity was considered the ultimate guarantee for the survival and security of Jordan. Once achieved, Jordan could be transformed into a model Arab state by opening the way for a full return to democracy. For the moment, however, matters of security and order remained the immediate concern of the regime.

As political stability gradually returned, investment began to flow back into the Kingdom. Jordan witnessed unprecedented growth levels in a number of areas, especially the services, construction, and financial sectors. Jordan's rapid economic and social development also owed much to the oil boom enjoyed throughout the oil countries of the Middle East during the mid and late 1970s. Large remittances flowed in from the 400,000 or so Jordanian citizens who supplied skilled labor mainly to the oil-rich Gulf states.

Munich Olympics

The Black September organization was formed after the September attack against the *fedayeen*. The object of the organization was to carry out reprisals against Jordanian officials. A Jordanian Prime Minister was assassinated. Later, the organization turned to Israeli targets that included the massacre of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympics.

These terrorist attacks on athletes proved to be a major disaster for the Palestinians. They gained a reputation as terrorists that has lasted for 50 years (continuously renewed by other terrorist attacks). This reputation has prevented world opinion from siding with the Palestinians and helping them gain statehood.

Yom Kippur War

In 1973 another war was fought between a coalition of Egypt and Syrian forces against Israel. Because the war began as surprise attack by the Arabs on the Jewish Holy Day of Yom Kippur, it is called the Yom Kippur War. Most of the fighting occurred in the Sinai Peninsula and in the Golan Heights—areas lost during the Six-day War. The Arab armies' initial military successes, especially the amphibious crossing of the Suez Canal and the storming of the Bar-Lev Line, reversed much of the psychological setback caused by the 1967 defeat, disproving the myth of Israel military invincibility.

However, lack of coordination between Egypt and Syria, combined with American resupply of Israeli materials, eventually allowed Israel to gain the upper hand. The Israelis were able to move toward both Syria and Egypt, coming within a few miles of Cairo. This alarmed the United States who were backing Israel and that alarmed the Soviet Union who were backing the Arabs. A peace accord was held at Camp David in the U.S. and that led to an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in which, for the first time, an Arab state recognized Israel as a legitimate state. The treaty between Egypt and Israel shattered the near-term chances for a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian situation, as it neither required the Israelis to withdraw from occupied territories (excluding the Sinai) nor asserted Palestinian sovereignty over them. Along with most

Arab leaders, King Hussein rejected the treaty as destabilizing to the region. In retaliation for assisting Israel, Arab Gulf states announced the suspension of oil exports to the United States.

At an Arab summit conference held in Rabat, Morocco in 1974, King Hussein agreed, along with all the other Arab leaders, to a summit declaration recognizing the Palestine Liberation Organization as the “sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.” Consequently, responsibility for negotiating the return of the occupied Palestinian lands was transferred from Jordan to the PLO.

The outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 led to large-scale fighting in the capital city of Beirut, destroying much of the city’s banking and insurance infrastructure. Accordingly, much of this regionally-oriented sector relocated to Amman, fueling a boom in service industries. By the early 1980s, Amman had been transformed into one of the most dynamic Arab capitals.

Jordan in the 1980s

Other Hot Spots in the Middle East

The primary attention in Jordan was directed to the Arabian Gulf in 1980 when war erupted between Iraq and Iran. Throughout the eight-year war, Jordan, along with the United States, France, and Arabian Gulf countries, supported Iraq against the threat of Iranian revolutionary expansionism. Nonetheless, Jordan always called for a peaceful settlement to the war, which, in the end, claimed around one million lives. It was during this time that trade between Jordan and Iraq again flourished. In particular, the supply line from Jordan’s Red Sea port of Aqaba overland into Iraq assumed major strategic importance, contributing significantly to the development of the Jordanian economy. This was due in part to the disruption of political and economic ties between Syria and Iraq, as Syria allied itself with Iran and halted trade with Iraq.¹⁵⁶

Although Jordan continued to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, King Hussein recognized that the continuing refusal of Israel and the United States to negotiate with the PLO had stonewalled any prospects for movement in the peace process. Therefore, after consulting with PLO leader Yasser Arafat, Hussein offered in February 1985 to coordinate negotiations with Israel under a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The agreement confirmed the principle of confederation between Jordan and an otherwise independent Palestinian state to be set up in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, the Israeli government’s rejection of negotiations, combined with opposition from within the PLO, derailed this initiative.¹⁵⁷

Jordanian Stability

Because of the turmoil of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in Jordan, some features of democracy had been suspended to be able to deal with attempted coups, assassinations, and invasions. The calm of the 1980s allowed the government to resume its commitment to parliamentary politics and reestablishing a pluralistic, organized political structure. Most notable among these were the reintroduction of political parties to Parliament, the drafting of the National Charter, the expansion of press freedoms, and a firm commitment to pluralism and human rights. In the words of King Hussein, Jordan’s commitment to fostering a democratic political culture is an “irreversible option.”

The ensuing parliamentary elections were hailed internationally as among the freest ever held in the Middle East. The new parliament emerged as a political force that exercised full legislative powers. In addition, the formulation of the National Charter established the framework for organized political activity in the country.

The Charter, which guarantees the protection of human rights, offers a model of democratic pluralism based on the guarantors of stability: public participation and collective responsibility.

Freedom of the press, one of the cornerstones of democracy, was enhanced with the enactment of new legislation on press and publications. In the area of human rights, the government repealed martial law, which had been enforced in the aftermath of the 1967 War. The government also encouraged the stationing of several international and regional human rights organizations in Jordan and ratified a number of treaties on human rights. Jordan guaranteed freedom of religion and established a non-Muslim advisory committee to assist the government in working with non-Muslim peoples and groups.

Jordan gave up sovereignty over the West Bank in 1988 except for guardianship of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. This renunciation included a termination of the \$1.3 billion program for the West Bank that had been funded by Jordan so that the PLO could and would take more responsibility for these territories. This change in Jordan's status with the West Bank also included a formal recognition of the State of Palestine.

Jordan in the 1990s

Peace Accord with Israel

In 1994 in the Wadi Arabah, an agreement was signed between Jordan and Israel ending their state of war and recognizing Israel as a country. The agreement was signed by King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. President Bill Clinton of the U.S. assisted in the negotiations. In addition to establishing peace between the two countries, the agreement settled land and water disputes and obligated the countries from allowing their territory to be used as a staging ground for military strikes by a third country.

Israel recognized the special role of Jordan in caring for the holy sites in Jerusalem. Both sides agreed to cooperate to help refugees including the formation of a four-way committee (Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Palestinians) to work toward a solution. Seeking to lay a firm foundation for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, the treaty also outlined a number of areas in which negotiations would continue. To this end, Jordanian and Israeli negotiators have signed a series of protocols establishing a mutually beneficial framework of relations in fields such as trade, transportation, tourism, communications, energy, culture, science, navigation, the environment, health and agriculture, as well as cooperation agreements for the Jordan Valley and the Aqaba-Eilat region



Figure 98: Signing of the Treaty of Peace between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Threats from Syria

Jordan's signing of the peace treaty with Israel was met with disdain by Syria's president Hafez Al-Assad. The CIA gave King Hussein a detailed report in December 1995 that described a plot to assassinate Hussein and his brother Hassan. A month later the CIA sent Hussein another report warning him of Iraqi plots to attack western targets in Jordan in order to undermine Jordan's stability. Other than strengthening security, Hussein did not act on these warnings.

Problems from Netanyahu

When Israeli leadership changed from Rabin to Netanyahu in 1995, it led to some changes in Israeli actions with respect to Lebanon where the Israelis used excessive force in retaliation of mortar fire launched in the vicinity of the Qena village in southern Lebanon. Of the 800 people in the village, 106 were killed and 116 injured as well as four UN peacekeepers who were seriously injured.

Premier Netanyahu also began to build settlements in East Jerusalem, in violation of the peace treaty and to initiate clashes between Palestinian and Israeli police, again in violation of the treaty. In response, King Hussein sent Netanyahu a letter (see box below) that expressed displeasure at these actions.

My distress is genuine and deep over the accumulating tragic actions which you have initiated at the head of the Government of Israel, making peace – the worthiest objective of my life – appear more and more like a distant elusive mirage. I could remain aloof if the very lives of all Arabs and Israelis and their future were not fast sliding towards an abyss of bloodshed and disaster, brought about by fear and despair. I frankly cannot accept your repeated excuse of having to act the way you do under great duress and pressure. I cannot believe that the people of Israel seek bloodshed and disaster and oppose peace. Nor can I believe that the most constitutionally powerful Prime Minister in Israeli history would act on other than his total convictions. The saddest reality that has been dawning on me is that I do not find you by my side in working to fulfill God's will for the final reconciliation of all the descendants of the children of Abraham. Your course of actions seems bent on destroying all I believe in or have striven to achieve . . .

From [King Hussein's](#) letter to Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) on 9 March 1997

Figure 99: Letter from King Hussein to Prime Minister Netanyahu

Four days after sending the letter, a Jordanian soldier patrolling the border between Jordan and Israel in the north killed seven Israeli schoolgirls and wounded six others. The king, who was on an official visit to Spain, returned home immediately. He travelled to the Israeli town of the girls to offer his condolences to the grieving families of the children killed. He went on his knees in front of the families, telling them that the incident was “a crime that is a shame for all of us. I feel as if I have lost a child of my own. If there is any purpose in life it will be to make sure that all the children no longer suffer the way our generation did.” His gesture was received very warmly in Israel, and Hussein sent the families \$1 million in total as compensation for the loss of life. The soldier was determined to be mentally unstable by a military tribunal and was sentenced to 20 years in prison, which he served entirely.¹⁵⁸

On 27 September 1997 eight Mossad (Israeli secret police) agents entered Jordan using fake Canadian passports and attempted to assassinate Jordanian citizen Khaled Mashal, head of the militant Islamist Palestinian group Hamas. Hussein was preparing for a 30-year Hamas-Israel truce three days prior to the attempt, after Hamas had launched two attacks in Jerusalem. Two Mossad agents followed Mashal to his office and injected poison into his ears, but they were caught by Mashal's bodyguard. The two agents were then held by the Jordanian police, while the six other agents hid in the Israeli embassy.

Furious, Hussein met with an Israeli delegate who attempted to explain the situation; the King said in a speech about the incident that he felt that somebody "had spat in his face." Jordanian authorities requested Netanyahu to provide an antidote to save Mashal's life, but Netanyahu refused to do so. Jordan then threatened to storm the Israeli embassy and capture the rest of the Mossad team, but Israel argued that it would be against the Geneva Conventions. Jordan replied that the Geneva Conventions "do not apply to

terrorists," and a special operations team headed by Hussein's son Abdullah was put in charge of the operation.

Hussein called American President Clinton and requested his intervention, threatening to annul the treaty if Israel did not provide the antidote. Clinton later managed to get Israel's approval to reveal the name of the antidote and complained about Netanyahu: "This man is impossible!" Khaled Mashal recovered, but Jordan's relations with Israel deteriorated and Israeli requests to contact Hussein were rebuffed. The Mossad operatives were released by Jordan after Israel agreed to release 23 Jordanian and 50 Palestinian prisoners.

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King Hussein's Cancer

In 1998 it was announced that King Hussein suffered from lymphatic cancer. It was the type of cancer that responded to chemotherapy which the king had already commenced. On 25 January 1999, Hussein was rushed to the Mayo Clinic in the United States for a bone marrow transplant. However, the transplant was not successful, and Hussein suffered internal organ failure. He was being kept alive by artificial means as he was rushed back to a hospital in Jordan. He died on 7 February 1999 with Queen Noor and four of his five sons at his side. At that time, King Hussein was the longest-serving executive head of state in the world. His eldest son, Abdullah, who had been named crown prince, was named king a few hours after Hussein's death by the National Assembly.

Hundreds of dignitaries attended the funeral including at least 60 heads of state and 15 former leaders. The UN general assembly held a special session in "Tribute to the Memory of His Majesty the King of Jordan" where tributes were made by the UN president and various other countries.

Chapter 16: Jordan in the Midst of Crises

King Abdullah

Early Life

Born in 1962 as the oldest son of Hussein's second wife, Princess Muna, he was the heir apparent when his father died. He is a member of the Hashemite dynasty and is the 41st-generation descendant of Mohammed. His early schooling was very good, first in Amman and then at St Edmund's School in England. He then attended Middle school at the Eaglebrook School and high school at Deerfield Academy, both in Massachusetts, United States. He did military training at the prestigious Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in England and, upon graduation, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the British Army and served a year in Britain and West Germany. He later attended Pembroke College, Oxford, where he completed a one-year special studies course in Middle East Affairs.

He joined the Royal Jordanian Army upon his return home and received a variety of training in infantry, artillery, parachuting, tanks, and helicopters where he qualified as a pilot. He also attended a foreign service program at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. He commanded the Jordanian Special Forces unit and, through it all, rose to the rank of major general. During the last years of his father's reign, he performed a variety of diplomatic missions. Clearly, he has stellar credentials in both civilian and military matters.

All of this training proved important in managing Jordan through years of crisis in the Middle East.



Figure 100: King Abdullah II in 2020 (Wikipedia, *Abdullah II of Jordan*, (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdullah_II_of_Jordan))

Gulf War (Iraq Invasion of Kuwait)

Causes of the War

Shortly after Abdullah's ascension to the throne in early 1990, Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait and occupied the entire country. The reasons for this invasion were obscure but may have included Iraq's resistance to Kuwait's repeated demands for repayment of the \$14 billion loaned to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. (This was a war fought from 1980 to 1988 between Iraq and Iran over Shia and radical Islamic ideology being spread by the Iran Revolution into Iraq.) The increase in Kuwait's oil production in 1999 also hurt Iraq by keeping oil prices down and thus making repayment of the loan to Kuwait difficult for Iraq. There were also disputes about the ownership of and access to Kuwaiti ports (oil shipping facilities) on the Persian/Arabian Gulf which Iraq tried to negotiate for several months but was unable to obtain concessions.

International Reaction

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was immediately met with international condemnation that included a UN resolution imposing economic sanctions on Iraq. The U.S. and U.K. sent troops to Saudi Arabia in preparation of a possible invasion to eject Iraq from Kuwait. The western powers urged other countries to similarly send troops. Many countries responded positively and a military coalition under the directorship of the United States was formed. This was the largest military coalition since WWII, clearly demonstrating the widespread condemnation of Iraq's aggression.

Coalition aerial and naval bombardment began in January 1991. Realizing that their situation was very difficult, the Iraqi military launched missiles into Israel, hoping that Israel would respond with excessive force and cause the Arab members of the coalition to begin a separate military exercise against Israel, thus breaking up the coalition. However, Israel did not make any response. Iraq then tried to dissuade the Saudis from attacking by launching missiles into Saudi Arabia, but, again, no specific response was made. These missile attacks were also condemned and solidified the intentions of the coalition.

The entire coalition coordinated a ground attack against Iraqi troops in Kuwait in February 1991. The ground assault was a decisive victory for the coalition and Kuwait was quickly liberated with Iraqi troops either captured or driven back into Iraq. The coalition army continued across the Kuwait-Iraq border to subdue the retreating Iraqi army but soon stopped their advance because of expressions from key coalition members who thought that the mission of the coalition had been accomplished. The entire ground campaign, from first invasion to the ceasefire, lasted just 100 hours.

Jordan's Position

Jordan stood in full agreement with the international community that the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait was a breach of international law that could not be allowed to stand. However, from the Jordanian viewpoint, Arab interests and common sense dictated that the matter should be settled on a regional basis by countries that knew the Arab culture and were closely associated with the Iraqi people. Jordan attempted to resolve the matter through the good offices of the Arab League, and King Hussein personally issued vigorous appeals to Saddam Hussein to yield to the demands of the international community. Unfortunately, the intransigent positions of both Iraq and the international coalition made a negotiated settlement impossible.

In light of the general ignoring of Jordan's suggestions for settlement without immediately going to war, the Jordanian government looked at the likely internal consequences to Jordan of war with Iraq. This led King Abdullah to stand squarely with the wishes of the Jordanian people, who sought to minimize the suffering of

their fellow Arabs through a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and he decided to not participate in the coalition. This non-participation led to international political condemnation and general cancellation of economic aid. These actions by coalition members were done with little recognition of Jordan's direct attempts with Iraq to reverse the invasion. There seemed to be no concern for the effects of the war on Jordan.

The Gulf War was an economic disaster for Jordan. Before the invasion of Kuwait, Iraq was Jordan's largest trading partner. Much of this trade involved transshipments of goods from the Jordanian port of Aqaba overland into Iraq, thus avoiding shipments into the Persian/Arabian Gulf that were disrupted by the previous war with Iran. In return, Iraq supplied Jordan with oil at reduced costs, thereby assisting the Jordanian economy. The war frightened tourists and that important sector of the Jordanian economy fell dramatically. Furthermore, many Jordanians worked in Iraq as well as the Gulf countries and sent billions of dollars' worth of salary remittances back to Jordan. Many of these workers were dismissed and returned to Jordan, thus reducing their remittances and exacerbating the unemployment problem within Jordan.

About one million Iraqi refugees also entered Jordan during the war. While most of these were nationals in transit through Jordan, about 300,000 became permanent, at least to the present time. This influx seriously overloaded Jordan as the native Jordanian population at that time was only about 3.5 million. Government services like medical and education were overwhelmed. Jordan's unemployment rate climbed to 30%.

Jordan-Iraq Special Relationship

Aside from their common characteristics as Arab and Muslim countries with a common border, there is a special historical bond between Jordan and Iraq. When Jordan and Iraq emerged from the Ottoman Empire after WWI, both countries were ruled by brothers from the Hashemite family. Jordan supported Iraq in its struggle against the radical Islamism exported by Iran.¹⁶⁰

With this setting, it is little wonder that Jordan (along with Yemen, the PLO, and Sudan) did not become actively involved in the coalition against Iraq. As a consequence of Jordan's position, other Arab states that were against Iraq's invasion (especially Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates), cut off the millions of dollars in financial aid to Jordan. These countries also cut off the transport of Jordan's agricultural and industrial product to the Gulf States and beyond.

Economic Consequences

Even before the war, Jordan was facing difficult economic problems. In 1988, unemployment was at 20%, foreign debt was triple the gross domestic product (GDP), and Jordan was forced to devalue its currency by 50%. Imports were twice as much as exports. In light of these problems, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pushed Jordan to impose tough economic reforms calling on increased production, decreased imports, reduced government spending, and no government subsidies.

These steps led to anti-government riots starting in Ma'an, the capital of Jordan's transport sector, and quickly spread throughout the country. These riots forced the king to change the government and to keep peace with the population, to maintain subsidies for most products (like oil and bread). Clearly the situation was dire when Abdullah took over as king and became worse with the onset of the Gulf War. Overall, Jordan's GDP declined by over 8%.¹⁶¹

To make matters worse, some members of the royal family and some government officials were known to have participated in corruption schemes. This also led to problems for King Abdullah. He appointed a well-known private citizen to head an anti-corruption commission to root out the problem.

Al-Qaeda

9/11 Attacks

The September 2001 attacks by Al-Qaeda on American targets were strongly condemned by King Abdullah. Jordan responded quickly to American requests for assistance, enacting counterterrorism legislation and maintaining a high level of vigilance. The Jordanian intelligence agency informed Abdullah that he would be the target of an assassination attempt. The attempt was foiled, in part because of superb intelligence by the Jordanians, as were later plots against the American and British embassies in Lebanon.

Hearing that President George W. Bush was considering an invasion of Iraq (see below), King Abdullah met with Bush and described the economic situation in Jordan that resulted from the Gulf War, told him of the economic consequences of an invasion of Iraq, and described the general political risks for the entire Middle East that would be involved in such an invasion. The subsidized oil prices from Iraq to Jordan amounted to \$500 million and that amount was greater than the U.S. aid to Jordan at that time. Abdullah failed to convince Bush to not invade but sought American aid to help with the inevitable economic problems.

Abdullah allowed the U.S. to station missiles in the Jordanian desert, close to the Iraqi border, but did not allow coalition troops to use Jordan as a staging area for the impending invasion.

Iraq War

Rationale for the Invasion

This war began in 2002 when the United States Congress passed a resolution that granted President George W. Bush, son of the former George Bush who was president of the United States during the Gulf War, to use military force against the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein. The rationale for the resolution was that Saddam Hussein's government possessed weapons of mass destruction. The Iraqi regime had used chemical weapons against the Kurdish civilians in northwest Iraq (an area the Kurds call Kurdistan), killing thousands. Saddam's government also used chemical weapons at least 10 times against Iranians during the Iran-Iraq War.

Additionally, some U.S. officials accused Saddam of harboring and supporting Al-Qaeda.

However, the 9/11 commission that investigated the rationale for the war concluded that there was no evidence of any relationship between Saddam and Al-Qaeda. On-site inspections revealed no stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction or of a program to produce them.

In spite of this evidence, the Bush administration continued to assert the presence of the offending weapons and of an Al-Qaeda connection. These assertions were greeted with widespread criticism both within the U.S. and internationally. Saddam continuously insisted that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

There was also a feeling within the American power structure, especially with Donald Rumsfeld (Secretary of Defense) and Dick Cheney (Vice President), and maybe even with Bush, that the Gulf War (Iraq against Kuwait) had been stopped without completing the task of ridding the world of a dangerous dictator and that Saddam should be removed. The leaders of the U.S. took upon themselves the obligation of punishing Iraq and of eliminating Saddam.

The war was probably illegal and, in the end, proved to be a major error as unintended consequences proved to be disastrous for the world, especially the Arab world. King Abdullah advocated that the problems within Iraq would best be handled by the Arab league as these leaders knew the situation better than the U.S. and other international governments.

Invasion of Iraq

In spite of the numerous counter opinions, the Bush administration pushed for the invasion, and it began on 20 March 2003. The invading troops were mostly from the United States and Britain with approximately 40 other nations supplying troops, supplies, equipment, or otherwise helping with the war effort. This group was called “The coalition of the willing.” Few Arab nations participated directly in the invasion.

The invasion was quick and decisive although not as easy as the victory in the Gulf War. The Iraqi army would resist an attack until they realized that they faced a superior force, usually armor, and would then withdraw and fight smaller-scale attacks using fighters dressed as civilians. The Kurdish militia troops (called the Peshmerga) simultaneously attacked the Iraqi army from their northwest enclave. (The Kurds are a non-Arab minority in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey that have sought independence and formation of a Kurdish homeland. This effort has been resisted by all three of the countries housing Kurds. Because of this agitation for a homeland, Saddam used chemical weapons against the Kurds in Iraq.)

About three weeks after the initial invasion, Baghdad fell, and Saddam went into hiding. The fall of Baghdad was greeted with widespread gratitude towards the invaders but also with massive civil disorder including looting and increased crime. The looting included the capture of over half a million tons of ammunition that was later used against the U.S. and other enemies in the Iraqi insurgency that followed the war.

During the invasion, the U.S. army met its fiercest resistance in the “Sunni Triangle,” an area northwest of Baghdad inhabited mostly by Sunni Muslims who were strong supporters of the Ba’athist (Saddam) regime. Saddam was born in that region and many government workers, politicians, and military leaders came from the area. The term Sunni Triangle was used by academics and reporters to distinguish it from other regions like the Shia-dominated areas of the south and the Kurdish stronghold of the north.

The Shia and Sunni in Iraq are constantly at odds with each other, in part because whichever group is in power discriminates against the other. During Saddam’s rule, the Shia were discriminated against even though they were the majority group in the country. Iran, also a Shia stronghold, gave support to the Shia in Iraq.

After nine months of searching, U.S. troops finally found Saddam hiding in an underground dugout, called a “spider hole.” He did not resist capture. A pistol, an automatic rifle, and \$750,000 in U.S. banknotes were also recovered from the spider hole. He was tried by a special tribunal for crimes against humanity and was hanged.

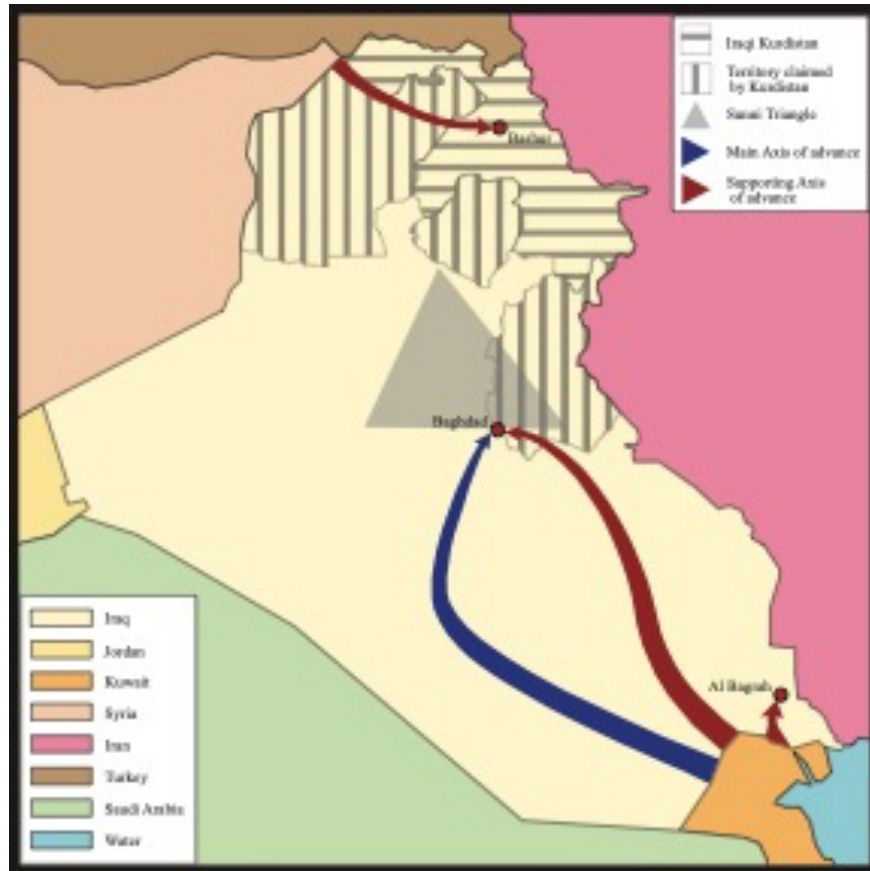


Figure 101: Invasion of Iraq by the “coalition of the willing”

Post-war Iraq

In an effort to establish a strong and lasting government, 31 countries, led by the United States, established a military occupation of Iraq. It was a time of violence and political turmoil within Iraq with major conflicts between the Sunni and Shia populations and both groups against the foreign occupiers. (Some estimates suggest 100,000 and perhaps 500,000 people died during this occupation.)

Initially the occupying countries created a Coalition Provisional Authority but then gave power to an Iraqi Interim Government. That government supervised a parliamentary election establishing an Iraqi Transitional Government that was finally followed by a conventional government called the Al Maliki I government, headed by Nouri al-Maliki. This government ruled for four years and was succeeded by another government (al-Maliki II) that ruled for another four years. Al-Maliki was a Shite and therefore received little Sunni support. But he did have the support of the Shia majority in Iraq. His sectarian policies helped contribute to the rise and anger of ISIS, a strongly militant Sunni group, and their invasion of Iraq.

ISIS

The ISIS invasion into Iraq soon followed and resulted in a vicious civil war with many civilian executions, rapes, and rampant lawlessness. The United States responded by increasing its military presence by 30,000 troops, adding to the 130,000 already deployed. The U.S. airfields in Iraq became very active in combating the ISIS invasion. The surge in U.S. troops contained ISIS and forced a gradual retreat and restoration of Iraqi security.

By 2011 the U.S. opted to withdraw from Iraq with guarantees from the government that Sunnis would be given key government positions and the overtly sectarian policies would be stopped. However, the Shia-dominated government did not follow through with these promises. That allowed ISIS to reconstitute and invade. They occupied about one-third of the country. The entry of ISIS resulted in tens of thousands of Shia banding together in an armed militia, supported by Shia-dominated Iran. The situation also sparked a second intervention by U.S. troops combined with 79 countries including NATO, the European Union, and the Arab League. This group gradually retook all the territory lost to ISIS and was able to withdraw in 2018.¹⁶²

Status of Iraq

A new election was held, and the new government was a coalition of Shia and Sunni headed by a Shia cleric, Moqtada Al-Sadr. Kurdish and Sunni representatives had key posts in the new government. After some widespread dissatisfaction and adjustments in the government, Iraq enjoyed the most stable period since 2003.

Today, in 2024, armed violence persists but it is sporadic, fragmented, and localized. In the field of diplomacy, Iraq's strongest relationships are with Iran and the USA. Iraq has sought for and established good relationships with Jordan, the Arab Gulf states, and Egypt. Iran has become Iraq's largest trading partner.¹⁶³

In retrospect, what has been learned about the U.S. involvement in Iraq? The initial objective of eliminating Saddam Hussein and his regime was accomplished. However, because the justification of the invasion (presence of weapons of mass destruction) proved to be false, the Bush government lost credibility in the eyes of the U.S. population and the world. Moreover, the concept of the United States inserting themselves into the affairs of another country, in another region, proved to be a serious mistake. The unintended consequences of the U.S. invasion ultimately resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, the disruption of the entire Middle East, economic disasters for several countries, the rise of strongly militant groups, and an increase in the influence of Iran (a terrorist-sponsoring country).

The principles proposed by Jordan before the U.S. invasion have proven to be correct—the Iraq situation was a local problem that should have been solved within the region with an emphasis on diplomatic solutions rather than force.

Syrian War

Another Middle East Disaster

In 2011, a civil war in Syria began between the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad and various domestic and foreign forces that oppose the Assad regime and, in many cases, each other. The unrest began in the midst of the wider Arab Spring protests (in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries). In Syria the cause was anger with the Assad regime and Assad's violent suppression of the discontent. A number of foreign countries including Iran, Russia, Turkey, and the United States have either directly involved themselves in the conflict or have provided support to one or another of the fighting factions.

Jordan's Participation

Because ISIS was one of the belligerents in the war and had threatened to expand the Syrian War into neighboring states, Jordan participated in the war against ISIS targets. ISIS had repeatedly cited King Abdullah as an enemy of Islam and an infidel. In June 2014 ISIS released a video in which they threatened to

“slaughter” Abdullah whom they named a tyrant. Jordanian ISIS members in the video vowed to launch suicide attacks within Jordan. The war seemed very close in north Jordan and so action to contain the war seemed especially compelling. (My wife, Margaret, and I would occasionally hear sounds of explosions when we were visiting Ramtha, a town in northern Jordan that is very near the Syrian border. This occurred while we were assisting Syrian refugees.)

The Jordanian air force joined in the U.S.-led bombing of ISIS on 22 September 2014. Jihadist groups retaliated by firing into Jordan and there was increased sniping at the border. (Margaret and I avoided the northern cities when this trouble began.) On 24 December 2014 a Jordanian F-16 pilot operating over Syria crashed after suffering a mechanical problem and the pilot, Lieutenant Muath al-Kasasbeh, was captured by ISIS. He was tortured and made to reveal the names and workplaces of fellow Jordanian pilots.

ISIS offered a bounty of 100 gold dinars (about \$20,000) for each Jordanian air force pilot killed. ISIS then released a video in which al-Kasasbeh, who was being kept in a cage, was burned to death by his ISIS captors. Jordan reacted to the video with outrage. It seemed to unite the people of Jordan in their resolve to punish those who committed the atrocity. Not only was the method of execution unusual and brutal, it was a violation of Islamic law. The Prophet Mohammed had said that killing by burning was not to be done because it simulated a person being burned in hell and therefore meant that the people carrying out this execution were acting as if they were Allah—the greatest sin possible for a Muslim.

Syrian Refugees

The Syrian conflict has resulted in a major refugee crisis with millions of people fleeing to neighboring countries (Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan) and a sizable number also going to European countries such as Germany. In Jordan the influx of Syrians has been especially devastating to the economy. King Abdullah was asked why Jordan allowed the refugees to enter with few barriers. He replied, “How can we keep out people who are fleeing for their lives.”

Refugees flooded into Jordan at the rate of 5,000 per day initially and then slowly dropped to about 1,000 per day for several years. The Jordan government and the UN created several refugee camps including Za’atari, the largest refugee camp in the Middle East and one of the largest in the world growing rapidly to over 120,000 inhabitants of which 80,000 remain. The people lived in tents supplied by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) with ground improvements, clothing, food, and other necessities supplied by several other charities.¹⁶⁴ (Margret and I were part of the charity effort at Za’atari sponsored by LDS Charities, an arm of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.)



Figure 102: Za'atari camp in 2012

Some interesting facts about Za'atari are the following:

- Tents have been replaced by 25,000 prefabricated shelters. (This was occurring when we were there. The shelters at that time were donated by the Saudi government.)
- Over 20,000 births have been recorded in Za'atari. (About 40 per week.)
- The main street of the camp has become a bustling marketplace stretching over 3 kilometers across the camp. Local businesses have partnered with Za'atari residents to supply the goods that are sold.
- Eight medical facilities provide free health care. The Moroccan government set up a hospital early in the occupancy of the camp. Other countries and the Jordan government have also responded to this need.
- More than 30 organizations operate in the camp. Almost 1,200 staff are employed by 32 different UN and NGOs working in the camp.
- Water is a precious resource and is trucked into the camp. This is typical across Jordan—a country with the second lowest water resources in the world, some of which are limited by the peace agreement with Israel.
- The camp is powered by solar energy. The power supply is, however, limited to 9 hours a day.
- Only 4 per cent of the refugees hold work permits. These permits can be granted to non-Jordanians upon request. However, the high unemployment rate in Jordan (about 30%) means that jobs are difficult to find. Two-thirds of the refugees report that they are in debt.
- Cash is donated by UNHCR each quarter. In a recent innovation, the cash is being replaced by digital payments.
- Most refugees want to return home one day. This is true for both older refugees and younger ones who have never seen Syria.¹⁶⁵

Jordanian Economic Impact

The economic impact of the Syrian War on Jordan was severe and immediate. Inflation rose mainly due to an increase in housing prices from Syrian families seeking housing outside the refugee camps. (Jordan allows refugees to enter any part of the country freely.) The overall growth rate of the economy was slowed by

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about one per cent—a significant amount in a small economy such as Jordan's. The trade balance was seriously affected—imports increased to meet the increased population and exports dropped because of higher internal consumption. As would be expected, the rapid rise in population and their free access to public services resulted in a severe deterioration of services in health care, education, and water supply.¹⁶⁶

A related but separate issue has been the loss of transportation across Syria. Before the war approximately 30% of Jordan imports and 11% of its exports flowed through Syria to farther markets such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Europe. Jordan was forced to find alternate and more expensive routes.¹⁶⁷

The Syrian War has resulted in about 500,000 deaths, making the Syrian civil war the second deadliest conflict of the 21st century after the Second Congo War. International groups have accused virtually all sides involved in the war (including the U.S.-led coalition) of severe human rights violations.

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Life in Jordan

Our Experiences

My wife, Margaret, and I had been in Jordan about three days. We had settled into our apartment (rented for us by another couple in our charity organization), leased a car for at least a year, done some shopping to stock up our pantry, and began to make calls on local, Jordanian charities that we might be able to work with. After one of those visits, we came out of the office building and found that our car had a tire that was nearly flat. We thought we could still drive the car for a short distance, but we had no idea where to go to get the tire fixed. Just then a man walked by on the street and my wife bravely went over to him and asked if he spoke English. He said, “A little.” She pointed to our almost flat tire, and he held up his hand in a sign of recognition and assurance and got into the back seat of our car. He directed us with hand signals to a tire repair shop on a busy street a few blocks away. There we got out and he spoke with the attendant who then began the repair. The man gave us a thumbs up sign and started to walk away. I went to him and opened my wallet to offer him some money for helping us. He smiled, shook his head, and said, “Welcome to Jordan.” He then walked away. His kindness, courtesy, and helpfulness were a theme that would characterize our experience in Jordan for the next three years.

I gradually learned how to drive around the main city of Jordan—Amman. The size of the city is about like my hometown—Salt Lake City—except that Amman is hilly and over 3000 years old. Some of the old parts of the city have very narrow and winding streets where you must be very careful when you drive along them to avoid hitting parked cars, store displays, and people walking along the sides. Some modern technology and infrastructure have come to Amman so there are lots of cars and some traffic lights, stop signs, and driving rules although these are recent and the people don’t always obey them. It is not unusual to be stopped at a traffic light on a multi-lane road and have someone in the far right lane make a left hand turn in front of you. Therefore, you must be constantly alert and not expect people to drive the way you would anticipate. Margaret never drove the car while we were there and I would not turn on the radio in the car because it might distract me. Usually driving took both of us to observe so that we could avoid other cars and make the turns we needed to take.

Margaret and I went to a week-long wedding celebration for a former PhD student of mine, Ra’ed, who is from Jordan. While studying with me, our family “adopted” Ra’ed and we now call him our son. A few years after his graduation, he wrote us that he would be getting married in Jordan, and he invited us to join him and participate in several of the events. In one event, a dinner and party in the town of Ramtha, the center of the Al-Zubi tribe, dozens of people were invited and present. We all ate a traditional Jordanian meal called *mensaf*, a dish of rice and lamb or chicken with a delightful warm yoghurt-based sauce over the top with toasted almonds scattered throughout. It was eaten, at least by the men, with their right hands and without touching their mouths. The rice mixture was rolled between fingers and thumb and then flipped into the mouth. I couldn’t do it. The other men at my table saw my predicament and asked if they could help me. I agreed, thinking that I would get extended instructions on how to roll the rice and meat between my fingers as they were doing. However, their involvement was much better. They took turns rolling a bite in their fingers and then while I leaned toward them, they flipped the ball into my mouth. We all laughed and they continued to take turns feeding me. I felt like a young bird eating from its parents. The food was wonderful, and I felt like a native (almost). Everyone enjoyed the dinner, the fun, the dancing, and the chance to celebrate a wonderful family occasion. This was typical of Jordan and its people.

Foreigners in general

Locals and foreigners can move about the country safely and easily. The road signs and many other public notifications are written in both Arabic and English. This has been the situation since the peace accord with Israel. Americans seem to be especially welcomed with locals greeting them with a pleasant “Welcome to Jordan.” This kind reception may arise, in part, from the well-known fact that Jordan is a major recipient of U.S. assistance, both military and otherwise.

GPS would get us from town to town but not to a particular location within the town because few places had addresses. All Jordanians understand this and, in a way that was typical, would identify a landmark with you and set a time to meet at the agreed place and then they would escort you to their house or business. It was a great system when people are as willing to help and accommodate you as are the Jordanians.

In both Amman and in the countryside, it would not be unusual to encounter donkeys, camels, sheep, or goats walking along the roadway. This attests to the still highly rural nature of the country and also to Jordanians’ practice of using whatever resource (in this example, the roadway) is available to accomplish their task. We would also see sheep, goats and camels grazing in the median of the freeways (there are a few freeways in Jordan) and even in the vacant lot next to our apartment in an Amman suburb.

Outside the few large cities, Jordan is characterized by small towns surrounded by farms and orchards. The towns reminded me of Mayberry USA in both atmosphere and pace of life. Small shops were the rule and shopkeepers were relaxed about their business. We would sometimes go into a shop and find no owner there. In a few minutes a man from the shop next door would come to offer help for us and explain that the owner had to run an errand. No one worried about stealing. In our entire time in Jordan, we don’t remember ever hearing of any crime. Margaret remarked that when we were at a buffet restaurant she could leave her purse on her chair and not worry about someone taking it. The feeling everywhere we went was of safety.

On rare occasions people would gather in a demonstration that was very vocal but there would be no violence. The people would be complaining about the high cost of some commodity (like fuel or bread) and ask their local member of parliament to understand how strongly they felt about the issue.

Jordanian Demographics

The native Jordanians are tribal and proud of it, in both the urban and rural populations. Some of the tribes have lived in the area for thousands of years. About 94% of the Jordanian population of 10 million are Arabs while the remaining 6% are other ethnic minorities. The official language is Arabic while English is widely spoken, especially in commerce, government, and education. (Almost all universities teach in English.)

About 97% of the population is Muslim with the remainder mostly Eastern Orthodox and a scattering of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and other religious groups. We heard the calls to prayer every day of our time in Jordan and mosques were common throughout the cities and towns. Some Jordanians were careful to pray when they heard the call and they either went to a mosque or had a prayer rug with them that they could use, either within a building or sometimes outside. Women usually prayed within their homes or in special areas in the mosques. On Fridays, many people who did not otherwise pray regularly would go to the mosques for noon prayers. Other religions had their churches, and these were well respected. Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter are respected (often with a paid holiday for all employees) and are even celebrated by some Muslims. The non-Muslims were similarly respectful of Muslim holy days. During Ramadan, most

businesses and government offices had special hours. Most restaurants, except those within hotels, were closed during the day during Ramadan.

In times past when the Muslim brotherhood arose in other Arab countries, some followers in Jordan threatened to damage Christian churches on Christmas. However, the plan became known within the general population and, throughout the country, Jordanians who lived near the churches stood around the churches on Christmas to ensure that no problems occurred. They were adamant that no terrorist activities or actions against other ethnic or religious groups would occur in their country.

There are no religious or governmental laws in Jordan that dictate how women should dress. However, some family traditions encourage women to wear head scarf (called “covering”) and long sleeves and long dresses (“burkas”) or pants that cover the legs. About half the women observe these traditions and, when we asked why, they often said that it made them feel more religious and comfortable. Almost no Jordanian women wear any type of face covering, although some Saudi and Yemeni women who visit Jordan will wear them. The Jordanian women who do not cover will generally wear modest dresses or pants that are western in style but even then having leg and arm coverings is not unusual.

Health services are furnished by the Ministry of Health and are free. However, there is also an active private sector with improved services. This full health coverage has resulted in an increase in the average life expectancy from 46.5 years in 1950 to 73.8 years in 2015. Jordan is seen as a health destination for people that are seriously unwell. The medical training, hospitals, and private practice of doctors are well respected.

Jordan is one of the countries with the lowest average age of only 23.5 years. This age means that Jordan has a young and vigorous population that is open to new opportunities and anxious to move forward in the world. Hence, entrepreneurship has great interest in Jordan, if the capital and outside knowledge of starting companies can be obtained.

Economy and Employment

Jordan today, 2024, has many problems, some of which will be discussed in this chapter, but the problems associated with the economy and related employment difficulties are the most compelling. Essentially everyone in the country, even the wealthy, is affected by the difficult economic situation.

Jordan's overall economy is among the smallest in the Middle East, with insufficient supplies of water, oil, gas, and other natural resources, underlying the government's heavy reliance on foreign assistance. Other economic challenges for the government include chronic high rates of unemployment and underemployment, budget and current account deficits, and government debt.¹⁶⁸

King Abdullah, during the first decade of the 2000s, implemented significant economic reforms, such as expanding foreign trade and privatizing state-owned companies. These adjustments attracted modest foreign investment. The changes contributed to an average annual economic growth of 8% for 2004 through 2008. The global economic slowdown and regional turmoil contributed to slower growth from 2010 to 2017—with growth averaging about 2.5% per year. The parts of the economy most hurt were export-oriented sectors, construction/real estate, and tourism.

Jordan is nearly completely dependent on imported energy—mostly natural gas for heating and oil for transportation and electricity. Energy consistently makes up 25-30% of Jordan's imports. To diversify its energy supplies, which were previously heavily dependent on Iraq, Jordan has secured several contracts for

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liquefied and pipeline natural gas, developed several major renewables projects, and is currently exploring nuclear power generation and exploitation of abundant oil shale reserves.

In August 2016, Jordan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed to a \$723 million Extended Fund Facility that aimed to build on the three-year, \$2.1 billion IMF program that ended in August 2015 with the goal of helping Jordan correct budgetary and balance of payments imbalances.¹⁶⁹

An associated problem for Jordan is high inflation (over 6%). The high rate resulted from the effects of the Iraq War and the Syrian War, both of which dramatically reduced Jordan's trade with those countries and also made transportation of Jordanian exports to its traditional markets more difficult. Inflation also increased because of the overwhelming influx of refugees from these two wars. During this time of neighboring wars, prices exploded for food, energy, and durable goods—many of which came from or through Iraq and Syria.

To illustrate the long-term effect of high inflation, consider the price increase index. For the past 50 years, the price increase was 1,636.98%. This means that an item that cost 100 dinars in 1973 costs 1,636.98 dinars at the beginning of 2023.¹⁷⁰ As a measure of the effect on people, it is telling to realize that over 30% of the population lives below the poverty line.¹⁷¹

Looking at the various segments of the economy can help to identify the mechanisms that might dramatically improve the economic picture. For example, the labor force by occupation is 2% in agriculture, 20% in industry, and 78% in services. Clearly, the low number of people in industry is supporting a very high number in services. The industrial production rate of only 2.2% ranks at 122 in the world (of 138 countries). This confirms that industry in Jordan needs to grow.¹⁷² The needed growth will come from either, or both, massive inputs of investment capital and/or encouraging foreign industrial firms to use Jordan as a location for manufacturing. The long-term political and social stability of Jordan should encourage foreign investment (even though salaries are higher than many places in the third world) but being located close to major markets like Europe and the Gulf States, should compensate. Having investment capital in the hands of Jordanians is also very appealing as it will provide the means for Jordanian entrepreneurs to exploit their creative ideas for products.

Currently, Jordan is trying to develop small, agricultural-based industries that have good profit margins. Two of the most successful are olive oil production and honey production. Many small farmers grow olives on trees that have been in production for years. If there were sufficient water to develop new groves that are scientifically planted and grown, the oil production could be increased dramatically, and Jordan could be a major producer of this commodity.

Beekeeping is, similarly, a business of small farmers with only a few hives. However, the industry has grown, and Jordanian honey has gained a nice reputation, not only for its quality, but also for the variety of flavors because the of the many plants native to Jordan that are used by the bees.

If the new laws favoring foreign investment are passed and promoted, Jordan could also develop a strong industrial presence with high employment. Jordan's strategic location, long known as a transportation hub, is an added bonus for manufacturing companies.

Refugees

The three largest groups of refugees in Jordan (by country of origin and by official registrations but not by actual number) are: Palestine (2,175,491), Syria (666,113), and Iraq (66,262) with a scattering of refugees from Yemen, Egypt, Lebanon, and Sudan. The refugee percentage of the entire Jordanian population is at

least 30% and could be as high as 50%. Many refugees are unregistered and uncounted as illustrated by Jordan's own official census that estimated the Syrian refugee number at 1.3 million, about twice the official count.¹⁷³ The actual number of refugees from other countries is likely similar, that is, twice the registered count.

Most of the refugees live in areas that were originally established as tent camps that have now grown to be small cities with permanent housing (albeit small homes that are little more than shacks). These camps were located either around major urban areas or have become, in themselves, major urban areas. (Such as Za'atari, the desert camp for Syrians that now has a population of 80,000.) Since the onset of the civil war in Syria and resulting refugee crisis, one of Jordan's most pressing socioeconomic challenges has been managing the influx of refugees.

Public services (health, education, water, food distribution, etc.) for these camps are provided by charities (NGOs), the UN, and by the Jordanian government, all of which are heavily overburdened. Monetary stipends are provided to some of the refugees by the UN, but the UN just announced that the monthly cash allowance for camp residents was cut to \$21, from \$32, starting in Fall 2023. In part because of the drop in stipends, many refugees have secured employment within the regular Jordanian economy but usually in the lowest paid jobs. Native Jordanians with limited education and skills compete for those jobs and resent the loss of jobs to the refugees, although organized dissent is rare.

Ironically, the assistance cuts occurred just as the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees said: "The number of refugee families who cannot pay their rent and are at risk of eviction from their homes has risen by 66 per cent from December 2022 to February 2023." He then warned that the lack of humanitarian assistance for Syrian refugees living in Jordan could push them to take dangerous routes towards Europe. He reminded the audience of the recent shipwrecks in the Mediterranean that resulted in the death of more than 80 refugees with 500 lost at sea while attempting to cross to Europe. "Sometimes people make desperate choices." He added that "Jordan cannot fill the gap that the UN and other aid agencies will leave. Jordan has done so much, and other donors need to recognize what is at risk."¹⁷⁴

About half of the refugees express a desire to return to their original homes and many, especially Iraqis, have already availed themselves of that opportunity as the fighting in Iraq has diminished greatly. Syrians are reluctant to return because the war there is still very active. Palestinians express a desire to return both because of a yearning for their home (although it has been 2-3 generations of absence) but also for political reasons as a way to express their resentment of Israel. The forceful dislocation of the Palestinians and their continuing status as refugees is a problem that has to be solved in order to finally move these people into the mainstream of normal life.

Water

Jordan is one of the driest countries in the world. A recent study indicated that when looking at the consumed domestic water, that is, the water actually used in a household, Jordan was next to lowest.

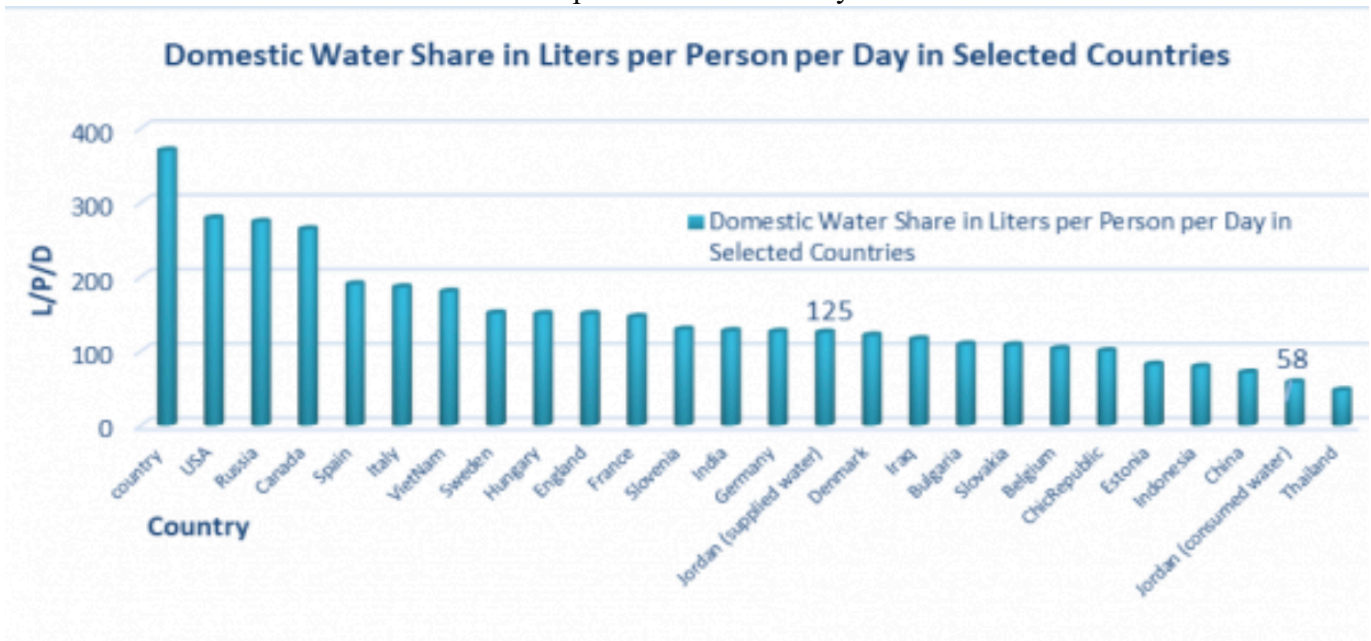


Figure 103: List of countries based on domestic water usage

([https://en.ammonnews.net/article/54245#:~:text=FAO%20\(2003\)%20has%20indicated%20that,MWI%202016%3B%20Daniel%20et%20al](https://en.ammonnews.net/article/54245#:~:text=FAO%20(2003)%20has%20indicated%20that,MWI%202016%3B%20Daniel%20et%20al))

Most domestic water (culinary and water for bathing/showers, clothes washing, and general cleaning) is delivered by trucks. The water companies obtain the water from springs that are certified and verified to be safe although most people still avoid it and drink only bottled water. This situation is necessary because few Jordanian areas, even in large cities, have underground water pipes from a central supply. Therefore, homes have large storage tanks that are regularly (usually weekly) filled by the trucks. This system drives up the cost of water and sometimes results in water shortages.

Another water problem is simply the lack of water for irrigation and development of new places to live. Most of the country only gets precipitation during December and January and then only three or four storms. The amount of water per person is dropping rapidly as the number of people is rapidly increasing, in part because of the influx of refugees.

The dire water situation can be seen clearly in the dramatic drop in level of the Dead Sea. All of the rivers and streams feeding the Dead Sea are being utilized more and the amount of rainfall has been dropping. These combined effects have resulted in a decrease in size of the Dead Sea by about one-third since 1960 and at a rate of four feet per year.

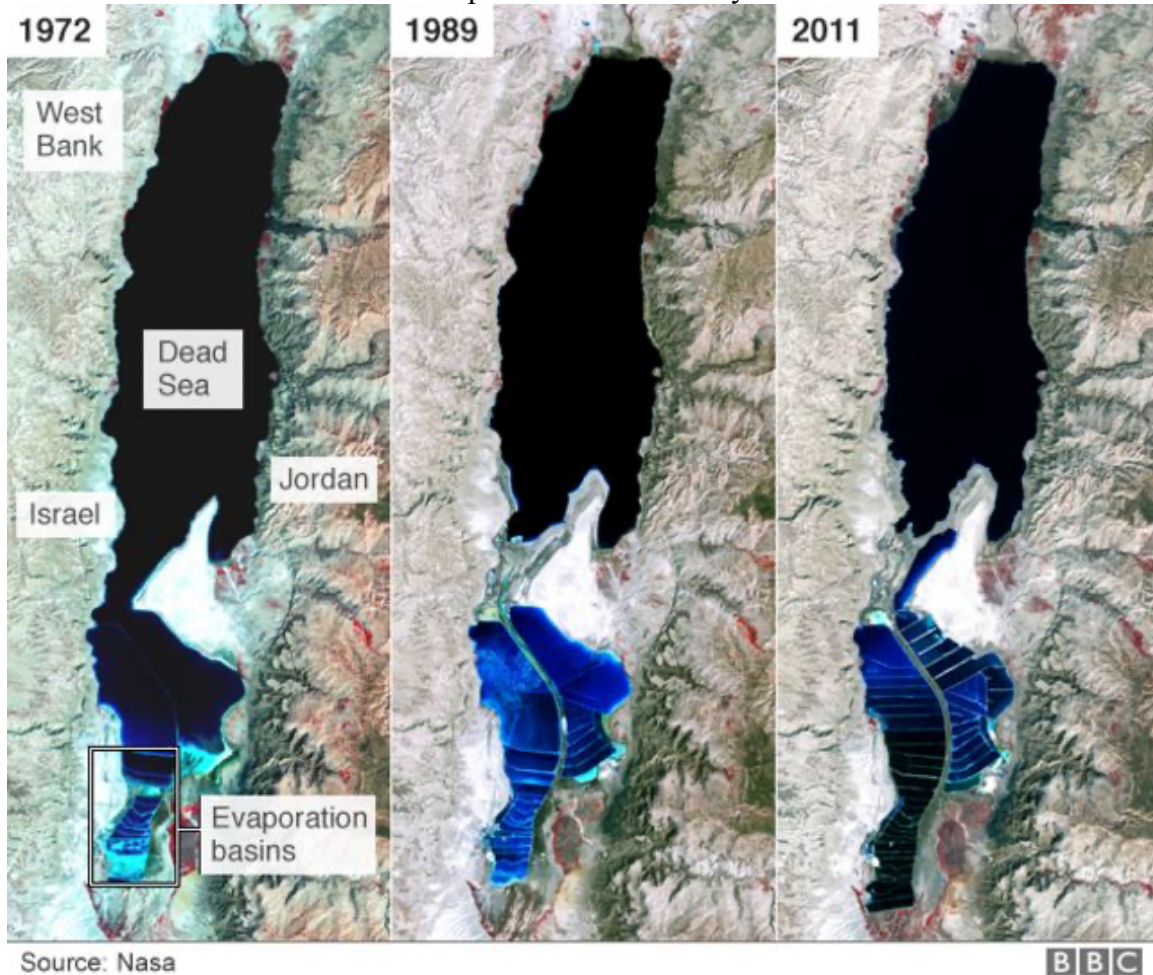


Figure 104: Drying up of the Dead Sea

(https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&sca_esv=556318805&rls=en&sxsrf=AB5stBhq0fFmD_WMELxGeYlwjHtZa9tCCg:1691852889421&q=dead+sea+drying+up&tbm=isch&source=lnms&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8s_GT9eAAxUyAzQIHe5eCqkQ0pQJegQIDBAB&biw=))

The average depth of the Dead Sea is around 950 feet—15% shallower than 50 years ago. A stroll around the shore of the Dead Sea gives strong evidence of the receding shoreline. Salt builds up from the evaporating water and coats the shoreline.



Figure 105: Evidence of the receding shoreline of the Dead Sea

(<https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2022/12/11/1139524126/photos-dead-sea-water-level-dropping-sinkholes-erosion>)

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One proposal to solve the problem is to require remediation by the Israeli and Jordanian companies that are mining the sea for potash through evaporation. While highly effective as a source for the minerals, the loss of water through evaporation is certainly a problem, but it is not going to make a huge difference in the water level.

Another proposal might offer a more substantial impact. This solution has the double benefit of not only adding saline water back into the Dead Sea but of creating non-salty water at the same time that can be used for general culinary and agricultural application. This project has been called Red-to-Dead and involves taking water from the Gulf of Aqaba, treating it, probably by osmosis, to remove the salt, and then storing the fresh water to be distributed to Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. The brine that is created during the osmosis process, is pumped over the hills (about 600 feet high) just outside the port cities of Aqaba and Eliat to the Dead Sea. Because the Dead Sea is so low in elevation, the descent would be 1800 feet and the resultant energy generated from the water dropping through turbines could be used to power the pumps. If additional power is needed (such as to pump the fresh water to the rest of Jordan, to Israel, and to Palestine), providing that power can come from a combination of solar and nuclear sources. The costs of the pipes and related infrastructure will be high, but the pipes and equipment will be largely locally produced and installed, thus providing new jobs. The value of the supply of fresh water and the increase in agricultural products, industrial capabilities, and human comfort will eventually far exceed the capital costs of the project. The estimated cost is \$10 billion.



Figure 106: Map showing a proposed route of the Red-to-Dead pipeline
(https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/Red_Sea_-_Dead_Sea_Canal_map.jpg)

The project has been abandoned, reportedly because of lack of interest from Israel. Surely the benefits to Jordan and to both Israel and Palestine—improved economy, ability to support their populations, improved stability, and significant improvement in employment from both the construction and the increase in the economy that would follow—are worth the cost to all the countries in the region (Saudi Arabia, Gulf States, Iraq, and Syria), as well as to the United States, United Kingdom, other European states, and the UN. Environmental concerns have been raised but can probably be overcome. If the effects on the environment are carefully considered and mitigating solutions worked out, this plan should be implemented.

Yet another proposal is to build a canal from the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea. This idea will raise the level of the Dead Sea but will not provide new fresh water and, therefore, would not increase the economies of Jordan, Israel, and Palestine.

Still another proposal, one that is favored by environmental groups, is simply to somehow increase the water that is flowing into the Jordan River. This solution seems difficult to achieve as both Jordan and Israel are currently doing all that they can to identify additional water required to support their growing population and agricultural needs. However, a combination of a canal to the Sea of Galilee and/or to the Jordan River along with desalinization plants along the coast might be a viable solution.¹⁷⁵ Frankly, I see little difference environmentally between withdrawing water from the Red Sea and withdrawing it from the Mediterranean, but it should be studied.

Education

The structure of the educational system in Jordan is much like that of the United States and European countries with some important changes. Education is compulsory and free for everyone under 16 years of age and is given in levels (grades 1-10) defined mostly by age. Primary enrollment is 95.7 per cent of those in the age group, higher than the regional average. The gender parity index of 0.98 is better than other Arab countries. Jordan is also one of the few Arab countries that has nearly identical primary school participation in both urban and rural areas. Overall literacy rate is 98.4% attesting to the excellent ability of the primary school system to teach the basics (at least). The secondary school system is free and is divided into two streams—scientific and classical—and students may choose which stream they want to pursue.

After completing the basic 10-year cycle, students take two additional years of secondary education in either the academic or vocational tracks. At the end of the two-year study, students take the general secondary examination (*tawjihi*) that serves as an entrance exam to universities and colleges. Alternately, students can study the vocational track (vocational training and apprenticeship) where, upon completion, they are awarded a certificate that qualifies them for a position in the trades. As with the primary education system, the secondary system seems to be performing well with Jordanian students taking the math and science study exam scoring 22 points above the international average.

For students choosing to attend private high schools, these are available but are not free. Most people believe that the education is better in the private schools, but the competency of students from the public schools suggests that they are also good.

Since tertiary education is not free, the rate of transition to tertiary education is correlated with family incomes. There are three times more students at the university level from families in the upper two income quintiles than those from the lower three. Just over 2.5% of Jordan's total population is enrolled at a university, a proportion comparable to the United Kingdom. Students who qualify on the *tawjihi* exam can choose between community colleges and universities, both public and private. However, the selection of

major at the university is not open. Entry to the majors is determined by performance on the *tawjihi* exam with majors such as medicine and engineering requiring the highest level of performance.

While the allocation to the majors system is a strong motivator for students to study and has successfully matched teaching capacity and student load in popular majors, the system has resulted in discouragement for late bloomers. It is also a disincentive for entrepreneurial students who get a bright idea they want to exploit but find they are locked out of a course of study that will help them in that quest. While there are tutorial classes (paid) that allow students to retake the *tawjihi* in hopes of scoring higher, these classes are often not available to poor students because of cost.

Eighteen of the twenty-eight total universities in Jordan are private with the vast majority of these being for profit. These private universities account for 25% of the total university enrollment. The public university system is dominated by the University of Jordan with an enrollment of about 40,000.

All universities must be accredited by the Ministries of Higher Education and some universities may have additional accreditation, such as from a foreign accrediting agency. The ministry also controls the approval of majors offered and the size of the enrollment in each major. Some of the universities offer master's and doctor's degrees. Jordan University has a fine medical school.

Internal Corruption and Bureaucracy

Corruption is present in both the public and private sectors in Jordan and at both high and lower levels. To be honest, however, Jordan ranks about in the middle of all countries in terms of corruption. When King Abdullah II first took office, some of the royal family saw an opportunity for personal gain. The most notorious of these cases involved Walid Al-Kurdi, the husband of Abdullah's aunt, Princess Basma. Al-Kurdi was the CEO and chairman of the state-owned Jordan Phosphate Mines Company. Kurdi was scheduled to appear before the committee investigating the corruption, but he left the country the day before. He has lived since then (2013) on self-imposed exile in London although his wife continues her excellent humanitarian work in Jordan. In his absence, a Jordanian court sentenced him to 37 and a half years of confinement and a fine of \$378.8 million. Now, rumors say that a negotiated settlement may be forthcoming. It will give the government a "win" in its war against corruption if he has a public trial. The deal would also benefit Kurdi as he could return to his home and restart his business life. Kurdi has called the charges against him "baseless."¹⁷⁶

At lower levels, Jordanian corruption is generally channeled through informal networks where middle-men get things done with favoritism, cronyism, nepotism, and bribery. This system is called "*wasta*." The system is accepted at all levels and is considered a way to get things done in a world of sluggish bureaucracy and low salaries with low motivation.

Several large construction projects have been only partially completed with little progress for years because of the bureaucracy and/or discovery of corruption. In one a major office building in Amman remained unoccupied for over 10 years. In another, a private university reported embezzlement of over \$20 million during the construction of the campus.

King Abdullah seems to have taken a hard stance against corruption. He has appointed a private citizen who is known to be honest and influential as a czar of the anti-corruption council with instructions to expose and root-out corruption in the government. Hopefully, this will be successful and carry over to the private sector.

Relations with Other Arab States

Jordan has been and still is the “eye of the storm,” that is, a place of calm even though chaos and trouble surround it. Truly, Jordan is a place of refuge as is apparent from the huge refugee population living in Jordan. Most of these refugees are fellow-Arabs and so it is clear that Jordan’s neighbors understand Jordan’s role and benefit from it.

Jordan is also a place with few natural resources that has carved out a role (even from ancient times) as the land transportation hub of the Middle East. Although vastly diminished by the wars in the area, Jordan still plays an important role in moving goods from the Red Sea to other parts of the Middle East and even from Mesopotamia to Egypt. When Palestine becomes a country with its own economy, the importance of Jordan as a port of entry and shipment will undoubtedly be magnified.

Because of the chaos that still exists in Syria, this position as transportation hub has presented Jordan with some recent and unique problems. These problems are associated with the manufacturing of illegal drugs in Syria and the transport of those drugs through Jordan, especially to markets in the Gulf countries. Of course, this drug trade creates an environment of drug use and general lawlessness within Jordan—problems that were previously minimal. Therefore, the Jordanian military has stepped up its surveillance and interdiction along the Syrian-Jordanian border and along other routes of exit through Iraq and Saudi Arabia. For example, Jordan recently seized six million amphetamines (known as Captagon) at the Iraqi border. The drugs originated from Syria and were bound for the Gulf.

A Jordanian air strike recently killed a drug trafficker in southern Syria as part of Jordan’s offensive against the drug trade. Jordanian security troops have arrested a “dangerous criminal” linked with international drug gangs in the northern Jordanian city of Irbid, a police spokesman said recently. The spokesman said the man, “who is classified as dangerous and who is linked to international drug gangs,” was arrested in an apartment in Irbid “after a long reconnaissance effort.” He said 287 pouches of hashish and 17,000 tablets were found in the apartment. The spokesman said that nine other traffickers were also arrested over the past days in Amman, the city of Ruseifeh, which is on the eastern outskirts of the capital, and in the central governorate of Balkaa.

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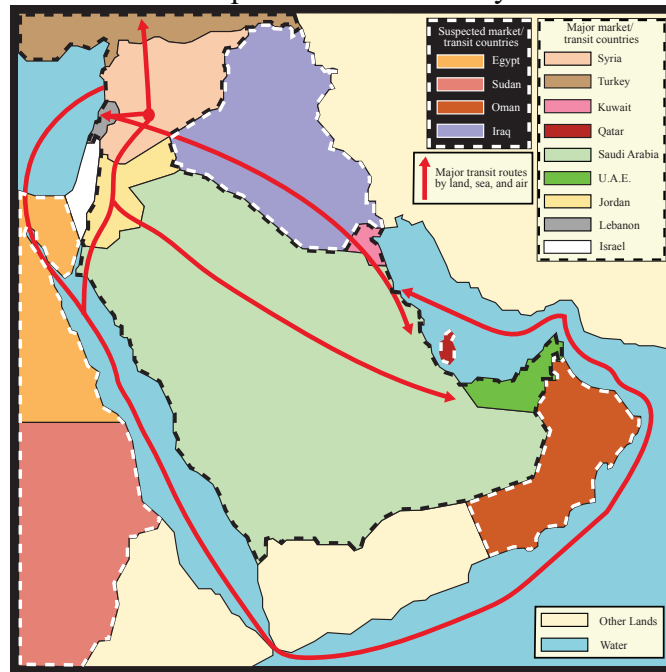


Figure 107: Drug routes from Syria

The Hashemite kingdom has been part of an Arab rapprochement with President Bashar al-Assad and recently supported the readmission of Syria to the Arab League. The Arab League's annual summit began in Saudi Arabia in August 2023, with 22 member states taking part. Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad returned to the Arab fold at the event in Jeddah—12 years after his country was suspended by the league, when demonstrations in Syria descended into civil war.

Following months of diplomatic wrangling and efforts by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in 2023, Mr. Assad, once viewed as a pariah, finally reconciled with the other Arab states in the Saudi coastal city after the Saudis managed to gather enough consensus to reinstate Syria. With Syria's return to the league, discussions will also focus on the impact of its 12-year civil war and measures to address reconstruction and the safe return of refugees.



Figure 108: Leaders join al-Assad as he is admitted to the Arab League

(<https://www.thenationalnews.com/gulf-news/saudi-arabia/2023/05/19/arab-league-summit-saudi-arabia/>)

Amid this reconciliation between the two countries, Jordanian and Syrian security officials met in Amman to discuss ways to curb the smuggling. Neither side released any details of the talks or their outcomes. Jordan is pursuing what officials call a step-for-step approach to solving problems emanating from Syria. It wants to see co-operation from Damascus on Captagon and other issues.¹⁷⁷

Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt are reforming the close ties that existed before the Iraq War. The oil of Iraq needs to move to the markets of Jordan and Egypt and the labor of Jordan and Egypt needs to have access to the reinvigorated economy of Iraq. This new tripartite agreement recalls the days when Jordan's Aqaba port was the terminal for Iraqi oil exports and the pathway for imports to Iraq. The proximity of Aqaba to Egypt meant that Egypt was also involved. In fact, the three countries (along with North Yemen) formed an economic cooperation council that existed from 1989 to 1990. (It fell apart when Saddam invaded Kuwait.)

Jordan and Egypt have told other Arab nations, including Syria, that membership in this new economic-political cooperative will be open to other states. That may be a way to bring Syria back into further good graces of the region. This might lead to a revitalized Levant and a new beginning all the countries in the region.

There are even plans to draw the countries closer with a sharing of their electrical grids and other infrastructure projects. In addition to the obvious economic incentives to bring the countries closer, there are political reasons to consider. Iraq wants to broaden its regional relationships beyond Iran. The Iranians might look favorably at closer ties to both Jordan and Egypt as a way to balance some of the difficulties between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States.

Jordan's relationship with Saudi Arabia is complex. For decades, the Saudis have taken a paternalistic view toward Jordan and that has led to attempts by the Saudis to influence or even manipulate the politics of Jordan. When Jordan follows what Saudi Arabia wants them to do, trade volume (food, energy, etc.) goes up, but when Jordan takes an independent path, the Saudis cut back trade and Jordan suffers as it has few other

places to get the food and manufactured goods that are usually supplied by Saudi Arabia. This difficult relationship was worsened within the last few months when Jordanian security announced that they had uncovered a plot to overthrow King Abdullah and replace him with his half-brother, Prince Hamzah. In a trial that arose from the investigation, a Jordanian court sentenced two former officials of attempt to destabilize the monarchy and gave them 15-year jail terms. Saudi Arabia was quick to declare its solidarity with Jordan and to distance itself from the two conspirators. King Abdullah refused to implicate Saudi Arabia in the case, thus maintaining his good relationships with the Saudi government. Saudi Arabia values its relationship with Jordan as it sees Jordan as a stabilizing force in the region and a potential link to the United States should Saudi continue to have problems with the U.S. government as they are with the current regime.

The new Saudi emphasis on openness and increased tourism bodes well for improving relations with Jordan as Jordan is a logical pathway to many of the potential Saudi tourist locations. The new Saudi city being built to encourage tourism is close to the southern Jordanian border and will certainly mean increased tourism within Jordan.

Relationships with the United States and Other Western Nations

The United States and Jordan have had diplomatic relations since 1949 and each side considers the other to be a valuable partner in seeking peace and prosperity in the Middle East. The United States is Jordan's single largest provider of bilateral assistance with more than \$1.65 billion flowing to Jordan in 2021 and \$425 million in State Department financing funds. The U.S. has also provided \$1.7 billion in humanitarian assistance to support Syrian refugees in Jordan since the start of the Syrian crisis. In addition, the U.S. and Jordan have signed a memo of understanding to provide \$6.375 billion in bilateral aid over a 5-year period, assuming the continued availability of funds.

The U.S. assistance money has gone to health improvements, road and water works, schools built, thousands of Jordanians educated in the U.S. and locally, grants for U.S. agricultural commodities, and, of course, refugee assistance. The strong military assistance program is designed to meet Jordan's defense needs of border protection and regional stability.¹⁷⁸

The recent long-term memo of understanding also outlined some steps that Jordan will be taking to make foreign investment more attractive because "the public sector [of Jordan] can no longer provide jobs." New Jordanian legislation will also improve the efficiency of the bureaucracy and will facilitate opportunities for growth. The new legislation will also set a gender quota to ensure that political parties achieve greater women representation.¹⁷⁹

On July 19, 2021, King Abdullah II became the first Arab leader to visit President Biden at the White House. The symbolism is important, but the leaders also had substantive gains in mind. During the years of the Trump presidency, the strong affiliation with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE marginalized the Jordanian-U.S. relationship. Jordanian kings were accustomed to having an outsized role and influence with the White House in forming U.S. Middle East Policy and that position was diminished with Trump. Both King Abdullah and President Biden were anxious to readjust the Jordanian position. King Abdullah also met with key U.S. military personnel and signed a new military cooperation treaty that helps the U.S. presence in the Middle East after the closing of some American bases on Qatar.¹⁸⁰



Figure 109: Meeting of King Abdullah II and President Biden (<https://arabcenterdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/King-Abdulla-Joe-Biden-White-House-768x383.jpg>)

The continued preferential treatment of Israel by the United States is a problem for most Jordanians. They understand the strong historical ties and internal support for Israel within the U.S. but question the seemingly uncritical support for Israel's overt violations of UN resolutions on establishing new settlements in Palestinian land and the obvious over-zealous and heavy handed reactions to Palestinian provocations. The recent situation in Gaza illustrates both the foolish Palestinian actions and the equally foolish Israeli over-reaction. Jordanians see Israel as a bully and believe the U.S. should intervene to stop such abusive behavior. At the individual level, however, Jordanians are friendly with Americans and eagerly welcome them to Jordan.

Israeli-Palestinian Problems

Consequences of WWI

As discussed previously in this book, the problems between Israel and Palestine that are so evident today began during WWI and the settlement agreements made shortly thereafter. These inherently conflicting issues can be summarized as follows:

- The British government's promise that if the Arabs would assist in defeating the Ottoman Turks, an Arab homeland would be created out of the former Ottoman Empire.
- The British government's letter of support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine (while still protecting the rights of the native Palestinian population).
- The agreement between the British and French governments that they would divide the Ottoman territories in the Middle East between themselves as protectorates/possessions.
- The agreement by the victorious nations that the peace plan proposed by the United States, wherein the former states within the Ottoman Empire would have rights of self-determination after the war, would serve as the basis of the peace accord.

When Jews began to immigrate to Palestine in large numbers following WWI, spurred on by the Zionist movement and Hitler's rise to power, the previous peaceful and legal acquisition of land in Palestine by the Jews began to threaten the Palestinian population that they would soon be a minority in their own country. As

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recognized by the British overseers at the time, the land of Palestine with its limited population, simply could not absorb the rising influx of immigrants. To protect the rights of the Palestinian people, the British set a quota on the number of Jews that could immigrate to Palestine. When WWII began, immigration slowed as shipping in the Mediterranean Sea became very dangerous.

Consequences of WWII

After WWII, the situation of the Jews in Europe was catastrophic. Thousands were refugees and, as a group, had suffered persecutions and deaths associated with the Nazi Holocaust. Some countries took a few of the refugees but compared to the vast number then wandering in Europe, the effect was minimal. The Jewish refugees were in dire straits, especially in a war-ravished area. Public opinion throughout the world was asking for something to be done to help them.

The British hoped for peaceful integration of the European Jewish refugees to Palestine within the quota system that they had imposed. However, the radical and terrorist faction within the Jewish population in Palestine attacked British installations and even civilian targets like the luxurious King David Hotel in an attempt to force unlimited immigration. Even moderate Jewish leaders were filling boats with refugees and forcing them into Palestine, by peaceful means when possible. But the situation was growing more tense by the day. Britain decided it had tried its best and announced that it was giving up the Mandate over Palestine and would soon leave the country. No mutually acceptable plan following the British exit had been worked out for the Jews and Palestinians.

United Nations Involvement

The recently-formed United Nations decided to take the responsibility upon itself to create a solution for Palestine. Several plans were suggested and debated in committee. The dominant plan came amidst an American demand that Palestine accept 100,000 Holocaust survivors. The British rejected this demand as it exceeded the quota and would strain the Palestinian ability to accommodate the immigrants. However, to satisfy the demands of the U.S., the British agreed to a joint U.S. and U.K. committee to suggest alternatives. The resulting recommendations were the following: 1) to force the immigration of 100,000 Holocaust survivors, 2) to eliminate the restriction on immigration, and 3) to make Palestine a country that could be neither Arabic nor Jewish under UN trusteeship. In essence, the plan ignored Arab sovereignty rights in the area. The plan triggered demonstrations in several Arab states and, in anger, calls for expulsion of the European Jews already in Palestine. Clearly the radicals on both sides had gained ground upon the recommendations of the American-British committee.

The UN reasserted its claim to precedence in the matter and set up a UN committee to investigate. In the UN committee Britain pushed for a binational solution, that is, an unpartitioned Palestine where the Palestinian majority would control the government. President Truman of the U.S., because of Zionist electoral pressures in America, favored a partition. The Arab countries sensed the problem with U.S. pressure within the UN and resented Arab exclusion from the UN committee. The Arab states advocated that the issue be brought before an international court realizing that international law favored the Palestinian position of sovereignty.

A UN committee studying the situation was shocked by the apparent state of war (barbed wire and armed camps) that existed in Palestine when they made their visit. They were also dismayed by the violence of the Jewish terrorist groups. Therefore, the UN committee believed that the best course was to separate the two groups. They recommended partition and it was approved by the body of the UN. This vote for partition was supported by the United States because they agreed with the basic U.S. decision proposed earlier.

Post-Partition Problems

The many wars between the newly-formed state of Israel and the Palestinians and, at times, other Arab countries, sometimes including Jordan, have been outlined in previous chapters. For our purposes here, a general overview of the situation is sufficient.

- Initially the Arab countries felt that they had been betrayed by western nations and the UN and they fought to gain back the land that had been unilaterally expropriated from them. This initial phase was characterized by an effort to eliminate the State of Israel. The Israelis won this initial war and the other wars against various Arab nations and groups that followed over the next 20 years.
- Over time, most of the Arab states, including the Palestinians, have recognized the right of Israel to exist as a nation and many have signed peace treaties (generally bi-lateral) with Israel.
- The majority of countries in the UN have repeatedly proposed that Palestine be recognized as a legitimate country (it is currently called the Palestinian Authority and is given local authority under Israeli control). Under Jewish pressure in the United States, these proposals for Palestinian autonomy have been blocked by the U.S. in the Security Council even though the U.S. publicly favors a creation of the State of Palestine.
- UN Security Council Resolution 242 was unanimously adopted in 1967 that established principles for a lasting peace between Palestine and Israel. The resolution stipulated a withdrawal of Israeli troops from territories occupied in the 1967 war and a termination of all belligerency over sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area. It also affirms the necessity of guaranteeing freedom of navigation through waterways in the area, achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem, and guaranteeing territory inviolability and political independence of every state in the area. This has been called the “two-state” solution.
- Israel and Palestine both accepted Resolution 242. The Arab states proposed a settlement based on Resolution 242 giving additional details.
- Israel has repeatedly refused to accept any of the peace proposals and has maintained an oppressive occupancy of certain parts of Palestinian territory (as defined in Resolution 242). Large parts of Palestine are even referred to as the Occupied Territories. This has, in essence, created a kind of open-air prison as Palestinians do not have freedom of movement outside their territory and are often subject to raids, arrests, and property destruction without court action.
- Groups within Palestine have continued acts of belligerence against Israel, some of them terrorist acts in which Israeli citizens have been killed.
- Israel has adopted a policy of reprisal for the belligerent acts of Palestinians in which the Israeli response is many times greater in terms of people killed and property destroyed than occurred in the Palestinian provocation.
- Israel has continued to build settlements for Israelis within the Palestinian territories. These are claimed to be defensive enclaves by the Israeli government. The UN and others have repeatedly declared these settlements to be illegal.

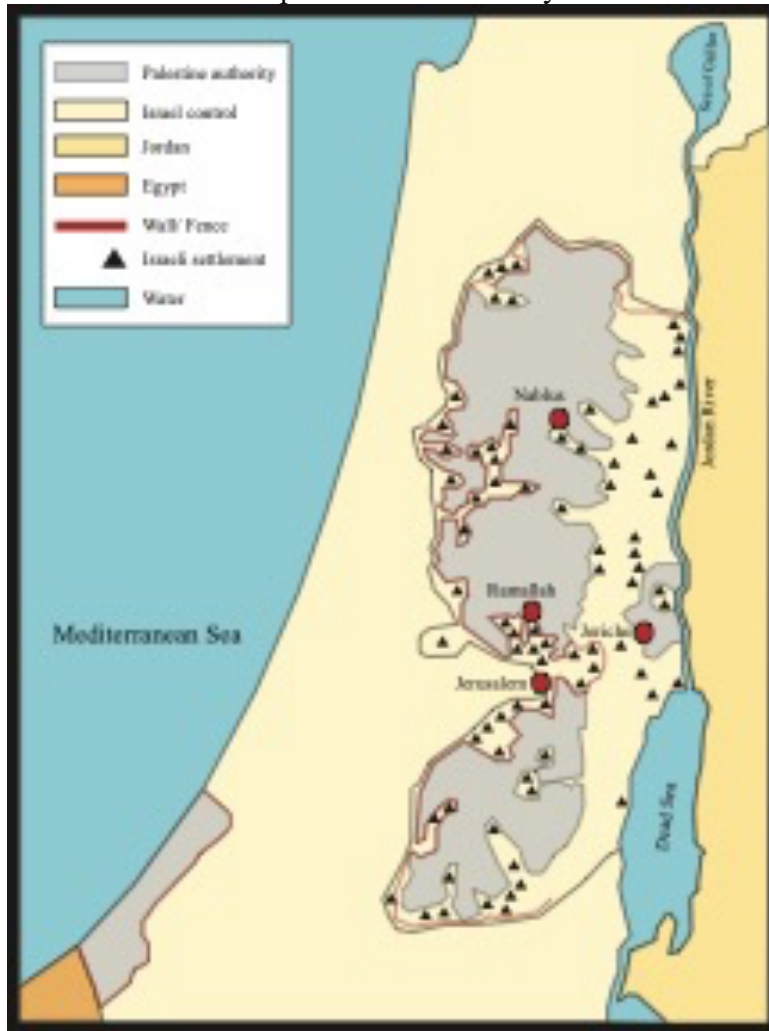


Figure 110: Map showing Israeli settlements within Palestinian territory

The events in Gaza in December 2023 cry out for a long-lasting solution to the problems between Palestinians and Israelis. In addition, the world is faced with a huge refugee population of Palestinians, the largest single country refugee population in the world.

Possible Solution

I believe that, given the right configuration of a working committee, a negotiated settlement is possible even in light of over 50 years of wars, terrorism, and cruelty between the Palestinians and the Israelis. To solve this problem, those who precipitated the problem in the beginning—the UN, the U.S., the State of Israel, the European nations that created the Jewish refugees to begin with—and those most affected by the situation—the Palestinians, and Jordanians—should participate in solving the problem.

The first step should be the granting of statehood to the people of Palestine. All parties have agreed that the two-state solution is the basis on which a settlement should begin. The Israeli government has stated that they accept a two-state solution even though the actions of some governments have been contrary to their stated position. The UN has stipulated that the boundaries of the Palestinian state will be according to the Resolution 242 and all the parties have agreed to that resolution. If the parties feel that the war in Gaza has changed the advisability of having the Palestinians in two distinct areas (West Bank and Gaza), the

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Palestinians who live in Gaza could be moved to an expanded West Bank so that the Palestinian nation would be consolidated.

When this is done, the current situation in which numerous Israeli settlements have been built within the Palestinian territory needs to change. These settlements should be abandoned (without destruction) and given to the Palestinians as part of the recompense for the destruction of their Palestinian homes. This will consolidate the Palestinians into one, expanded, area and the Israelis living in the settlements would be offered Gaza as a place to go.

While Resolution 242 solves the land problem, it does not give the Palestinians just compensation for the land lost when the State of Israel was originally created. Perhaps the concept of adequate monetary compensation is another key element in the answer to this problem as monetary compensation is currently used in settling many legal cases and has been used since the time of Moses and Hammurabi of ancient Babylon. Let all the participants work out the just compensation, not only for the loss of land and homes and place of belonging, but also the suffering and pain associated with these losses. The compensation should be given to the Palestinians who remained in both the West Bank and in Gaza and should also be given to the Palestinians now in Jordan that became refugees from the time that Israel was created and from the various ensuing wars.

Some additional compensation should go to their governments to compensate for the services and other expenses associated with housing the Palestinians as refugees. For both the Palestinians and Jordanians, the compensation could be a way to begin new industry, revive their economies, and move strongly to create stronger countries. Having strong and healthy Palestine and Jordan will be an integral part of making the solution last.

The difficult question of returning Palestinians needs to be solved. I believe that when offered a fair compensation, many of the Palestinians will choose to remain where they are. Others may want to move to other lands in the Middle East, America, or Europe and they should be given priority immigration status. Some, of course, will choose to return to Palestine. For this, Palestine needs to have open borders recognized by all parties, including Israel.

In return for the settlement, Palestinians must agree to accept Israel as a country and neighbor as well as to condemn and stop all terrorist and anti-Israeli activities. They may even find that Israel is their best partner for jobs and markets. The radical groups like Hamas, if they still exist, must agree to surrender their weapons and accept the permanent status of Israel and Palestine.

Israel must also remove the boundary restrictions between Palestine and Jordan so that the Palestinian population can have free and open connections and not be subjected to the harassment of road checks and lengthy or restricted border crossings that currently exist. In short, Israel and Palestine should treat each other in ways that are common among European nations.

Palestinian Actions

The recent attack on Israelis by Hamas was correctly condemned by most governments and people throughout the world. The Palestinians need to learn that their cause will be realized when the opinion of the world's population understands them and agrees with them and not through war and terrorism. This will be done by the following:

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1. Palestinian renouncement of all terrorist activities and effective reinforcement of an anti-terrorist policy. This includes a media campaign directed to the Palestinian people, both within Palestine and abroad, to realize that terrorism is contrary to the best interests of Palestine.
2. Election of moderate and creative Palestinian leaders who publicly espouse the peace plan and condemn terrorism. These leaders should be highly charismatic and fluent in English (perhaps even raised in the U.S.) so that they can actively and forcefully communicate their cause to the American people and the U.S. government as well as the rest of the world.
3. Initiate a sincere and effective public relations campaign in the U.S. and Europe to announce the Palestinian plan. The speakers in this campaign should be native speakers of the particular country who can speak without exaggeration and extremism. Their message should build up Palestine without condemning Israel.
4. Establish good relations with Israeli moderates and work with them to create an improved atmosphere between the Palestinians and the Israelis.
5. Give up hoping for a better past.

Israeli Actions

The incredible over-reaction by the Israelis was also universally condemned as it bordered on genocide, especially the killing of women and children. Clearly the Israelis wanted to solve the terrorist actions forever, but perpetuation of a Palestinian prison state will not work as that will only continue the deprivation of human rights. Therefore, the Israelis must do the following:

1. Stop the use of excessive force in dealing with terrorist acts or acts that are contrary to Israeli policy. If a problem occurs, let the courts resolve it rather than seeing it as a military matter.
2. Work to reduce the oppressive behavior of the Israeli military. Be willing to accept Palestine as a peaceful neighbor and to reduce the overall military presence within Israel. Totally and completely withdraw from Palestine.
3. Fully accept the two-state solution and focus on the advantages of peace in the area.
4. Realize that continued denial of rights to non-Israelis or non-Jews will eventually be condemned by the world and Israel will suffer as did the Apartheid government.
5. Remember that historically the Israelites were only briefly sovereign over the entire area west of the Jordan River and that they have always occupied it along with non-Israelites. Most of the time, many areas west of the Jordan River were under the control of non-Israelites. Remember the examples of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in cooperating with neighboring peoples.
6. Be willing to accept change in others.

Jordanian-Israeli Issues

Peace

Jordan and Israel have an uneasy peace, not because either side will attack the other, but because both sides do things to anger the other. For example, the Jewish Mossad (secret police) secretly entered Jordan in 1997 seeking to assassinate the Hamas leader, Khaled Mashaal who was, at that time, in Amman. They botched the job and fled to the Israeli embassy in Amman seeking asylum. The Jordanians were angry about the invasion of their territory and chanted that the embassy should be stormed to retrieve the gunmen. Thankfully, calmer voices prevailed, and the two governments peacefully resolved the issue.

Jordanians resent the continued Israeli use of excessive force against Palestinian terrorists. Not only do the Israelis capture and execute the offender, they also destroy his family home and expel or imprison family

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members. (Even Machiavelli said that hurting the family of a criminal should be avoided as it builds widespread resentment and does little good.) Jordanians are amazed that Americans and many others in western countries, don't see this excessive behavior as a crime against humanity and take appropriate action. They also see the restrictions on travel, employment, and domination by one group over others as an infringement of basic human rights. They rationally ask, "How are the Israeli actions different from those of the South African government during the days of Apartheid?"

Holy Places

Jordan and Israel agreed in their peace treaty that Jordan would be the custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem. Jordan feels strongly about their role as protectors of the noble sanctuary/temple mount and were offended when Israeli troops entered the area and began exerting military control over Muslim worshippers. If there was a danger to Israeli citizens from the worshippers on the mount, the Jews should have worked out a solution with Jordan rather than attempt to solve the problem directly using military might. Some patience and momentary cessation of worship on both sides would have been better than creating lasting anger.

Jordanian Attitude

The Israelis also have legitimate grievances against Jordan. When Israel would attempt to help Jordan by doing some kind act like supplying water beyond the amount required in the peace treaty or supplying low-cost natural gas from Israeli Mediterranean fields, such acts of kindness were never acknowledged. Most Jordanians are ignorant of these acts or are never informed by the decidedly anti-Israeli Jordanian media.

The entire Arab world needs to start seeing Israel as a benefit to the area and a source of technology and employment opportunities, either within Israel or in companies owned by Israelis that are allowed to operate freely in Arab countries.

The Eye of the Storm

Historical View

This book has emphasized the position of Jordan as a refuge for individuals and groups of people throughout history beginning with the patriarchs and continuing throughout the Old Testament period. Jesus needed a place to temporarily escape the turmoil west of the Jordan and found that solace and peace in Jordan. Later, the Christians fled Roman persecution by going east of the Jordan River. A similar pattern exists in modern times with Palestinians, Iraqis, and Syrians all seeking refuge in Jordan.

What is it about Jordan that has made it a land of refuge and peace? It is, in my opinion, the friendliness and openness of the people. It is a pride that they have in being a place of peace. It is a willingness to let patience and good judgement override temporary anger. I saw these qualities nearly every day when I was there and the evidence of it is clear for all to see.

Thank you Jordanians!

Biblical References Booklet

Biblical and Related Notes to Jordan

Introductory Notes:

This booklet focuses on the sites in modern Jordan that are linked to the Bible and, in a few cases, to non-biblical events or places that have biblical relevance. Linking modern and ancient locations can be done based on one or more of several factors including: archeological discoveries, Biblical references that are clear enough to indicate a certain site, inferences from Biblical references, non-Biblical history, logic, knowledge of history, name similarities, and traditions. While this booklet is not intended to be a scholarly study of the sites, the method of linking each site to its Biblical reference will be discussed so that the reader can gain some confidence that the site *is* appropriately linked. The booklet is not an intensive history of the area; however, some history is included as background. The most recognizable name for individuals and places are chosen (except to emphasize a point) even though the name may not have existed until later. Note also that names vary in spelling and should be viewed from a Semitic language standpoint of having a root of, usually, three consonants with vowels added for intonation, but that the vowels often changed over time as the way the people said the name changed.

This booklet is divided into two parts—1) Notes and Explanations of Biblical Sites (by Geography), and 2) Biblical and Related References to Jordan by Time Period. Both are presented as charts. On both charts the sites are arranged, generally, from north to south and from west to east. A reference map is included in the booklet but not all of the sites could be shown because of limited space. Several good maps are available on the Internet that will help in locating the sites. Scholars differ on the locations of many sites and so some individual judgment will be needed. It is best to consult several different maps. The chart on Notes and Explanations gives comments about each of the sites. Some of the comments relate Biblical stories or occurrences associated with the site. Other notes discuss non-Biblical history, and still others discuss the site as it now appears. Some stories extend over many locations (like the exodus). However, when a story is related, it is given only once and that is done at the place of greatest relevance.

The Biblical references are separated into historical and scriptural periods to give a visual sense of when various events took place or were referred to in the Bible. Of note is the overall impression that is gained by scanning the entire document—Jordan was important throughout all Biblical periods, a fact not well appreciated. Some might recognize the importance of Jordan in Old Testament times, but few realize the importance of Jordan in the life of Jesus. Many important events are simply referred to as occurring "east of Jordan" or after having "crossed over Jordan". A careful reading of the New Testament suggests that Jesus spent much time in Jordan. He was baptized there, fasted, and was tempted there, preached there, converted many there, and sought refuge there from the turmoil in Galilee and Judea. These scriptures also suggest that the number who followed Jesus beyond the Jordan River (that is, on the east side) may have been greater than the number in Galilee and Judea, but then, the Galilean and Judean resistance of many to his word might be expected because "a prophet is without honor in his own country." Moreover, the turmoil that existed on the western side of the Jordan River with many different factions fighting and arguing against each other, would have polarized the people and, therefore, many who might have accepted his message could have been confused.

This booklet was developed while my wife, Margaret, and I lived in Jordan from 2012 to 2015. I have tried to visit most of the sites listed in the booklet. It contains all the Biblical references to Jordan I could find. If the reader finds others, please let me know at brentstrong@me.com and I will put the new reference in the next printing of the book.

Map of Jordan with Selected Referenced Sites Marked

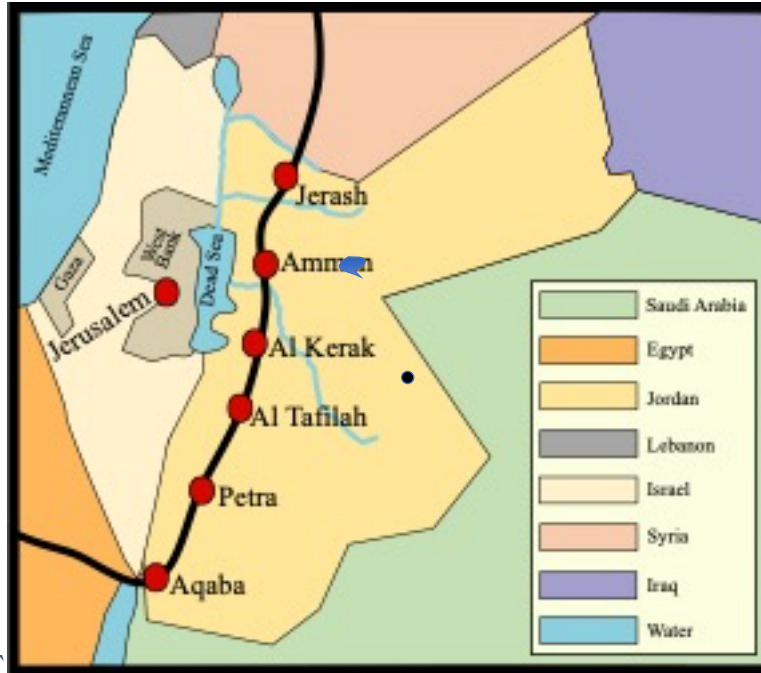


Figure 111: Map of Jordan with key places noted

<p>Site</p> <p>Ancient Name/ Modern Name</p>	<p>Notes and Explanations of Biblical Sites (by Geography)</p>
<p>King's Highway</p>	<p>The King's Highway runs from Syria in the north (with connections on to Mesopotamia), through modern Jordan to Aqaba in the south (with connecting routes to Egypt). In the forested mountains of Gilead in northern Jordan the highway follows canyons and moderate passes between the mountains. In the middle and southern parts of Jordan the land is much drier and the road follows towns that sprang up at wells and streams. All along its distance there are east-west passages that follow canyons and streams affording access to fords across the Jordan River into Canaan (Palestine/Israel) and linkages with important trade routes through the desert like the frankincense route to Saudi Arabia and Yemen.</p> <p>When Abraham and Lot left their homeland to find a new land promised to them by God, the logical route from Haran (northern Syria) to Canaan would have been along the King's Highway through Syria. The mountains of northern Lebanon would have inhibited a more coastal way and Haran is north of Damascus so the King's Highway could have easily been followed from Damascus south. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Abraham followed the well-known highway far enough south to come to a good east-west passage that would have crossed to the west side of the Jordan River. Some have suggested that the patriarchs may have departed from the King's Highway near the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee, but others point out that many of the events of their lives and references to places in central Jordan (such as the Jabbok River) suggest a crossing of the Jordan River farther south, through the valleys of the mountains of Gilead in Jordan.</p> <p>Some incidents of the use of the King's Highway by Abraham and his family occurred, for example, when Mesopotamian kings raided areas from northern to southern borders of Jordan and then retreated back into Syria along the King's Highway, taking Lot with them. When Abraham heard about it, he took his soldiers/servants and pursued the invading kings and fought with them near Damascus. Then Abraham returned from pursuing and fighting them, probably along the same pathway. Later, Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac and the servant went to Mesopotamia (Syria) and</p>

<p>Site</p> <p>Ancient Name/ Modern Name</p>	<p>Notes and Explanations of Biblical Sites (by Geography)</p>
	<p>there found Rebecca who returned with him. The servant would likely have followed the King's Highway as Isaac was living in Lai-Roi, an area in the Negev at the time. Jacob fled from the anger of Esau and went to the land of the east (Jordan) and then up to Haran where he met and fell in love with Rachel. Jacob worked for his father-in-law many years and eventually left to return to Canaan. He travelled the King's Highway and, along the road in the mountains of Gilead, Laban caught up with Jacob. They reconciled and then Jacob continued along the highway. At the junction of the Jabbock River and the highway, Jacob reconciled with Esau. Jacob then turned west along the Jabbock and stopped where it joined the Jordan River at Succoth. He lived there for a while and then later crossed over the river and entered the land of Canaan. Even the burial procession of Jacob from Egypt, led by Joseph and his brothers, followed the highway through the southern part of Jordan as is evident from the statements that they stopped along the way at Atad, beyond Jordan, where great mourning occurred before proceeding into the land of Canaan. When Moses was commanded by the Lord to depart from Kadesh and move toward the promised land, Moses asked the king of Edom for the right to move along the King's Highway, but the request was not granted. Moses then went into the desert to the east of Edom where they encountered fiery serpents. Eventually, Moses passed by Edom and came to the eastern boundary of Moab. Again, Moses asked permission to travel along the King's Highway but was still denied. Throughout the remainder of the Old Testament history, we read of battles between Israelites and their neighbors on the east side of the Jordan River, often crossing the river at well-known fords and moving north and south in Jordan, presumably along the King's Highway.</p> <p>Later, when Persians and then Greeks ruled the territory from Mesopotamia to Egypt, trade along the King's Highway continued to be important. When the Romans conquered the territory, they maintained the importance of the road and reinforced several of the roadside cities as military centers. This situation continued into New Testament times and, because of the antipathy between the Jews and the Samaritans, the King's Highway grew in importance as a route between Galilee and Judea that would be taken to avoid entering the land of the Samaritans. Hence, when Jesus travelled from Galilee to Jerusalem, he may have traveled along the King's Highway (with the one exception of when he went through Samaria and encountered the woman at the well of Jacob), although he could also have walked along the eastern bank of the Jordan valley on some of the trips. When Paul journeyed from Damascus to Arabia (Petra), he would have walked along the King's road. At the time, the road was under the control of the Nabateans whose capital was Petra.</p> <p>After the time of Jesus the Romans continued to use the King's Highway (called in Latin the <i>Via Regia</i>) and even improved and expanded it and gave it a new name, <i>Via Nova Traiana</i>, to facilitate Roman trade and military movement through Jordan. The road continued to be important through the Byzantine period and also the Muslim period when it became part of the pilgrims' route from Damascus and Baghdad to Mecca. The crusaders understood its importance and built key castles to protect it. Then, when the Ottomans became rulers of the territory, they realized that a railroad would improve trade and communication in Jordan and built the Hijaz Railroad, generally paralleling the route of the King's Highway (but running several miles to the east where the railroad bed could be laid more easily).</p> <p>Today the King's Highway is still a major north-south route in Jordan. The northern part, that is, north of Amman, is the principal road. South of Amman the King's Highway goes through many small cities and has been superseded as the major roadway by the Desert (Airport) Highway; but much traffic still runs on the ancient road.</p>
<p>Other side of Jordan, Over Jordan, East people/Al Ghor, Jordan Rift Valley, Jordan River Valley</p>	<p>After the flood of Noah his children separated into different parts of the world. The Jordan River Valley, otherwise known as Al Ghor and the Jordan Rift, was one area where the descendants of Shem (Semites) located. Even after the Tower of Babel they shared a common ancestral language that was the origin of the Semitic languages—Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Over time the descendants of Abraham gained prominence in the area and most of the people in the area became associated with the Abrahamic tribes. These people moved east and west from the valley to occupy all the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, south of the Arabian Peninsula.</p> <p>Physically the rift valley descends from the foothills of the mountains of Lebanon through the Sea of Galilee, down the Jordan River Valley, to the Dead Sea and then continues as a desert depression to Aqaba where it meets the Red Sea. The valley is several miles wide and is highly fertile for most of its length. Even the land immediately south of the Dead Sea is highly fertile only giving way to desert as the rift approaches Aqaba. Because most of the rift valley is below sea level, a natural greenhouse effect increases the temperature and allows shorter and more frequent growing seasons than in higher</p>

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	<p>elevations. From this perspective it is no wonder that many people choose the valley to plant their crops and raise their livestock.</p>
<p>Decapolis</p>	<p>When the Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in the 4th century BC, the entire eastern Mediterranean area became a vast commercial zone supervised by Greek merchants who established key trading cities from which goods in the surrounding areas could be gathered and transported to markets throughout the known world. In the process these trading cities became islands of Greek culture, eventually spreading the Greek lifestyle and language until most people in the entire region adopted many Greek cultural traits and almost everyone spoke Greek as the language of commerce, learning, and history.</p> <p>Ten of these Greek cities were united in a trading group that became known as Decapolis (meaning 10 cities). Most of these cities were in present-day Jordan sitting astride the King's Highway or its connecting east-west routes and, for over two hundred years, they dominated trade and culture throughout the area east of the Jordan River. When the Romans conquered the territory in the mid-1st century BC, the trading importance of the 10 cities and the Greek culture spreading from them continued. (Romans adopted much of the Greek culture throughout the empire with only a few changes to accommodate the Roman emphasis on order, discipline, and practicality, even retaining the Greek language in the eastern part of the empire.) This was the situation when Jesus began his ministry in Galilee.</p> <p>Galilee and its sister territories on the west side of the Jordan River, Samaria and Judea, had also been dominated by the Greeks and the Romans as were the areas east of the Jordan River (Perea). However, in Galilee and Judea a group of Jews, the Pharisees, had arisen to combat the assimilation of Greek and Roman culture by the Jews. An even more belligerent group, the Zealots, struggled to achieve independence from Roman rule. Another group of Jewish leaders, the Sadducees, did not resist the Greek culture and were therefore psychological enemies of the Pharisees and Zealots. Hence, Galilee and Judea were in turmoil as these groups vied with each other and with their Roman rulers to gain prominence and power. The Bible mentions that Jesus occasionally left Galilee and its warring factions to preach in Decapolis. People were converted among the Jews living in the Greek cities and Jesus often found more acceptance east of the Jordan than in his own province.</p> <p>Josephus and Pliny the Younger both mention the Decapolis and allude to the power and importance of these cities during the Roman empire period in the 1st and early 2nd centuries AD. Christianity flourished in the Decapolis and when Christianity became the state religion of Rome in the 4th century, some of the Decapolis cities became key Christian centers. Many Byzantine ruins from this period are evident in the cities.</p>
<p>Bashan</p>	<p>Bashan was an ancient kingdom in northern Jordan, extending north into Syria, with Ashteroth Karnaim as its capital city. Mount Bashan is a mountain in southern Syria that is in the territory of ancient Bashan. Because the King's Highway ran through Bashan, it was involved in the battle of the Kings of Abraham's day and would have been important in the commerce and travel throughout the period of the patriarchs.</p> <p>As Moses led the children of Israel northward at the end of their 40 years in the wilderness, Moses conquered the Amorites, thus giving safe passage for the Israelites to the area near the Jordan River crossing, only a few miles north of the Dead Sea. Then Moses took a group of warriors from each tribe and moved northward, completing the conquest of the Amorites and then conquering King Og of Bashan and all his territory. An interesting note about King Og is that he was of the group of giants that ruled in the Middle East. Og's iron bed (showing a high technology in the age of bronze) measured nine cubits long and 4 cubits wide (approximately 13 feet by 6 feet).</p> <p>The inheritance of the tribe of Manasseh included the land of Bashan. However, many maps of the tribal inheritances show that Manasseh only extended to the Yarmouk River, the traditional northern boundary of Jordan and did not include the territory as far north as Mount Hermon as the Bible suggests. This may have indicated that the territory of the Tribe of Manasseh was pushed southward over time as northern peoples continued to press against the land claimed by the Israelites.</p> <p>When Joshua appointed cities of refuge, Golan in the area of Bashan, was one of the cities. Bashan continued to figure as an important area throughout the period of the kings of Israel, especially as conquerors or oppressors from the north (Syria, Babylon) entered Israel via the King's Highway as it passed through Bashan. As a highly forested and fertile area, Bashan furnished wood (oaks, generally) and beef for a variety of purposes in the kingdoms of the Israelites. Noted for its beauty, Bashan became a general title for the territory in the far north of Jordan and was not specifically identified. In</p>

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	modern times the area has been known as the Golan Heights, an important territory in the struggle between modern Israel and Syria.
Sea of Galilee, Sea of Chinnereth/Sea of Tiberias, Lake Gennesaret, Kinneret	<p>The Sea of Galilee has been known by a variety of names throughout the Old and New Testament periods and into the modern era. It has figured prominently in the Bible, especially in the New Testament. The few citations in the Old Testament mostly concern the sea or lake (it is called both) as a locator for a boundary or a city. In the New Testament, however, it is a focus of the life of Jesus and his disciples. During his ministry he lived on the shore of the sea and many of his disciples earned their living from the sea. Jesus travelled across the sea on several occasions, using it as a transport to Jordan where he often taught and sought solitude. Some of the most impressive events in the life of Jesus, such as walking on the water and calming the storm, occurred on the sea. In modern times the sea has been a boundary between Israel and Jordan; but today the entire coastline lies within the territory administered by Israel.</p>
Jordan River	<p>Today we think of the Jordan River as dividing one land from another, but in ancient times that was not always the case. The united kingdom of the Israelites spanned the river and so did the tribe of Manasseh and other non-Israelite kingdoms from time to time. Nevertheless, it was a natural boundary and, in the case of Moses, was not to be crossed during his lifetime. For Joshua and Elijah, it was crossed with the help of the power of God.</p> <p>The Jordan River always seemed to have a special significance. It was the barrier to the promised land for the wandering Israelites and was the water of healing for Naaman the Syrian and Elisha the prophet. It was the water in which John baptized people from Jerusalem, Judea, and Jordan, including, of course, Jesus.</p>
Yarmouk River	<p>Although not mentioned specifically in the Bible, the Yarmouk River is important as the largest tributary of the Jordan River and the natural boundary between Jordan and Syria. Many maps of the land allocated to the Tribes of Israel show the Yarmouk as the northern limit of the tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan River. In modern times the bridge over the Yarmouk was an important target for Lawrence of Arabia in WWI. The city of Deraa, another important location in WWI, lies just north of the Yarmouk.</p>
Gadara, Antiochia/Umm Qais	<p>Located in the extreme northwest edge of Jordan, Gadara was one of the Decapolis cities that was important in the times of the Greeks. Its hilltop location gave it great military importance as well as the commercial importance common to all the Decapolis cities. It was damaged in the Maccabean wars when the Jews revolted against Seleucid (Greek) rule and then moved to take possession of many Greek cities on both the west and east sides of the river. The city was rebuilt and fortified by Pompey, the Roman general, and continued in importance through the New Testament period.</p> <p>Later, during the Jewish revolt of the first century AD, Vespasian decimated the city's population as part of his suppression of the revolt. However, the key military and commercial location of the city allowed it to recover and continue as an important center on the eastern side of the Jordan River. From the 4th century it was the seat of a Christian bishopric and then, in the 7th century it fell to the Muslims in the battle of Yarmouk. Then in the mid-8th century it was destroyed by an earthquake and abandoned.</p> <p>On one occasion, as reported in Mark 5, Luke 8, and Matthew 8, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee to preach and to find respite from the troubles on the western side. He went to the area of Gadara (spellings change among the writers) and there encountered one or two men (accounts differ) who were possessed of devils. They pled with Jesus to cast out the evil spirits. Jesus agreed but then, upon request of the evil spirits, sent the spirits into a herd of swine who then ran into the sea and were drown. Today the area of Gadara is called Umm Qais.</p> <p>The site of ancient Gadara has impressive ruins of the city and several clues indicating where the miracle reported in the New Testament may have occurred. Today, the ruins are quite a distance from the Sea of Galilee agreeing with some of the details of the scriptural account but also suggesting that the miracle occurred far outside the city (in the general region of Gadara). However, there are tombs and other indications that the city or region is appropriate for the biblical story. The ruins are quite extensive and in many places are well preserved. As is typical of Greek and Roman cities, there is a forum (called an agora in Greek) and a main road that is built in standard Roman style with a sewer and other indications of good engineering. Houses and shops line the streets, and a small museum has some statues, busts, and other artifacts from the ancient period.</p> <p>The view of the Sea of Galilee from Gadara and surrounding territory is spectacular. The city of Tiberius can be clearly seen (although at a considerable distance) and also several Israeli farms. The</p>

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	<p>Golan Heights are immediately to the north of the Gadara region and can also be easily seen (but not entered). Today, Israel occupies the Golan Heights and the former Jordanian coastline around the Sea of Galilee.</p>
<p>Abila Dekapoleos, Selucia/Hartha, Ain Quqweilbeh</p>	<p>This site, located northeast of modern Irbid, dates from the Bronze Age, and became one of the Decapolis cities or, in some counts, a feeder city that was not actually one of the 10 official center cities but was linked to them. It was, however, very important in the Greco-Roman period as attested to by the numerous ruins (aqueducts, public buildings, tombs) found there.</p>
<p>Ramoth-gilead/Ramtha</p>	<p>As part of the partition of the promised land by Moses and Joshua into sections for the 12 tribes, some cities were set-aside as refuges for people who killed someone inadvertently (manslaughter). The Mosaic Law allowed the family of a person who is killed by another to seek vengeance upon the killer. However, if the death was accidental, the killer could flee to one of the cities of refuge and receive protection from the city against the vengeance seeker. (The slayer had to wait outside the city and explain the situation to the city fathers before being granted asylum.) Six cities, three on the west side of the Jordan River and three on the east side, were designated as refuge cities. Ramoth-gilead, located within the territory of the Tribe of Gad, was one of these. The other cities on the east side of the Jordan were located in the tribal areas of Reuben and Manasseh.</p> <p>The concept of familial vengeance or retribution is still practiced in many Middle Eastern countries, especially for crimes other than murder. For example, if a sheep is killed, the owner of the sheep can require payment of the sheep by the killer and may also be entitled to physically beat the killer. Even if a person is killed in an auto accident, the family of the deceased has the right to require payment from the person responsible for the accident. In Jordan these family retribution decisions are usually reviewed by a civil court to ensure that the decision is reasonable.</p> <p>Ramoth-gilead is located near the northern boundary of Jordan and is a main crossing point into Syria. Therefore, throughout the period of the kings, it was often involved in wars between the Israelites and the Syrians/Arameans. One battle involved the kings of Judah and Israel (northern kingdom) jointly attacking the Arameans, but the king of Judah died in the battle and the next morning all the troops returned to their own countries, leaving Ramtha in the hands of the Arameans. In another incident the prophet Elisha sent a servant to Ramoth-gilead to find the captain of the army and anointed him king over Israel, in defiance of King Ahab.</p> <p>Today, Ramtha is a small city that is mostly agricultural. However, for many years it has also been a city of smuggling. The large Al-Zubi tribe come from the Ramtha area.</p>
<p>Capitolias/Bayt Ras</p>	<p>This walled city, enlarged by the Romans in the first century AD was one of the Decapolis cities. It is located a few miles north of the modern city of Irbid and has become part of greater Irbid. It remained an important city through the early Byzantine period. The bishop of the city was one of those who attended the famous Nicaean Council in the 4th century.</p>
<p>Arabella, Bayt Arbeel /Irbid</p>	<p>This site was established in the Bronze Age and remained important into the modern period. Irbid is the third largest city in Jordan. Anciently Arabella was a major wine-producing area until the Muslim period when it was changed into a major producer of olive oil. Today, as in the past, Irbid suffers from water shortage. The Romans solved the problem by bringing water into the city through underground tunnels. Sadly, the tunnels have been neglected and the water problem remains.</p>
<p>Al Yaseelah/Hawara</p>	<p>While not one of the Decapolis cities, the site lies at the crossroads of some connector routes and is, therefore, at a strategic location. Evidence of commercial work, such as a wine press and extensive storage locations, suggests that this site was used as a processing location for the produce from the surrounding villages.</p>
<p>Gilead</p>	<p>Gilead is a heavily wooded, mountainous region in northern Jordan. When Jacob left Padan-Aram with his wives, goods, and animals, his father-in-law Laban was angry and pursued Jacob along the King's Highway, eventually catching up with him in the mountains of Gilead. In the story of Joseph when he was cast into a hole and then sold to a group of Ishmaelites, it mentions that they came from Gilead, suggesting that these mountains were on the trade route (King's Highway).</p> <p>These mountains were assigned principally to the tribe of Gad but with some portions going to Reuben and Manasseh. Gilead is divided by the Jabbok River (today called the Zarqa River). Gilead, bounded on the north by Bashan and on the south by Ammon and Moab, continued to be important throughout the period of Joshua, the judges, and the kings as an area often contested between the Israelites and their neighbors east of the Jordan River. David fled to this area in his dispute with Jonathon.</p> <p>The balm of Gilead refers to a resinous material derived from the trees in the Gilead forests,</p>

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<p>Pella/Tabaqat Fahl western</p>	<p>an Old Testament allusion that is then turned to refer to Jesus and his saving grace.</p> <p>Pella lies on the eastern flank of the Jordan River Valley in the foothills where a <i>wadi</i> and springs give sufficient water to supply a settlement. Hence, from Neolithic times people have occupied the site of Pella making it one of the world's oldest habitations. It is mentioned in 19th century BC Egyptian writings and would, of course, be encountered as any army moved along the eastern side of the Jordan Valley. A Canaanite temple has been uncovered amidst the ruins suggesting that the city was very large for the period. No wonder that Pella became one of the Decapolis cities when the Greeks conquered the territory. The name, Pella, probably was given by the Greeks in honor of the birthplace of Alexander in Macedonia.</p> <p>No specific record is given of Jesus visiting Pella when on his trips to Decapolis, but the Gospel of John indicates that after baptizing Jesus (and possibly some of Jesus' disciples in Judea), John went to Aenon near Salim (Pella) and baptized many people there. Therefore, many converts lived in Pella or the surrounding area and their number grew because, according to both Josephus and Eusebius, Christians fled to Pella in 66 AD to escape the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. These refugees from Judea would be drawn to a city where other Christians were already living. The Christian refugees may not have actually fled to the city of Pella but could have hidden in a wadi south of the city itself. Because Pella is on the western front of the Gilead mountains, it is possible that the flight to this location was predicted in Mark 13:14.</p> <p>The city continued its importance in the Byzantine era, as demonstrated by the churches dating from that period. A nearby battle between the Muslims and the Byzantine Christians led to the control of the city by Muslims. An earthquake in the mid-8th century destroyed the city and it was mostly abandoned at that time.</p>
<p>Brook Cherith/Wadi Yabis</p>	<p>Elijah confronted King Ahab by calling upon the Lord to cause a drought in the land. In anger, Ahab threatened to kill Elijah and, therefore, Elijah fled to the Brook Cherith, across Jordan. There Elijah was fed by ravens until the brook dried up and God commanded Elijah to move to another location. Most scholars believe that this <i>wadi</i>, located in Elijah's home district just south of Pella, in Gilead, and not far from where Elijah was born, is Cherith. Some scholars, however, believe that Brook Cherith is farther south in the Jordan Valley, near the location of Christ's baptism but that argument seems to confuse Christ's baptism site with John the Baptist's baptism site in the north. He actually baptized in two principal locations—Bethany beyond Jordan in the south and Brook Cherith in the north. Both locations were connected to Elijah and John the Baptist. This double geographical connection is especially meaningful as Jesus referred to John the Baptist as an Elias (Elijah) or forerunner.</p> <p>The New Testament indicates (John 3:23) that John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim and these sites are directly across the Jordan River from Wadi Yabis. Therefore, John was baptizing near here. This place may also have been a refuge for Jesus and may have been the actual location where some Christians hid after they left Jerusalem at the time of the Roman destruction.</p> <p>The modern peace agreement between Jordan and Israel states that Israel has certain water rights between the Yarmouk River and Cherith/Wadi al-Yabis, thus recognizing the importance of this site.</p>
<p>Jabesh-Gilead/Tell al-Maqbara</p>	<p>Jabesh-Gilead is a city in the area of Gilead that dates from the early Bronze Age as determined from archeological evidence at the site. The city seems to have had close ties with the tribe of Benjamin as evidenced by their refusal to join with the other Israelite tribes in a war against Benjamin over a murder of a concubine committed by some Benjamites. When the tribes that were unified against Benjamin met, following their annihilation of the Benjamites, the absence of Jabesh-Gilead from the unified meeting of the other tribes was specifically noted. Therefore, in retribution for not uniting with their brother tribes, the adult men and women of Jabesh-Gilead were slain. Later the unified tribes felt bad about having one tribe, Benjamin, not able to grow because so many of them had been killed in the war. Therefore, the young daughters of Jabesh-Gilead were given to the Benjamites who survived, thus providing the means whereby the tribe of Benjamin could once again become part of the Israelite confederation.</p> <p>Years later the Ammonites came upon the people of Jabesh-Gilead and threatened them with destruction. When the people of Jabesh pleaded for mercy, the Ammonites agreed, provided that the people of Jabesh covenanted to serve the Ammonites and also agree to have their right eye plucked out. The people of Jabesh asked for a week to make a decision. During the week the people of Jabesh sent word of their predicament to King Saul who became angry at the Ammonites for their cruelty. (It is</p>

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	<p>interesting here to note that Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin and was, therefore, a possible descendent of the young women of Jabesh who were given to the men of the tribe of Benjamin.) Saul enlisted an army and went to the aid of Jabesh. When the Ammonites tried to attack, Saul's army defeated them.</p> <p>Saul ruled as the king for many years but was eventually defeated and killed by the Philistines. When the Philistines were combing the battleground looking for their dead and for plunder, they discovered the body of Saul and they cut off his head and circulated it throughout the land of the Philistines as a trophy. They hung Saul's body on a wall as a reminder to the Israelites of the Philistine victory. When the people of Jabesh heard of it, they went to the town and took down Saul's body, returned to Jabesh where they solemnly burnt the body and buried the bones (ashes) with honor. Shortly thereafter, when David was anointed king, he heard of the respect shown to Saul's body and praised the people of Jabesh. Later, David removed the buried remains of Saul and reburied them in the land of Benjamin.</p> <p>Some archeologists believe that the location of Jabesh-Gilead is not at Tell al-Maqbara, but is at Tell Abu Kharaz, a short distance farther along the Wadi Yabis. (Note that Yabis preserves the name Jabesh.) Eusebius, a historian of the 4th century, places Jabesh-Gilead a few miles south of Pella.</p>
<p>Abel-meholah/Tell al-maqlub</p>	<p>This Bronze Age city near the northern Jordan River is the birthplace of Shaphat, the father of Elisha. When Elijah the prophet was commanded to flee the wrath of Ahab, Elijah went to the wilderness of Judea and then to Mount Hor and then to a cave. In the cave he was instructed to go to the home of Elisha where he would call him to be a follower. Elisha was plowing in Abel-meholah when Elijah encountered him.</p>
<p>Tishbe, Listib/Tell Mar Elias (north)</p>	<p>Elijah the Tishbite was from Gilead, probably from the town of Tishbe (also called Listib). Today a Byzantine church on a hill called Tell Mar Elias (the hill of the prophet Elijah) overlooks the little village that was once Tishbe. The village is located in a lovely valley in the midst of the Gilead forest.</p>
<p>Ajloun, Rabad</p>	<p>The mountainous area surrounding Ajloun is heavily forested, thus inhibiting the use of the area for agriculture and, therefore, decreasing the population in the area. It was reported that the forests in the vicinity were so dense that a person could walk from Ajloun (approximately in the center of Gilead) to Umm Qais without ever stepping into the direct sunlight. Nevertheless, many Roman ruins and other Roman artifacts such as coins, attest to the use of the area from ancient times.</p> <p>Although not mentioned in the Bible nor directly related to biblical times, the castle built on the mountain overlooking the city of Ajloun is important both as a historical and a religious site. The castle was built by the Muslims (nephew of Saladin) in the 12th century as a bulwark against the crusaders. Interestingly, the style of the castle was largely borrowed from those built by the crusaders in the previous century and therefore did not reflect the previous Muslim style. (However, the Muslims adopted the French style from that period onward). The castle featured a dry moat, drawbridge, catapult stones, arrow slot windows, winding staircases, cisterns, a fortified keep, and numerous battlements. The castle sits atop a mountain and has a commanding view of the surrounding valley and of the Jordan River Valley in the distance. It was part of a signaling network allowing communications from Jerusalem to Baghdad.</p> <p>A large Christian tribe, the Rabadi, come from the area and many still live in the vicinity.</p>
<p>Anjara</p>	<p>Located not far from Ajloun is the small town of Anjara. Local tradition says that Jesus and Mary stayed in a cave in this location on one of their trips between Jerusalem and Galilee. While not confirmable scripturally, an ancient olive press confirms the antiquity of the site.</p>
<p>Zaphon/Crossing or passages of the Jordan, Tell al-Qos</p>	<p>This city of Gilead is in the Jordan River Valley near a convenient place to ford the river. It was named as one of the cities defining the territory of the Israelites.</p> <p>In the story of Jephthah who was chosen as the general over the Gileadite armies against the Ammonites, Zaphon (mis-translated as "northern" in one Bible verse) is the location where the elders of Israel met to choose their captain. Although an outsider, Jephthah was chosen and had great success in his battles against the Ammonites. He captured all the Ammonite territory that, at the time, stretched from Gilead to the deserts of southern Jordan. In gratitude to God, Jephthah vowed that whatever greeted him upon his return home would be sacrificed to the Lord, thinking, of course, that it would be an animal. When his daughter met him, he was devastated, but felt compelled to honor his pledge. His daughter was given as a servant of the Lord (probably as a virgin priestess) rather than executed.</p> <p>Later the Ephraimites, who claimed that Jephthah did not ask for their support against the Ammonites and probably wanted a share of the booty, came to battle against the Gileadites. Jephthah said that he did call upon the Ephraimites for help but they would not respond. In the ensuing war the</p>

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	Gileadites under Jephthah were routed. The surviving Ephraimites tried to flee across the river and were challenged by the Gileadites to say "Shibboleth", a word difficult for the Ephraimites to pronounce. Those who mispronounced it were identified as Ephraimites and were killed.
Khirbet al Samra	Situated in the desert north of Zarqa, these extensive ruins beg the question of why a major city of the Roman period would be located in the desert. It was located on the <i>Via Nova Traiana</i> (still visible in the area), but that does not explain how the city was founded or why it grew. The many reservoirs in the vicinity attest to the large population and the Romans' capability in securing water. The many Byzantine churches in the area suggest that the city was still prosperous in Byzantine times. The ruined mosaics in the churches attest to the effects of the destruction of faces on mosaics during the iconoclast period in the 8 th and 9 th centuries AD.
Rihab, Beth Rehob	<p>Rihab is a city in northern Jordan that is mentioned in the story of the spies that Moses sent out. When Moses sent the spies to discover the promised land, he said to explore from the Wilderness of Zin to Rehob, with the comment that Rehob is on the way toward Hamath, which is in Syria. He was saying that the spies should explore all the length of the land from south to north. Since Rehob is in northern Jordan we can assume that this means these spies explored both the western and eastern lands where the Israelites would eventually settle. Records from Tuthmose III in the 15th century BC name Rihab as one of the cities conquered by Tuthmose. It is later mentioned as a city that paid tribute to Egypt until it rebelled during the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV in the 14th century BC.</p> <p>When the king of Ammon fought against King David, the Ammonites hired 20,000 men of the Syrians (Aramaecans) and Beth Rehob to fight as mercenaries against the Israelites. During the battle, David's general, Joab, was able to defeat the Aramaean army but was not able to capture the city and, therefore, he returned to Jerusalem.</p> <p>Archeologists exploring the ruins of a church in Rihab that is dated from the 3rd century AD, found a cave beneath the church that contained Christian inscriptions. The placement of the cave beneath a church suggests that the cave may have been a hiding place during the time of Roman persecution of the Christians and that the church was built over the cave as a way to commemorate these early Christians. Therefore, the cave has been suggested as the oldest Christian gathering place. There is also a tunnel connected to a cistern, thus providing water for the cave dwellers.</p>
Umm al Surab	A modest city in the desert would be unimportant to most people (except for scholars) but for the interesting engravings that were found in a Byzantine church in the ruins. The inscription states, "Lord, protect Umairas and Corous, the children of Albianous who built this church in memory of Saints Sergius and Bakhous on the 25 th of the month of Cubbaous' (in the local dating system, equivalent to 489 AD). Clearly a man, Albianous, built the church to ask for protection for his children. He also wanted to honor two saints, Sergius and Bakhous, who were officers in the Roman army during the time of the Diocletian reign in the early 4 th century. The co-emperor, Maximianus, visited Syria and, as was the custom during this time of Roman religious unification, asked that all army personnel offer sacrifices to the Roman gods. Two officers, Sergius and Bakhous, were absent from the group sacrifice and when they were brought before the co-emperor, they admitted to missing the sacrifice because they were Christians. They were stripped of their army ranks and publicly humiliated. The next day they were killed. The church, built in the next century, honored these two men.
Gerasa/Jerash	<p>Gerasa, located near the King's Highway at a crossing point for an east-west passage to the Jordan River Valley and not far from major iron ore deposits, has been a major trading center since the early Bronze Age. It is near the center of Gilead and, therefore, was important throughout the period of the judges and kings when Gilead was the site of many battles. When Jordan came under the domination of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks, it was a key objective and possession in their conquests. The Greeks, in particular, used Gerasa as a major city for both trade and military control, making it part of the Decapolis. As was customary for the Romans, they took the culture and experience of others and used them, perhaps increasing the engineering and efficiency of what they took over. From the conquest of the Romans in the 2nd century BC to the destruction of an earthquake in mid-8th century AD, Gerasa thrived. These assertions are attested to by the expansive and well-preserved ruins that we see today in Jerash. Greek and Roman ruins dot the entire Mediterranean basin, but none are more extensive or as well preserved as those at Jerash. It deserves to be one of Jordan's principal tourist centers.</p> <p>When approaching Jerash from the south (coming from Amman), the lovely valley in which Jerash resides lies parallel to the main north-south highway of Jordan (King's Highway). The complex of ruins lies adjacent to the main road through the valley on the west side and the modern city of Jerash</p>

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	<p>is across the road on the east side. This simple separation seems to set off and protect the ruins. A close inspection of the modern town, however, reveals many ruins tucked in between modern houses, affirming that ancient Gerasa was a city of major size.</p> <p>A modest tourist bazaar leads from the parking areas to the ticket booth. After passing the ticket booth, the Arch of Hadrian signals the entry into the ruins area. In 126 AD when Hadrian was emperor of Rome, he visited Gerasa as part of his tour of the newly acquired territory of Arabia and he inaugurated the new Roman highway, roughly paralleling the King's Highway, which was built by his predecessor Trajan (<i>Via Nova Traiana</i>). The arch was built in Hadrian's honor. It is massive and splendid, equal to the arches of Titus and Constantine in Rome and of the same style (which was later copied by Napoleon when he built the <i>Arc de Triomphe</i> in Paris).</p> <p>Just beyond the arch is a long, oval hippodrome in which chariot races were (and are) held. Along the inside and outside walls of the hippodrome were small shops that must have catered to the spectators. Continuing northward brings the visitor to another entry arch and a short way further stands the magnificent forum with dozens of columns still defining the unusual oval perimeter. After a turn to the left and a short climb, the temple of Zeus can be entered. Its hilltop location affords a wonderful panoramic view of the city. Just to the side of the temple is a marvelous amphitheater. The acoustics allow a speaker in the center of the orchestra to be readily heard by those in the top row of seats. The extensive stage is used for the annual Jerash Festival. A close inspection of the seats reveals seat numbers (in Greek letters) and places where a safety rail restrained the front row spectators.</p> <p>Descending the hill and continuing north along the edge of the ruins area takes the visitor past several Byzantine churches. Local tradition is that mass could be said only once a day in each church and, therefore, several churches were built to allow mass at multiple hours. The temple of Artemis lies along this westerly side of the ruins area and, like the temple of Zeus, sits atop a hill and gives a commanding view of the northern part of the ruins. An interesting feature of the temple of Artemis is the column that moves in the wind. By inserting a thin piece of metal, like a knife blade, into the crack between the drums of a particular column in the temple, the rocking motion of the column can be perceived by motion of the metal piece. One wonders why the column has not fallen over the years.</p> <p>Below and east of the temple lies a complex of buildings including a winepress (complete with troughs to underground storage facilities) and a reconstructed rock saw run by a waterwheel. This device illustrates the ingenuity of the Romans and affirms their ability to change rotating motion to horizontal reciprocal motion, a concept previously thought not to have been invented until the 10th century AD. Continuing down the hill to the east brings the visitor to the main north-south street of the city, the <i>Cardo</i>. A cathedral is passed and a huge fountain is encountered on the side of the road along with many shop areas, each defined by massive Corinthian columns. The bed of the <i>Cardo</i> is made of great stone blocks on which some grooves seem to be worn, perhaps by chariot wheels. Occasionally a round stone is seen with a metal handle. These are manhole covers that provide access to the sewer that runs under the street. (Some cracks between the pavement rocks reveal a second layer of rocks below the street, obviously the lining of the sewer.) Continuing along the <i>Cardo</i> to the south will eventually lead back to the forum. Throughout the city are blocks that formerly made up the walls of the many buildings whose foundations clearly show their size and, occasionally, their purpose. Many blocks are carved with inscriptions using either the Greek or Roman alphabets, thus attesting to the dual nature of a Roman city in the eastern half of the empire where the language of commerce was Greek.</p> <p>When Jesus went to the Decapolis, he would have encountered this thriving and commercially active environment. Some have wondered if he would have been comfortable or would have even entered such an obviously pagan environment. However, Jesus was not a Pharisee and clearly was comfortable helping Roman soldiers and other non-Jews who honestly sought him. The peace on the eastern side of the Jordan River was clearly a draw to him when he sought solitude. He counseled the rich people of Jordan as shown in the encounter with the rich young man that occurred in Jordan (Matthew 19:16-30) and advised them to forsake their riches for the gospel. What better message could be given?</p>
<p>Bostra (nearby)/Umm al-Jimal (other ruins nearby include Sabha, Subhia,</p>	<p>Ancient Bostra dates from the Nabataean and Roman period when it was built to protect the eastern frontier of the empire. In spite of the military nature of the town, it became ever more important as an agricultural center during the Byzantine era. Then, after the Muslim conquest, Bostra diminished in importance as the economy was dealt a blow from an earthquake in the mid-8th century.</p> <p>Of particular interest today is the use of dark basalt as the chief construction material. The natural insulative nature of basalt (readily available in the vicinity) is especially important in this semi-</p>

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<p>Sama Al Sarhan, Hamama, and Umm al Qutain)</p>	<p>desert climate. By using corbeling (overlapping of blocks to give support to higher blocks), structures up to 6 stories were built. Water was collected from miles away and stored cleverly.</p> <p>The other sites noted are in the vicinity of Umm al-Jimal and Mafraq. They were desert cities and most of the ruins date from the Byzantine period.</p>
<p>Al Fundain/Mafraq</p>	<p>The Aramaeans, descended from Aram, son of Shem, were centered in Syria and became a regional power during the 12th century BC but never were strong enough to be called an empire. They were mentioned in the records of the Mesopotamians and the later Assyrians. The Aramaeans dominated Israel during part of the time of the Judges. During this period the Aramaeans built several fortress cities and Al Fundain (which means "the fortress"), modern Mafraq, was one of these cities. The Aramaeans were enemies of Kings Saul and David who eventually succeeded in conquering them. The Aramaeans were absorbed into the Assyrian empire in the 8th century BC and were lost to history from that time forward.</p> <p>The Aramaeans continued to be the majority population in the homeland of modern-day Syria and their language continued as a major language of commerce and education. Even during the Greek and Roman periods, the spoken language of most of the inhabitants of Syria and surrounding areas, including Jordan and Galilee, was Aramaic. Hence, most scholars believe that Jesus spoke Aramaic as his native language. Eventually, Aramaic yielded to Arabic as the language of the Semitic people in the greater Syrian-Jordanian-Palestine area. Today, some Syriac Christians still use the Aramaic language, although mostly for religious purposes.</p>
<p>Mizpah-gilead</p>	<p>After serving his father-in-law, Laban, for 20 years, Jacob left Padan-aram in Syria with his wives and animals but without announcing his departure to Laban. When Laban was informed of Jacob's departure, Laban pursued Jacob and caught up with him in the mountains of Gilead where Jacob had encamped. After some discussion they agreed to reconcile and, as a mark of that agreement, they built a rock watchtower (<i>mizpah</i>). Jacob then named the location Mizpah and said, "For the Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." Because of this statement, people have used the word "mizpah" as the name of charms or symbols that are given, often half to one person and half to the other, to mark their mutual hope that a remembrance will also be kept between them. The scripture also says that the place could be named Galeed, a name derived from the Hebrew "gal" meaning a heap of stones and "edh" meaning a witness. This name may be the origin of the regional name Gilead.</p> <p>Mizpah was one of the places that Jephthah passed through during his campaign against the Ammonites. This confirms the location in a reasonable passageway through the mountains of Gilead.</p>
<p>Jabbok River/Zarqa River</p>	<p>While on his journey from Syria to Canaan, Jacob reconciled with Laban near the Jabbok River, a major tributary of the Jordan River that passes through the Gilead hills. Its valley provides a convenient east-west passage from the King's Highway to the Jordan River Valley and would, therefore, be a logical route for Jacob to follow. Several important events took place near the Jabbok.</p> <p>It is possible that Mizpah was along the northern bank of the river since its water would have afforded good pasture for Jacob's animals, but we are not sure as the scriptures don't specifically mention a river near Mizpah. However, both Mahanaim and Penuel, sites important in the story of Jacob with angels and with Esau specifically refer to encampments along the banks of the Jabbok.</p>
<p>Mahanaim, Mihna/Tulul ed-Dhab al-Gharbi</p>	<p>When Jacob had reconciled with Laban, he went a little farther on his journey and was met by angels and, upon their appearance, Jacob understood the multitude of God's hosts and could sense the power of God. Jacob realized that his small group of people was not much, but with God's great host of angels, together they were mighty. Jacob therefore named the place Mahanaim meaning two hosts. It was from here that Jacob began the process of reconciliation with his brother Esau. Jacob sent messengers to Edom in the Land of Seir (southern Jordan) where Esau lived. The messengers told Esau that Jacob had many possessions and would share them with Esau to make amends for past problems. When the messengers returned to tell him that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, Jacob was afraid. Perhaps thinking about the name of the place where he was at, Mahanaim, he realized that if he divided his wives, cattle, possessions into two parts, Esau would likely only destroy one group and the other would be saved. Hence, two groups were again created in Mahanaim.</p> <p>A city was later built at Mahanaim, and it was a marker for the southern boundary of Bashan at the time of Moses. When the tribal lands were awarded, Mahanaim became part of the boundary separating the lands of Manasseh and Gad. Mahanaim was set aside as a sanctuary city, perhaps remembering the reconciliations of Jacob.</p> <p>At the time of the death of Saul, Mahanaim was the city where Abner, the commander of</p>

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	<p>Saul's army, installed Saul's son as king of Israel, prior to David emerging as the king over a united nation. Later, when Absalom rebelled against David, it was to Mahanaim that David fled (it was a city loyal to kings) and it was there that he heard of Absalom's death. The place where Absalom died was called the Woods of Ephraim and is part of the Gilead forest. When David was dying and instructing Solomon, his successor, David asked Solomon to be king to those of Gilead who protected him when he fled there to escape the army of Absalom.</p> <p>The hill called Tulul ed-Dhab al-Gharbi is usually associated with Mahanaim.</p>
<p>Penuel, Peniel, Behlium/Tulul ed-Dhab al-Sharqi</p>	<p>When Jacob had divided his family and his possessions in anticipation of an encounter with Esau, Jacob waited alone on the northern bank of the Jabbok River. Jacob showed great humility before the Lord, realizing that he had left his home 20 years before with only his staff and now returns with great riches. He pled with the Lord to spare his family from Esau's wrath. He then separated many of his animals and instructed his servants to cross over the nearby Jabbok River and deliver these gifts to Esau. He then sent his wives and children to the other side of the river and waited, alone on the northern shore. That night he was visited by a man (angel) with whom he wrestled. Jacob prevailed in this match and when the angel was required to leave with the coming of day, Jacob demanded and received a blessing and a new name—Israel, one who has power with God. Jacob named the place Penuel.</p> <p>A city was built at Penuel, and it became important during the time of the judges. When Gideon was chasing the fleeing Midianites, he stopped at Penuel and asked for assistance (just as he had done earlier at Succoth) and, as with Succoth, the people refused to help Gideon. Then, when returning from the battles with the Midianites, Gideon entered Penuel and broke down the tower of the city and slew the men.</p> <p>During the dispute following the death of Solomon, the ruler of the northern kingdom, Jeroboam, built an idolatrous center at Penuel.</p>
<p>Succoth, Sukkot, Shochoh/Tell Deir 'Alla</p>	<p>On his return from Syria, Jacob reconciled with Laban and then with Esau and then proceeded down the Jabbok River to the Jordan River Valley and there, on the eastern bank of the Jordan, he built a house for himself and booths for his animals. This place was, therefore, named booths (Succoth). Later, when the land was divided between the tribes, Succoth was part of the inheritance of Gad. This confirms that Succoth is on the east side of the Jordan River in Gilead.</p> <p>Succoth also figures in the story of Gideon and the Midianites. During the time of the judges, Israel came under the domination of the Midianites, a tribe from the southern part of Jordan and northern Arabia. An angel spoke to Gideon, a man of the tribe of Manasseh, calling on him to destroy the images of Baal and defeat the Midianites. Gideon sent messengers to the other tribes and gathered a great number of men who were willing to fight the Midianites. However, there were so many that the Lord thought the people would take the victory unto themselves. Therefore, Gideon was instructed to take the army to a spring and there observe how the men drank. Those who bent down and drank directly from the stream were sent home but those who dipped their hand into the water and lapped from their hand were retained. Then that night Gideon gave each of the 300 remaining warriors a lamp and a clay cover and instructed them to surround the Midianites and, upon his signal, break the cover and blow trumpets thus confusing the enemy. The plan worked perfectly, and the Midianites were routed. Gideon and his army followed the retreating Midianites over the River Jordan near the town of Succoth. Gideon asked for help from the inhabitants but was refused. He also passed by Penuel and was refused there also. Finally, he destroyed many of the Midianites and captured their leaders, thus ending the war. Gideon then went back to Succoth and beat the elders of the city with briers and thorns to teach them a lesson.</p> <p>Succoth is also remembered as the location where the bronze (brass) basins and other implements for Solomon's temple were cast, evidently because of the type of clay in this region.</p>
<p>Adam/Damieh (near to Zerathan/Tell as-Saidiyya)</p>	<p>When Joshua led the Children of Israel across the Jordan River at Bethabara, near Jericho, the Bible records that the waters stood up in a heap near the city Adam that is near Zerathan. This becomes clear when it is realized that Zerathan is a mountain that narrows the river valley and, therefore, would be a natural place of restriction for waters that are being pushed upstream to allow for the Israelite crossing. The city of Adam was a marker for this event. Note that Damieh contains the same root letters as Adam, possibly an ancient connection.</p> <p>Zerathan is also a marker as is shown in other biblical verses when events along the Jordan River are cited such as the location for the casting of the metal sea (bronzes) and other implements for the temple of Solomon.</p>

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<p>Perea/Jordan River Valley</p>	<p>In New Testament times when Herod the Great died, the Romans divided his kingdom into several portions eventually being given to three sons with one son receiving two portions. Perea was one of the areas and it lies on the eastern side of the Jordan River from about the mid-point of Gilead to about the mid-point of the Dead Sea (roughly from the Jabbok River to the Arnon River). Perea did not extend far to the east, probably not much beyond the King's Highway, and, therefore, is strongly associated with the Jordan River Valley. Josephus refers to this area as Perea so the name was likely commonly used.</p> <p>Many events of the New Testament occurred in Perea, yet most people are not aware that they occurred on the east side of the Jordan River. Scholars refer to many of the events in Jesus' life that occurred on the "other side of Jordan" as the Peraan Ministry. Some of the events do not specifically state where they occurred but logic tells us they happened in Jordan. For example, the wise men who came from the east surely must have traveled through Jordan on their way to Jerusalem and Bethlehem.</p> <p>John the Baptist may have grown up in the Peraan wilderness and also preached and baptized there. Jesus went to him at Bethany Beyond Jordan to be baptized. Many believe and local tradition affirms that Jesus remained in Perea for the 40 days of fasting in the wilderness.</p> <p>On other occasions Matthew states that Jesus departed from Galilee and came to the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan, that is, to Perea. There many followed him, and he healed them there. He answered Pharisees' questions and taught his disciples about marriage. This is also the place where he blessed the little children and reminded his disciples that they needed to become as a little child. There he also taught the rich man who was told to give up all his goods and follow Christ to gain eternal life. Christ gave the parable of the workers in the field before leaving Perea to go to Jerusalem.</p> <p>We also have record of people from beyond Jordan crossing over to the west side of the river to hear and follow Jesus, some probably from the visits that Jesus took passing on his way to the Decapolis cities, for example. Jesus may have spent considerable time in Perea because of the peace that he found beyond Jordan. In particular, John records that the Jews sought to take him, and he went to the place where John baptized, beyond Jordan, and abode there. The people came to him and believed.</p>
<p>Tomb of Gad/Ain al-Jadur, Salt</p>	<p>Local tradition in Ain al-Jadur, near the city of Salt, suggests that a tomb in the village is the tomb of Gad, leader of one of the tribes of Israel. Other ruins in the Salt area include: Khirbet Al-Souq (a major center as judged by the pillars and the size of the cemetery), Khirbet Ayoub (remains of the Roman temple and a Byzantine church erected on top of the temple's ruins), Khirbet Hazeer (remains of a castle, oil press, cemetery, works of art suggesting a population that may date to the Bronze Age), Zay (mentioned by Eusebius and location of a Byzantine church with beautiful mosaics), and Al Jadoor (Roman temple, public baths, graveyards, and many pillars indicating a possible Roman forum).</p>
<p>Qasr Al-Hallabat</p>	<p>Several desert castles, while not biblical, have importance as Byzantine and Umayyad structures. The castle at Qasr Al-Hallabat, in the eastern desert northwest of present day Zarqa was built by the Romans as a fort to guard the <i>Via Nova Traiana</i>, the Roman road built by Trajan in the second century AD. The Roman structure was then demolished to allow construction of an Umayyad complex containing a mosque, water system, and bathhouse.</p>
<p>Land of the Children of Ammon, Rabbath-Ammon, Philadelphia/Rajm al-Malouf/Amman</p>	<p>The Children of Ammon or Ammonites are the descendants of Benammi, one of the sons of Lot. The brothers, Moab and Benammi, were conceived shortly after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Whereas the Moabites remained in the general area surrounding Sodom, the Ammonites settled in the hills quite a distance northeast of where Sodom was located; the area now known as Amman.</p> <p>The Land of the Ammonites was important in the time of Moses because the Lord specifically warned Moses to turn away from the land of the Children of Ammon and proceed westward toward the Jordan River. Several reasons for this avoidance of the Ammonites are given including the following: It is a land given to the descendants of Lot as an inheritance (thus confirming that descendants of tribes other than the Israelites were able to enjoy inheritances from the Lord); there are reported to be giants living in the land; the people are great, many, and tall (perhaps the same reference as the giants); and the borders of the Ammonites were strong. The steep, hilly nature of Amman suggests that it would be a city that is easily defended. Also, rock towers, still in existence around modern Amman, suggest a sophisticated warning system for the city.</p> <p>The Ammonites were idol worshippers and influenced the Israelites' tendencies to depart from the ways of God. The Ammonites were often enemies of the Israelites, especially against the tribes of the eastern side of the Jordan River. In one important war between the Ammonites and the Gileadites,</p>

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	<p>the Gileadites were led by Jephthah who had initially been shunned by the Gileadites because he was the son of a harlot. However, when the Ammonites massed their army to attack the Gileadites, the elders of Gilead sought him out and pled for his return. He consented and then immediately contacted the Ammonite ruler and asked why the Ammonites were making war. The Ammonite ruler stated that, generations previously, when Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, some Ammonite territory was taken in the conquest of the eastern bank. Jephthah repudiated this account and stated emphatically, probably citing the written record, that Moses was specifically forbidden by the Lord to attack or in any way interfere with the Ammonites. The Mosaic conquest was strictly against the people of Heshbon and Bashan. Even though Jephthah's account was accurate, the traditions of the Ammonites (or, perhaps their desire for land) denied the story and a war was fought. Jephthah destroyed 20 principal cities of the Ammonites stretching from the Arnon River (which is actually far south of the traditional land of the Ammonites) to the vineyards of the plain. (These boundaries suggest that the Ammonites had conquered other nations and were a major power east of the Jordan River at this time.)</p> <p>Another war between the Ammonites and the Israelites was centered on Jabesh-Gilead in the time of King Saul. The Ammonites threatened Jabesh and when peace (surrender) was discussed, the Ammonites demanded total obedience from the people of Jabesh and the forfeiture of one eye from every man. The Jabeshites requested a week to consider these outrageous terms. During that week they contacted King Saul who assembled an army and marched to Jabesh where he defeated the Ammonites and gained the loyalty of the Jabeshites.</p> <p>During the time of King David there was another war between the Ammonites and the Israelites. The problem occurred when the Ammonite king died, and his son came to the throne. King David, seeking to continue friendly relationships because of the kindnesses shown by the old king, sent men with messages of consolation to the new king. However, the princes of Ammon convinced the new king that the messengers were really spies and the new king humiliated the messengers by shaving half of their beards and cutting away half of their clothes, exposing their buttocks and sending them away in shame. They returned to David who angrily assembled an army against the Ammonites. To fortify their army, the Ammonites enlisted Syrian mercenaries. When the Israelite general, Joab, saw the Syrians on the battlefield alongside of the Ammonites, Joab divided his army into two portions—the stronger part he confronted the Syrians and the rest against the Ammonites. When the Syrians saw the formidable force against them, the Syrians broke ranks and ran. This discouraged the Ammonites who also retreated quickly into their city. Not too long after their flight, the Syrians regrouped and attacked Israelite territory. At this, David took control of the Israelite army himself and directed the Israelite victory over the Syrians. David then returned to Jerusalem and sent Joab to wage a siege against the city of the Ammonites, Rabbah (modern Amman). This is the time when David saw and then slept with Bathsheba. When he discovered that she was pregnant, David recalled her husband, Uriah, from the Ammonite siege and tried to convince him to go to Bathsheba. But Uriah would not do it and, therefore, David sent Uriah back to Amman and gave instructions to Joab to put Uriah at the hottest part of the battle and then withdraw the troops around him, thus exposing Uriah to the attack by the Ammonites. Uriah was killed.</p> <p>The land of the Ammonites again became important in David's life during the uprising caused by his son, Absalom. David learned of Absalom's plot and fled to the eastern side of the Jordan River. While living in Gilead, David's army was supplied by merchants from Ammon.</p> <p>The prophets of Israel (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Zephaniah) sometimes used the Ammonites as a foil to convince the Israelites to repent. Sometimes the prophets cursed the Ammonites. Certainly, the relationship between the Ammonites and the Israelites was complex. The Ammonites were both friends and foes during the time of the divided kingdom. Sometimes the Ammonites and Israelites were controlled by the same foreign nation, like the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. Both were conquered by Alexander, and, under the Greeks and the Romans, the Ammonites flourished. Rabbah became one of the Decapolis cities and its name was changed to Philadelphia. At other times the Ammonites and the Israelites were independent enough to act for themselves and, usually, they did not agree. An example was the conspiracy that the Ammonites entered into with other non-Israelites to halt the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem during the time of Nehemiah.</p> <p>The Romans were especially interested in making Philadelphia a major center for trade and control. The Romans constructed new roads (the <i>Via Nova Traiana</i> among them) and other major</p>

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	<p>public works such as the amphitheater (seating about 8000) and the temple of Hercules on the hill overlooking the valley where the main city was located. All that remains of the statue of Hercules are a shoulder and a hand, but from their dimensions the size of the statue can be estimated, and it was immense. Stairs descended from the temple mount to the city, terminating in a beautiful gate. Baths and fountains were also part of the Roman contributions to the city.</p> <p>Amman became a major Christian area from the early years of the church. (Jordanian Christians proudly think of themselves as descended from the first Christians, and there is good reason to accept their claim.) However, during the Christian persecution of the Emperor Diocletian about 300 AD, the city became a major location for martyrs and historians mention many of them by name. Later, when Constantine became emperor and allowed Christianity to flourish, Amman again became a major Christian center. Ruins of Byzantine churches and graves can be found in the old city sector and in several outlying suburbs, some discovered as recently as 1976 when a man discovered a church as he was digging the foundation for his house.</p> <p>Major earthquakes in the Byzantine period reduced Amman to just a village and it remained quite small until the Ottomans built the Hijaz railroad to facilitate trade and journeys to Mecca for hajj pilgrims. In 1921 the newly installed king of Jordan moved his residence, and the capital city of Transjordan, from Salt to Amman. This move brought government ministries and the accompanying people. Then, beginning in 1948 waves of refugees converged on Jordan, especially Amman, where jobs were available. Today Amman is a major metropolis of about 2 million inhabitants.</p>
<p>Qasr Amra</p>	<p>One of the group of desert castles, Qasr Amra was originally a much larger complex. All that remains now is a hunting and vacation retreat. It is known for the lovely frescos depicting local wildlife, women, and the zodiac. Another fresco depicts 6 kings of the period from the Middle East and Europe. A bathhouse shows the leisure that was part of life in the Umayyad period when the retreat was built. This castle is only about an hour drive east of Amman.</p>
<p>Qasr Al-Azraq</p>	<p>This desert castle is quite large and remains largely intact. It is located in the town of Azraq, about 1.5 hours east of Amman near the Azraq game preserve located as part of an oasis and wetlands area. It was previously known as an important stopping place for migratory birds, but many of the birds now pass it by as the wetlands have shrunk dramatically due to water use by other areas in Jordan.</p> <p>Although the site was originally built by the Romans or, perhaps, by the Nabateans, the current structure is mostly from the 13th century. The structure is a square with high, thick walls and towers at the corners that is clearly defensive. The entry door is a single massive granite slab that is mounted so well that it is still easily rotated. Of interest is the Roman game that is carved in the inner courtyard.</p> <p>During the Ottoman period the site was a military outpost and then, during WWI, Lawrence of Arabia used the castle as his headquarters during the campaign to capture Jordan from the Ottoman Turks during the Great Arab Revolt.</p>
<p>Qasr Al-Mushatta</p>	<p>This desert castle is about 30 minutes south of Amman. Major portions of the castle still remain at the original site, but the lovely façade has been moved to the Pergamum Museum in Berlin. The ruins in Jordan consist of an outer wall with 25 towers and interior rooms, including a mosque. Residential areas attest to the presence of a royal party as one room is a throne room and others are apartments with sophisticated architecture and air flow methods for cooling. The castle was likely built during the Umayyad period.</p>
<p>Tell Mar Elyas (south), Brook Kerith, Chereth /Wadi Al-Kharrar, Elijah's Hill, Tell al-Kharrar</p>	<p>Two locations have been identified by scholars and by tradition as the brook where Elijah was fed by ravens as he retreated from the wrath of King Ahab. One of those locations is in Gilead, not far from Tishbe, the town where Elijah was born. A mountain near that site has traditionally been called "Tell Mar Elyas," the Mountain of the Prophet Elijah. (See previous description.)</p> <p>The other location is in the southern part of the Jordan River Valley, a few miles north of the Dead Sea. This location also has both logic and tradition behind it and, just as in Gilead, there is a hill identified as Tell Mar Elyas. The logic for the southern site is that this hill is traditionally where Elijah ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire. The admonition of Elijah to Elisha to stay in Jericho and Elisha's refusal to do so supports the location of the hill of Elijah's ascension in the south as Jericho is just across the river from the southern hill. Also, the southern site is very near the place where Joshua crossed the Jordan River leading the Children of Israel and is near the baptism site of Jesus. In all three instances, the person of focus is passing into a higher or more desired state. Hence, great religious significance is attached to the southern site. Therefore, locating the Brook Chereth at the southern site is reasonable, traditional, and spiritual.</p>

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	<p>The linkage between Elijah and John the Baptist at this site is also a strong spiritual indication that the southern location has special importance. Some suggest that the cave wherein Elijah dwelt is the same cave that John the Baptist lived in and that the brook that is today known as the Brook of John the Baptist may have been the Brook Chereth. The New Testament links John the Baptist with Elijah and, therefore, further adds to this possibility.</p>
<p>Bethany beyond Jordan/al-Mightas</p>	<p>Several claims have been made identifying the location of the baptism site of Jesus, known scripturally as Bethany Beyond Jordan. However, recent archeological and historical studies have confirmed that the site long suggested by local traditions in Jordan is the correct site and the government of Jordan has created a park to protect the site and regulate the traffic. It is located at the mouth of the Wadi al-Kharrar where the stream (called Brook Kerith) flows from the Spring of John the Baptist and empties into the Jordan River. The <i>wadi</i> (gully or canyon) slopes gently from east to west and is about 40 feet lower than the surrounding plain of the Jordan River Valley and varies in width from about 40 feet to over 400 feet. Overall, the <i>wadi</i> is about 4500 yards long and is filled with tamarisk trees so dense that that the area has been called the "Jungle of the Jordan." A bare hill rises in the middle of the <i>wadi</i>, surrounded at its base by the tamarisk, and located about 1500 yards east of the river. This hill is called Tell Mar Elyas (described above). Driving west along the access road of the park, one sees just the top of the hill and the tops of the tamarisk trees until the road turns northward and drops into the wadi itself. Here is a place for buses to park and where the trail through the tamarisk begins. The winding trail follows the streamlet, sloping westward toward the river.</p> <p>After walking along the narrow path through the tamarisk for about 1000 yards, the visitor encounters a dry riverbed running north and south and, along its eastern side, a clearing and a pool of water. Inside the pool area are four foundation pillars and, leading down to the pool from a nearby raised slope are steps that lead to the ruins of two churches. The dry riverbed was the original bed of the Jordan River that was left dry when an earthquake in the 8th century diverted the main flow path of the river about 150 yards to the west where it currently flows. The pool is the place where the streamlet entered the river in ancient times and is the exact spot where the baptism of Jesus occurred. The entry of the streamlet provided this quiescent pool that was much better for baptisms than would the main flow of a large and fast-moving river as was the Jordan in Christ's time. The churches built on or near the pool date from the early Christian period, a prayer hall there may be from the 2nd century. Records of pilgrims from these early times verify that this is the place that ancient Christians came to worship and remember the baptism of Christ. Hermit caves in the nearby hill (Tell Mar Elyas) also testify that this was the location of the baptism.</p> <p>Returning to the pathway through the tamarisk, the visitor travels about 200 yards and encounters the present-day Jordan River. An Orthodox church stands about 30 feet from the water's edge and a wooden pavilion covers steps down to the water. There are provisions for changing clothes and many people come to this site to perform baptisms. The Jordan River at this point is a lazy, silt-laden stream about 20 feet wide and only 6 feet deep. An Israeli pavilion is directly opposite the Jordanian site and many people can be seen on that side also viewing the site and performing baptism. However, the actual site is to the east as described above. A Catholic church is located about 50 yards south along the river.</p> <p>The scriptural account of Christ's baptism fits well with the location just described. The Gospel of John describes John the Baptist preaching in the Judean (southern) wilderness beyond Jordan (that is, on the east side north of the Dead Sea) and Jesus coming there to be baptized of him. The other gospels do not specify that the baptism occurred beyond Jordan, but their accounts are consistent with John's. Note also that John the Baptist is asked whether he is Elyas, perhaps a reference to the location of the baptism being also where Elyas (Elijah) ascended to heaven and, therefore, easily brought to mind. The gospel of John also indicates that Jesus and his disciples stayed at the baptism site (Bethany beyond Jordan) for some time and baptized there whereas John the Baptist left and went to the north (Brook Cherith) to baptize the people from the Galilee. The gospel also indicates that Jesus and his disciples baptized more people than John did. However the gospel later clarifies that Jesus himself did not do the baptizing, rather, it was the disciples.</p>

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<p>Bethabara/Israelite crossing</p>	<p>Just a few hundred yards from the baptism site is the place where Joshua and the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River. The crossing is opposite Jericho. The 5th century mosaic map of the Holy Land (located in the city of Madaba, Jordan) puts the crossing site at the same location as Bethany Beyond Jordan and the Bible also refers to the baptism site as Bethabara, where the crossing occurred. Hence, the same site was used for crossing to a promised land (Israelites) and crossing into the kingdom of God (Jesus).</p> <p>Another crossing occurred east of Jericho—the crossing of Elijah and Elisha. Tradition and the location of Tell Mar Elyas (see above) suggest that this crossing was also at Bethabara.</p> <p>When the Israelites were allowed to return to Jerusalem by Cyrus the Great, following the Babylonian captivity, they crossed at the same place as they did under Joshua, again reflecting the concept of entering the promised land.</p>
<p>Plains of Moab, Abila, Shittim (also called Abel-shittim) and near Beth-peor, Beth-jesimoth/ Abil-ez-Zeit, Al Kafrayn</p>	<p>When Moses and the Children of Israel had defeated the Amorites at Heshbon (see below), they moved northwestward into the Jordan River Valley and camped on the eastern side of the valley in an area of flat, fertile land (called the Plains of Moab) at a place called Shittim. The location is known approximately as the present-day village of Al Kafrayn (near Abil-ez-Zeit) and lies on the plain opposite the city of Jericho. From here Moses took a group of warriors northward and conquered the land up to, approximately, the present-day border of Jordan (including the land of King Og of Bashan) and eastward to the edge of the desert. These conquered lands were assigned to Reuben, Gad, and part of Manasseh. It was in this location (Plains of Moab) that Moses ordained Joshua and turned control of the people over to him. Moses left here to ascend Mount Nebo and it is in the Plains of Moab that the people mourned for Moses 30 days.</p> <p>This place was already occupied or was near a village of the Moabites called Baal-peor or Beth-peor. The men of Israel mingled with the women of Moab and began to worship the Moabite gods. The anger of the Lord was manifested to Moses, and he ordered that all the men who were fraternizing with the people of Baal-peor be killed. Since the worship involved sexual sin, the event is mentioned by Paul in the New Testament as a reminder to the early Christians.</p>
<p>Beth-nimra, Tel Nimrin/Shuneh Janoubiah</p>	<p>These are cities mentioned in describing the territory of the tribe of Gad and lying in the plain of the Jordan River. South Shuneh is the modern Dead Sea resorts. Byzantine church ruins were found in the area with beautiful mosaics and some clay pieces that allow the church to be dated to the 6th to 8th centuries.</p>
<p>Abel-keramim/Tell al-Umayri, near Naur</p>	<p>This iron age site was heavily fortified and is located near the boundary of the Ammonites in the mountains to the east of the Jordan River Valley. Modern excavations show evidence of household shrines, typical of the religion of the Ammonites.</p>
<p>Amorites</p>	<p>This iron age tribal kingdom of people descended from Canaan was located north of Moab and to the west of the Ammonites. It extended north along the Jordan River valley until it met the kingdom of Bashan in southern Syria (who may have also been Amorites). At times, the Amorites also had control of territory on the west side of the Jordan River, and possibly further north into Mesopotamia.</p> <p>In the last year of the exodus, Moses was told to move the Israelites northward through the desert on the east of the lands of Edom and Moab. When the Israelites reached the southern boundary of the Children of Ammon (modern-day Amman), Moses was instructed to turn to the west and proceed toward the Jordan River. Moses sent a message to Sihon, king of the Amorites who lived in the path the Lord told Moses to take, asking permission to pass through his kingdom. Sihon refused the request and Moses was told to engage the Amorites in battle. The Israelites were successful and marched through Amorite territory to Shittim, in the Jordan River Valley, taking possession of the Amorite territory.</p> <p>In the days of the united kingdom, Solomon subjected all the remaining Amorites to slavery, thus ending their existence as a separate people.</p>
<p>Heshbon, Asboos/Hesbun</p>	<p>The capital of King Sihon of the Amorites was Heshbon, located on a large hill southwest of Amman about 10 miles. The battle in which the Israelites conquered the Amorites was fought close to this city and the Israelites took possession of Hesbon and the villages around it. It became, therefore, a symbol for the conquest of Israel over the tribes that opposed them.</p> <p>When the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, conquered the cities of Jordan on his way to Jerusalem, Heshbon was not spared. The city was overrun, and the population killed and scattered. This defeat of Heshbon was lamented by the prophet Isaiah as he compared the destruction of Heshbon to the destruction that would await Jerusalem.</p>

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	<p>Josephus mentions that Heshbon was an important city during the time of the Maccabees and King Herod built a fort there. It continued to be important during the Roman and Byzantine periods and continued as a military site well into the Muslim period. The early church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, called it Heshbon Asboos and noted that it was a "great city." The bishop of Heshbon was one of those who attended the Council of Nicaea in the 4th century.</p> <p>Amidst the Roman and pre-Roman ruins are Byzantine churches and Muslim forts. Clearly Heshbon was important throughout many civilizations of the Middle East. Modern excavations at the site have identified 10 different civilization layers. The large hill that represents the central location of the city has been well marked with informative plaques describing the buildings on the site and speculating on the life of the people who lived there. In the St. Stephen's church mosaic in Umm ar Rasas (see below), Heshbon is called Asponta.</p>
<p>Mt. Nebo, Mount Pisgah/Siyagha/Abarim Mountains</p>	<p>Mount Nebo is well known as the place where Moses looked into the promised land. Viewed from the Plains of Moab, where the Israelites were encamped, Nebo is a peak that overlooks the Dead Sea and the Jordan River Valley. Viewed from the east side, however, Nebo is seen as a moderate prominence on the Moab Plateau, not much higher than the surrounding land. These contrasting views are best understood by considering that the Jordan River valley, housing the Dead Sea, is near the lowest point on the surface of the earth and, therefore, any escarpment overlooking it seems very high. Indeed, the road from Nebo to the floor of the valley is extremely steep and winding. Nebo was also important as a holy mountain in the times of Jeremiah. As reported in 2 Maccabees, Jeremiah was warned of the impending capture of Jerusalem and took the ark of the covenant to the eastern side of the river 'till he came to the mountain where he went up and saw the inheritance of God. Jeremiah then found a cave wherein he hid the ark and the other holy items he rescued from the temple.</p> <p>A monastery was built on the site of Mt. Nebo in Byzantine times and, although it was repeatedly destroyed by earthquakes in 551, 1016, and 1033, it was rebuilt each time. In 1932 the church at the site became the property of Franciscan monks.</p> <p>The modern site has an overlook at the western edge and a church behind it. Also at the site is a museum and several monuments to visits made by religious dignitaries. Immediately behind the lookout is a sculpture consisting of a metal staff (representing the rod of Moses) around which serpents are entwined and then extending outward at the top to form a cross. This is a symbol of Moses and the fiery serpents (related to Christ) and has become emblematic of Mt. Nebo.</p>
<p>Temptations of Christ/Wadi al-Afreet, Al Mukhayyat</p>	<p>To the immediate south of Mt. Nebo is a very desolate valley that locals call the Wadi al-Afreet or Valley of the Devil. The scriptures relate that after his baptism, Jesus went immediately into the wilderness and there he fasted for 40 days. He was then tempted by the devil. Local tradition suggests that this valley is the place of fasting and temptation. The reasoning is appropriate because of the proximity of the valley to the baptism site (only a few miles away) and the barrenness of the area.</p> <p>A town at the top of the valley is called Al Mukhayyat and could be the ancient city of Nebo that is referred to in the Bible. The ancient city seems to have been prosperous as gauged by the number of churches, wine and oil presses, and other buildings in the area. The mosaics in several of the churches are quite noteworthy.</p>
<p>Medaba/Madaba</p>	<p>Madaba is a medium-sized city about 20 miles southwest of Amman. It is mentioned several times in the Old Testament and usually is associated with the land of Moab. After the allocation of the conquered land to the 12 tribes, Madaba was in the area assigned to Reuben. During the time of King David, the area around Madaba became part of the expanded Kingdom of the Ammonites and a great battle was fought at Madaba between David's army and the Ammonites. Interestingly, the account of the war indicates that the armies were in the "field," a normal description of any place of battle, but since Madaba is a relatively flat plateau that is noted for its rich farmland, "field" could also be descriptive of the agricultural place where the battle was fought.</p> <p>As the gateway to Nebo, Madaba is often associated with Nebo and with other towns in northern Moab. Some have speculated that it might be the home of Ruth and a local church has a well under the nave that is called the well of Ruth, but there is no ancient evidence of this. However, Madaba continued to be important in the Maccabean period and then into Roman times. Ruins in Madaba show remnants of the <i>Via Nova Traiana</i>, the Roman road built in the 2nd century AD. A fine 1st century Roman house has been unearthed near the road. The house has a lovely mosaic floor, a common feature of Roman houses of that time. Among the mosaics in the Roman house is a famous depiction of a tree of life. This tree has fruit hanging below its branches in contrast to a similar tree of life mosaic found in ancient Jericho ruins that has animals (some killing each other) below the tree.</p>

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	<p>These depictions are readily seen at the souvenir shops on the road to Nebo and in downtown Madaba.</p> <p>The history of Madaba is unique. Madaba continued to be important into the Byzantine era as evidenced by the many churches in the area. Most of the churches featured beautiful mosaic floors, a custom continued from the Roman homes in the area. One especially well known mosaic is a map of the Holy Land showing many of the cities and other geographical features. The Jordan River is at the center of the map and both Bethabara and Bethany Beyond Jordan are identified. At that site a fish in the Jordan River, swimming south, encounters another fish swimming north from the Dead Sea, thus indicating that the Dead Sea does not support fish life. Jerusalem is clearly seen in the map and many of the biblical sites in Jordan can be identified.</p> <p>To the surprise of visitors, the church housing the map mosaic and most of the other churches in the city were built in the 19th century. Why are the churches not ancient? The answer is because Madaba was largely abandoned in the 8th century when an earthquake destroyed much of the city. Only scattered farmers and shepherds remained for about 1000 years. Then, in the mid-19th century, the Christian patriarch in Jerusalem wrote to the governmental overlord of the area (it was part of the Ottoman Empire) and said that two Christian tribes in the town of Kerak (south of Madaba about 50 miles) were at war and the patriarch asked if one of the tribes could be given a place of refuge so that both tribes could be preserved. The Ottoman authority agreed to allow one tribe to move to Madaba and, therefore, the city was re-inhabited. When the people began digging in the rubble, they found the mosaics (many of them, like the map, had been severely damaged) but still churches were built over these works of art, and they are available now for visitors to see. Madaba is known as a city of mosaics.</p>
Qasr Al-Kharana	<p>This desert castle is relatively close to Amman and is an enjoyable half-day trip south from the capital. It was probably not used as a caravanserai as there is not a nearby water source, nor was it used as a military fort since the windows don't fit the model for arrow-slits. However, the architecture follows the Syrian style of the Umayyad period and the windows provide a nice cooling system (using the Venturi effect).</p>
Mephaath/Kastrom Mefa'a, Umm ar Rasas	<p>Mephaath was an ancient city of Moab mentioned along with others cities within the inheritance of Reuben. It was designated as a Levite city. The similarity in names, general location, and historical traditions link this city to Kastrom Mefa'a (better known as Umm ar Rasas), designated as a World Heritage Site because of the magnificent ruins that are found there.</p> <p>The ruins at Umm ar Rasas are extensive and unique in many ways but have only been marginally explored with little excavation beneath the obvious surface buildings. There is evidence of Roman, Byzantine and Muslim occupation. The Byzantine is especially important because of the mosaic floors of several churches. One has lovely lion figures and is currently unprotected so the site management has covered the floor with plastic and then spread sand on top. Those wishing to see the lions must know where to look, uncover the mosaics, and then recover them when finished.</p> <p>Another especially impressive mosaic is in the ruins of St. Stephen's church, built in the 8th century. It is the largest mosaic in Jordan and is justly housed inside a covered pavilion. The mosaic, showing animal and human figures, has a border depicting cities (with their names) on the eastern and western sides of the Jordan River—Hesbon (Esbounta), Madaba, Amman (Philadelphia), Kerak (Charak Mosba), Belemounta (Ma'in) on the east and Jerusalem, Gaza, Nablus and Caesarea among those on the west. Six mosaic masters signed the work, suggesting the importance of this site when it was built.</p> <p>Many of the human faces and some animal faces on the mosaics have been obliterated. This is clearly the work of the iconoclasts of the 9th century. During that time the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople became troubled by the commandment to not worship any graven images. In his opinion, the icons of the Orthodox Church and the Statues of the Catholic Church were violations of this commandment. He then ordered that the icons and statues be destroyed and that the faces of humans and some animals on the mosaics be destroyed. Many priests and lay members throughout the empire accepted his order and a rampage of destruction occurred. However, the pope in Rome did not agree and effectively stopped any destruction in the area under his control (essentially Europe). Angry letters were exchanged between the emperor and the pope. The emperor reminded the pope that, since the days of Constantine, the emperor was the ultimate head of the church (both the Roman division and the Orthodox division) and had the power to appoint (later, to approve) the person to be the pope. The pope pointed out that the emperor was many miles away from Rome and did not know or understand the special circumstances of the European church. Since the emperor had no means to enforce his mandate, the pope was able to ignore the command to destroy the figures. Then, to further weaken the</p>

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	<p>control of the Byzantine emperor over the Catholic Church, the pope invited a European monarch who had demonstrated great loyalty to the Roman pontiff, to become a rival Roman Emperor, thus effectively cutting off any residual power that the Byzantine emperor might have in Western Europe. The king chosen for this honor was Charlemagne, king of the Franks. Because the pope crowned him, the title given to Charlemagne was Holy Roman Emperor. The coronation date was Christmas Day, 800 AD. This step was a major factor in the separation of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, although formal separation would not occur for another 200 years.</p> <p>Within a mile of the ruins at Umm ar Rasas stands a tower with some ruins around its base. The ruins have been identified as a church and living quarters for pilgrims. The tower is one of the type called Stylite Towers or towers where someone dwells. In the early Christian church ascetic monks would occasionally want to demonstrate their piety and to seek further grace by subjecting themselves to physical hardship. One type of hardship that became popular was to live for extensive periods on the top of a tower. Sometimes the monk on the tower would also perform difficult physical feats such as standing for long periods—one did so for 53 years (but, I assume, not continuously) or standing on one foot or lying only on one side. Pilgrims would come to the site as a method of believing that they could gain some of the good will generated by the stylite monk. The tower was used as the identifying landmark for Umm ar Rasas in the mosaic in the nearby St. Stephen's church in the ruins of the Umm ar Rasas city.</p>
<p>Almon-diblathaim, Diblath</p>	<p>This is a stopping place during the last year of the exodus. It must lie near to and probably north of Dhiban since it follows Dhiban as a camping site during the northward trek of the Israelites through Jordan. Scholars believe it is located in the desert area northeast of Dibon and southeast of Madaba, probably near and, perhaps, at the site of Um ar Rasas.</p>
<p>Sea of the Arabah, Vale of Siddim, Salt Sea/Dead Sea</p>	<p>The Dead Sea is a large body of water that forms much of the western border of south-central Jordan. It extends northward to a point just south of Mount Nebo and extends southward to the ancient city of Zoar. The Madaba Plateau overlooks the Dead Sea along the northern part of its eastern shoreline making ancient passage very difficult because of the height of the cliffs that descended directly into the water. The cliffs along the southern shoreline are receded from the shore and, therefore, a fertile and highly productive agricultural area exists that extends for several miles to the south until it meets a sandy desert. This area owes some of its high agricultural output to the natural greenhouse effect caused by the high temperatures and dense air. The southern end of the Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth.</p> <p>Because there is no outlet for the water, evaporation leaves a high salt residue, and the water becomes very salty. No animal life exists in the Dead Sea, and this is depicted humorously in the famous mosaic map in St. George's church in Madaba where it shows fish in the Jordan River swimming south only to meet fish swimming north, away from the Dead Sea.</p>
<p>Beth-Baal-Meon, Blimota/Ma'in and Zara</p>	<p>This location is a city of the Madaba plateau that was part of the inheritance of Reuben but has a special significance because it is associated with a water god. Such association is logical because Ma'in was built around a hot water spring. It is one of the cities identified in the mosaic in St. Stephen's church in Umm ar Rasas and in that mosaic the city is called Blimota.</p> <p>Famous in Roman times, today it is a spa resort where people go to enjoy the warm water and the pleasant surroundings with usually warm weather. The site overlooks the Dead Sea. A nice museum (The Museum of the Dead Sea) has been built only a few miles from Ma'in. This museum is located on a panoramic spot and is a pleasant place to relax, learn of the Dead Sea, and have lunch at the restaurant.</p>
<p>Machaerus/Mukawir</p>	<p>The scriptures relate that while John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness (on the east side of the Jordan River) he angered Herodias, the wife of King Herod, because he condemned their marriage as illegal. (Herodias was the widow of King Herod's brother and Jewish law forbade such a marriage). The king would have killed John immediately, but he feared the wrath of the people. Therefore, he incarcerated John in a nearby mountaintop palace called Machaerus. Later, King Herod went to Machaerus to celebrate his birthday. Herod's stepdaughter, Salome, danced for him and, because of the skill of her dance, he promised to grant her wish, even to half his kingdom. At the urging of her mother, Herodias, and probably because John the Baptist was on her mind (he being jailed in the same fortress location), Herodias suggested that Salome ask for the head of John on a charger (platter). King Herod was loathe to kill John, but he felt that his promise must be kept. Therefore, John was beheaded, and the head was presented to Salome as she wished.</p> <p>There are several of these pleasure palaces-fortresses throughout the Holy Land that were</p>

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	<p>built or enlarged by King Herod's father, Herod the Great. A very famous one is Masada, on the west shore of the Dead Sea, nearly opposite the place where John was beheaded. Since John was preaching on the east side of the river, it would have been logical and convenient for him to be taken to the pleasure palace on the east side—Machaerus.</p> <p>Machaerus is about 30 miles south of Amman between the King's Highway and the Dead Sea near a small village named Mukawir. The palace is atop a large, isolated plateau overlooking and not far from the shore of the Dead Sea. The top of the plateau is reached by walking along a steep gravel pathway that winds along the western face of the plateau. The ruins on top have not been improved but are impressive, nonetheless. The cistern is large, the rooms indicate that many people could be accommodated, and the overall impression is one of solemnity, probably because of the events that occurred there.</p> <p>During the time of the Jewish revolt in 66-70 AD, Zealots fled to many of these pleasure palaces. The Roman army pursued them and laid siege to each palace-fortress. At Masada, on the western side of the Dead Sea, the Romans built a dirt ramp leading up to the summit and thereby gained access to the top, only to discover that the Zealots had committed suicide. At Machaerus the Romans built a similar ramp but the Zealots surrendered. The rebels were allowed to leave but their fortress was torn down. Hence, the poor state of preservation of the current site.</p>
<p>Dibon Gad/Dhiban</p>	<p>This very old city (early Bronze Age) sits between two canyons (<i>wadis</i>) on the King's Highway and, therefore, is a natural site for a trading center. The antiquity of the site is confirmed with archeological evidence and, perhaps, through Egyptian records where a town named TPN or TBN (Semitic language root consonants) is recorded. Of particular interest to scholars is the Mesha Stele, a stone monument with an inscription telling how the god of Moab, where Dhiban is located, was angry with his people and allowed them to be subjugated to the Israelites but then returned to the people and allowed them to cast off the Israelite yoke. The stele was erected by King Mesha of the Moabites who reigned about 840 B.C., and it further describes some of the projects that King Mesha accomplished, including his complex system of wells and a large pool to guarantee the water supply of the city. Biblical scholars are delighted with the stele because it is the longest Iron Age inscription ever found in the region, gives insights into the Moabite language, and confirms a Biblical event described in 2 Kings 3:4-8. The stele is the earliest non-Biblical reference to the Hebrew God, Jehovah (Yahweh), and also references the Kingdom of David. Sadly, the stele was broken in a dispute between local tribes over ownership. However, a paper mâché duplicate was made and most of the original broken pieces have been recovered. The duplicate and the broken pieces are in the Louvre.</p> <p>Dhiban was a stopping point on the Israelite trek during the last exodus year, was part of the assignment to Reuben, and remained a modest trading city throughout the Persian and Greek periods later gaining in population and significance under Nabatean and, later, Roman rule.</p>
<p>Aroer/Arzair</p>	<p>This city, on the edge of the plateau looking into the ravine of the Arnon River, was the southernmost town of the Israelite inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan River. It was part of the ancient kingdom of Moab but, at the time of Moses, seems to have been part of the Amorite kingdom of King Sihon. Later it was part of the kingdom that reverted to King Mesha and, as is clear from writings about Moab during the time of King David and later as described by Jeremiah, it was securely part of the Moabite territory.</p>
<p>Arnon River/Wadi Mujib</p>	<p>The Arnon River flows through a deep gorge, today known as Wadi Mujib, and is a major river flowing into the Dead Sea. It was a natural boundary and, during the time of the exodus, the Arnon River was the border between the lands of the Moabites and the Amorites. It became the southern boundary of the land given to Reuben although the Moabites seemed to have possession of several towns north of the Arnon River throughout the Old Testament period.</p> <p>Wadi Mujib is an important regional wildlife preserve. It is especially well known for the many bird varieties sighted therein.</p>
<p>Moab</p>	<p>The ancient Kingdom of Moab lies along much of the eastern shore of the Dead Sea and extends eastward for a considerable distance into the desert east of the King's Highway. For much of the biblical period, the capital of Moab was Dibon, but other cities have occasionally been the capital.</p> <p>Moab is named after one of the sons of Lot who was conceived after the destruction of Sodom. Therefore, the people of Moab trace their ancestry back to Lot and to Abraham's family. When Moses moved northward in the last year of the exodus, he asked the king of Moab to grant the Israelites passage and the king refused, thus forcing the Israelites to travel through the eastern desert. After conquering the Amorites and the people of Bashan, the Israelites camped in the Plains of Moab</p>

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	<p>near the place where Joshua would eventually cross the Jordan River. This encampment made the king of Moab very nervous, and he sought to have a curse placed on the Israelites so that God would take the Moabites' side in any warfare. The king sent word to Balaam, a prophet, to come and perform the cursing. However, in the night, the Lord spoke to Balaam and told him to refuse to curse the Israelites, so the messengers returned to the Moabite king. The king was still fearful and sent princes to Balaam to plead for him to curse Israel, promising Balaam great rewards. Balaam then went with the princes toward Moab but on the way an angel of the Lord blocked the pathway. The angel was seen only by Balaam's ass that turned immediately into the field to avoid the angel. Balaam beat the ass, forcing it to return to the path. Two other times the angel blocked the path at narrow places and the ass moved aside on one occasion crushing Balaam's foot. Balaam continued to beat the ass until, mercifully, the Lord allowed the ass to speak, and the situation was revealed to Balaam. After arriving at the Moabite capital, the king asked Balaam again to curse Israel. Numerous sacrifices were offered on several occasions but instead of cursing Israel, Balaam was told to bless them, and he did. Eventually, the king of the Moabites understood that Balaam would only follow the word of the Lord and Balaam returned to his home.</p> <p>Presumably the Israelites would have been true in their worship, but even as they waited at Shittim, many took up with Moabite women and entered into worship ceremonies to the Moabite god. These men were destroyed. The lure of Moabite gods and their worship ceremonies was a constant temptation to the Israelites. The interactions of the Israelites with these near neighbors were difficult throughout the period of Joshua and the Judges. Wars were raged and both sides had opportunities for victory. These wars give the story of Naomi and Ruth even more meaning. Because of a famine in Israel, Naomi's family, husband and two sons, went to Moab where the sons married Moabite women. Eventually the husbands and sons died, leaving Naomi and the two daughters-in-law to survive on their own. Naomi decided to return to her home in Bethlehem and suggested that the daughters-in-law return to their homes. One did but the other, Ruth, refused to leave Naomi. Therefore, the two women went to Bethlehem where, eventually, Ruth married a leading man in the city and bore children, one of whom was the grandfather of King David and forefather of Jesus.</p>
<p>Rubat Moab, Areopolis/Rabba</p>	<p>Even in a land of great Christian devotion from the early days of the Christian church, some places seem to have resisted the conversion to Christianity and Rubat Moab (Rabba) in central Moab was one of these. A 4th century historian relates that the Roman emperor, Theodosius I, who ruled in the 4th century, issued an edict against the people of Rabba because they fought Christianity. (Theodosius was attempting to make Christianity the official and exclusive religion of the Roman Empire.) Then, a century later, the city seems to have accepted Christianity and many large churches were built, the ruins of which are still easily identified.</p>
<p>Kir-moab, Qer Harreseth, Mizpah- moab/Kerak</p>	<p>Because it sits astride the King's Highway and contains a massive hill with three steep sides, thus forming a natural defensive position, the town of Kerak has long been a fortress city. This ancient Moabite city is mentioned as a place where an Assyrian king sent captives to be held. The city became part of the Nabatean empire and then fell to the Romans as part of their conquest of the southern Jordanian deserts. Kerak remained an important city during the early Muslim period and then became the capital of the Crusader kingdom east of the Jordan River. The crusaders built the castle that dominates the city today. This castle withstood a year-long siege but eventually fell to Saladin's brother who then became the ruler of Kerak and its region. It remained important as a fortress guarding the pilgrimage route to Mecca.</p> <p>Biblical references to Kerak (Kir-moab or Qer Harreseth or Mizpah-moab) generally list it as a key city in Moab. Of particular interest is King David's request of the king of Moab to allow David's parents to flee there during the internal wars in Israel as David consolidated his kingdom.</p>
<p>Sodom/Bab edh- Dhra</p>	<p>Sodom is one of the most infamous of ancient cities and one of the oldest. Genesis identifies Sodom as a Canaanite city along with its sister city, Gomorrah and other cities in the Jordan plain. When Abraham's and Lot's servants argued because their flocks were mixing together, Abraham gave Lot a choice of places to live and Lot choose the well-watered and fertile plain surrounding Sodom. However, the prosperity of Sodom was a magnet for kings from the north and when these kings conquered Sodom, Lot was taken captive. Abraham heard of this tragedy and quickly responded by organizing an army, chasing the kings of the north, conquering them, and returning Lot to Sodom.</p> <p>Probably the most famous event concerning Sodom was its destruction. The story begins with holy men visiting Abraham and telling him that they were going to visit Sodom and, because of its wickedness, the city would be destroyed. Abraham successfully pled that Lot and his family be spared</p>

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	<p>from the destruction. When the holy men entered Sodom, they were invited to eat and stay with Lot. During that evening several men from the city came to Lot's house and demanded that the holy men be sent out so that the men of Sodom could know them sexually. Lot would not yield the men, but the men of Sodom persisted and pressed forward to force the situation. The holy men pulled Lot inside the house and then caused that the men outside the door become blind. The holy men then told Lot to gather all his family together and leave the city, without even looking back. Lot's sons-in-law refused to go. Lot's wife looked back and turned to a pillar of salt. However, Lot and his daughters escaped the destruction that came by fire from heaven. From that time onward Sodom and Gomorrah became symbols of evil and the destruction of the wicked. Other sins of Sodom cited (in Ezekiel) are pride, idleness, and ignoring of the needy amidst a life of plenty.</p> <p>The modern site of Bab edh-Dhra is accepted by many biblical scholars as the place where ancient Sodom was located. The tell at this site has bitumen and petroleum, along with sulfur and natural gas deposits suggesting that the ancient destruction could have been a description of the explosion that might have resulted from gas leaking out of an underground cavern that was ignited.</p>
<p>Gomorrah/Numeira</p>	<p>Gomorrah is a sister city to Sodom and suffered the same fate at the same time. The archeological site near the town of Numeira is accepted by many scholars are the site of Gomorrah.</p>
<p>Lot's Wife formation</p>	<p>At least two rock formations along the eastern shoreline of the Dead Sea have been called "Lot's Wife" because they have a resemblance to standing woman.</p>
<p>Zoar, Bela/Safi</p>	<p>Zoar, modern Safi, is a city at the southernmost tip of the Dead Sea. It is a fertile agricultural area with intensive farming on the plain extending south of the Dead Sea. This is the principal commercial city in the area.</p> <p>During the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot was told by the holy men to flee to the town of Zoar, which he did. Evidently Zoar was near enough to see the destruction (in fact, Abraham could see it from his location on the hills west of the Dead Sea) but was not so near that it was destroyed. However, within a short time Lot and his daughters sought protection in a cave above the city of Zoar.</p>
<p>Lot's Cave/Khirbet Al Mukhayyat, Ain Abata</p>	<p>Lot and his daughters went up into a cave in the mountains that formed the eastern border of Zoar. There they dwelt and it was there that the daughters became pregnant with sons who became the founders of the Moabites and the Ammonites. A Byzantine church was built next to the cave and, although in ruins, its existence lends some credibility to the choice of the cave's location as authentic.</p> <p>A nice museum (Museum at the Lowest Point on Earth) has been built on a small plateau below Lot's cave. It is a pleasant place to rest and gain some information about the Dead Sea and its history.</p> <p>A monastery built to remember Lot was built on the top of a nearby mountain and is called Ain Abata. Excavations have found water troughs and storage facilities and, of course, several churches that were used by the monks and pilgrims. There is also a cave at this location that is reputed to be the cave of Lot.</p>
<p>Plain of Jordan, Cities of the Valley</p>	<p>The cities of the Plain of Jordan comprise Sodom, Gomorrah, Zoar, Admah and Zeboiim (modern Bab Edh-Dhra, Numeira, Safi, Feifa, and Khanazir.). These cities were all wealthy and prosperous, thus attracting Lot as a place to live. They were all captured during the war of the 5 kings when Abraham went after Lot and rescued him. Modern-day cities in this area are agricultural but there are mining operations (both ancient and modern) and major projects extracting bromine and potash from the Dead Sea.</p>
<p>Desert Highway</p>	<p>When Moses led the children northward during the final year of the exodus, he asked to travel through Edom and was denied permission. He also asked to pass through Moab and was also denied. Therefore, although the path was not straight, the scriptures indicate that at least some of the route that the Israelites took was on the eastern side of Moab in the desert. Today it is called the Desert Highway.</p> <p>The road continued to be used, at least in part, through the Muslim period when it became a major road for pilgrims to Mecca. The Ottomans built the Hijaz Railroad to parallel this road and today it is the main highway between Amman and Aqaba.</p>
<p>Zered Valley/Wadi Hasa</p>	<p>This valley leads from the Moabite mountains into the southern end of the Dead Sea and has been the traditional boundary between Moab and Edom. Zoar sits where the valley widens into the Jordan Plain (Wadi Arabah) and the river running in the valley empties into the Dead Sea (at its southern end).</p>
<p>Lye-abarim</p>	<p>This exodus stopping point lies along the Zered Valley, the border of Moab. The site is on the</p>

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	<p>eastern (sun-rising) side of Moab. It may have been east of Zoar, near the southern end of the Dead Sea. The next stopping point to the north was Dibon.</p>
<p>Edom, Idumea</p>	<p>Edom was a kingdom situated south of Moab and extending from the Zered Valley south to the Gulf of Aqaba. Because Edom was largely south of the Dead Sea, the western boundary, at times, extended across the Jordan Valley Rift to the hills of Judea. The indeterminate eastern boundary was within the southern Jordanian desert and was determined by interactions with desert tribes. This area, known for its copper mines, was settled in the early Bronze Age. The numerous trade routes crossing the area such as the King's Highway and the frankincense route from southern Arabia, were a major source of wealth to the Edomites.</p> <p>The origin of the name is with Esau, the oldest son of Isaac and twin brother of Jacob. After selling his birthright for pottage and then having his blessing usurped by Jacob, Esau received a lesser blessing and then moved to the area known as Edom where his people replaced (or assimilated) a group known as the Horites. Esau took wives from among the Hittites (another tribe having Indo-European roots) who knew the secret of iron smelting and, therefore, may have come to Edom for the mines. Esau later took to wife one of the daughters of Ishmael, his uncle.</p> <p>When Jacob was returning from Syria with his wives and flocks, Esau heard of the return and travelled north (probably along the King's Highway) to meet Jacob. There was fear in Jacob's heart because the last time Jacob and Esau were together, Esau threatened to kill Jacob. Therefore, Jacob divided his wives and flocks and set aside a gift of many flocks for Esau. However, when Esau saw Jacob, Esau ran and embraced him, bestowing love and forgiveness upon Jacob. Esau initially refused the gift but Jacob pressed it upon him saying that if it was not for retribution, it was for love. Esau then accepted the gift, and returned to Seir (the major mountain in Edom and a marker for the area).</p> <p>When Moses and the Israelites had spent 39 years in the desert, they were commanded to leave their resting place and travel north. Moses asked permission of the King of Edom to pass along the King's Highway, through Edomite land. Even though Moses promised that the Israelites would not disturb the land or drink the water, the Edomite king refused passage. Therefore, the children of Israel were forced to take a round-about route to the east of Edom, buying with money meat and water from the Edomites, but specifically commanded not to meddle with them, for their land was given to the children of Esau as an inheritance from the Lord.</p> <p>Moses stipulated that the Israelites were to be cautious about the Edomites and the Egyptians, taking them into their congregations only after 3 generations. This stipulation probably kept the groups separate for many generations. During the times of the united Israelite kingdom, Edom was made a servant state but, later when the Israelites had weakened, Edom again became independent, only to come under the control of the Nabateans. During the Nabatean period Edom came to be a dominant area of the Middle East, controlling trade along the major routes and resisting invasions by the Persians and Greeks.</p> <p>During the Maccabean revolt, part of Edom, now called Idumea, fell to the Maccabeans and there was a forced conversion of the inhabitants to the Jewish faith. Although the Pharisees rejected the inclusion of the Idumeans into the Jewish community, there was intermarriage and, eventually, the house of Herod, who were Idumeans, became the rulers of both Idumea and Judea. The rise of the Herodians occurred because of their friendship with the Romans and, when the Romans conquered the Nabateans and the Jews, Herod was installed as king. During the Diaspora of the Jews, the term "Edom" became associated with "Rome", probably because of this connection through Herod and his descendants.</p>
<p>Atad, Abel-Misraim</p>	<p>After Jacob's death, which occurred in Egypt, he was embalmed in the Egyptian style and then, according to his wishes, he was transported by his children to his final burial site in Hebron. Genesis reports that when the immense company of people accompanying the body came to the threshing floor of Atad, beyond the Jordan River, that is, on the eastern side of the river, a great mourning was held for seven days. After the mourning Jacob's body was carried across the Jordan and buried in the tomb of his fathers.</p> <p>While the location of Atad is not known, its placement in the southern part of Jordan at a place where a branch off the King's Highway would allow crossing into Hebron, satisfies the requirement of it being east of Jordan and also allows the large burial party to travel well known trading routes.</p>
<p>Oboth, Ain Uber</p>	<p>This stopping place in the last year of the exodus is noteworthy because it is the place immediately following the experience with the fiery serpents. Because Moses was forced to avoid Edom, he led the Israelites into the eastern desert and the people complained because of the difficulty</p>

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	of the passage (probably very hot and windy). There they encountered fiery serpents and many of the people died from the bites. The people repented of their complaining and asked Moses to remove the serpents. Moses inquired of the Lord and was told to make a model of a bronze serpent and place it on a rod. Then, all those who were bitten by the serpents need only look upon the rod and they would be healed. This image was later adopted by the medical profession as a symbol of healing. It has also been adopted as a prototype for Christ and the spiritual healing that he will give to those who have faith to look to him. In memory of the attack of the fiery serpents and the healing of the rod, a sculpture of the serpent and rod, rendered into the form of a cross, has been placed on Mount Nebo so that it is associated with Moses.
Bozrah/Busayra/ Bezer	This was the capital city of the Edomites and has been mentioned as a general term for the people of Edom/Idumea. Amos indicated and some scholars have also suggested that this is the site of Bezer, a city of refuge within the territory assigned to Reuben, although other ruined villages have also been proposed as the site of Bezer.
Punon, Phaino/Faynon	This very old (Bronze Age) city and region are famous for its copper and iron mines. It continued to be important through the Old and New Testament periods and is mentioned by Eusebius in the 4 th century AD as still an important mining location. Punon was also a stop on the exodus. Some scholars have suggested that Punon was the site of King Solomon's copper mines. The Romans also used some of the 250 mines in the area. During the times of Christian persecution in the reign of Emperor Diocletian (about 300 AD), convicted and often mutilated Christians were sent to the mines of Faynon after their initial punishment. The ruins of the city are located between the Dead Sea Highway and the King's Highway, about 50 miles south of the Dead Sea. There are several Byzantine churches and some water ponds as well as copper pieces and pots, etc.
Shobak/Montreal	This crusader castle was built in the early 12 th century by the king of Jerusalem, hence the name derived from the "royal mount." It was a protection for the southern trade routes and as a way to collect tolls from pilgrims who passed along the roads. Eventually it was ceded to the Lordship of Kerak and replaced in importance by the stronger castle at Kerak. The castle fell to Saladin after a two-year siege. It is located southeast of Kerak about 30 miles.
Zalmonah/Bir Madhkur	Zalmonah in south-central Edom, probably not as far north as Ma'an. It was a stop during the last year of the exodus. The site later became a trading center on the Spice Route connecting Petra with Gaza. Evidence at Bir Madhkur, the name given in Arabic, shows that the Romans built a fort and bath complex there. Hence, it was an active site into the New Testament period. Several other structures have been discovered, one of them having 6 internal rooms. Outlying farming structures suggest that the population during the Roman and Byzantine periods was quite large. This active location is reflected in the presence of a nearby spring (in the <i>wadi</i>). Today, the site is a center for both archeological and ecological tourism.
Mt Hor/Jebel Haroun	<p>Mount Hor is located on the edge of the Land of Edom and is the scene of the Prophet Aaron's death. The tomb of Aaron is located on the top of the mountain. The tomb was mentioned by Josephus in the 1st century and Eusebius in the 4th century AD and is, therefore, ancient and well known.</p> <p>Aaron became the mouthpiece of Moses when Moses complained that he could not speak well enough to confront pharaoh in the challenge to free the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage. Aaron continued to accompany Moses through the dealings with pharaoh and then later in the wilderness he was a principal helper (such as holding up Moses' arms during the battle with the Amalekites and accompanying Moses with 70 elders onto the mountain to see God). Later, Aaron and his sons were consecrated as a priest class for all Israel. Sadly, Aaron was also involved in making the golden calf that was such an abomination to God.</p> <p>After the children of Israel left their encampment at Kadesh, the Lord commanded that Moses take Aaron and his son, Eleazar, up onto Mount Hor where the priestly robes were removed from Aaron and bestowed on Eleazar. Aaron then died and after a 30-day mourning, the Israelites began their last trek (lasting about a year) before crossing into the promised land.</p>
Kadesh-Barnea, en Mishpat, Sela/Petra, Umm al-Birya	Instead of thinking of Kadesh-Barnea as a single, specific confined location, it should be thought of as an area, perhaps a few miles in diameter, that is centered about the area of Kadesh but includes surrounding mountains, streams, and other physical features. Hence, Kadesh-Barnea, en Mishpat, and Sela are all considered to be the same location. This concept is needful because Kadesh-Barnea is the place where the Children of Israel camped for 37 of the 40 years they were in the wilderness and such a camp would of necessity been spread over a considerable area. Careful reading of the Bible reveals that it took approximately two years to reach Kadesh and then, after the 37-years'

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<p>Site</p> <p>Ancient Name/ Modern Name</p>	<p>Notes and Explanations of Biblical Sites (by Geography)</p>
	<p>encampment, it took about one year from the time the Israelites left Kadesh until they crossed over the Jordan River.</p> <p>Scholars differ on the location of Kadesh, assuming that there is only one Kadesh. Some place it on the western side of the Jordan Valley Rift, approximately 75 miles south of Hebron and point to the scriptures that define it as part of the inheritance of Judah. However, this location has major problems, not the least of which is the question of why the Israelites, after their encampment at Kadesh, would cross to the east side of the Jordan Valley Rift and proceed north and then recross the valley (at the River) to enter the promised land when they were already on the western side and could have just moved north. Also, the events of the last year of the exodus and the locations associated with those events are clearly on the east side of the Jordan River Rift. Therefore, with strong logic and confirmation by succeeding events, the location of Kadesh in the Negev Desert shown on many Bible maps can be rejected as the site of encampment. However, the southern Judea site fits with other scriptures saying that Kadesh-Barnea was on the southern boundary of Judea. This leads to the supposition that there may have been two locations known as Kadesh, thus explaining some of the citations that seem to suggest both westside and eastside locations.</p> <p>A much more logical location for Kadesh, at least the place where Moses and the Israelites encamped, is on the eastern side of the Jordan River Rift near the city of Petra or, perhaps, within the Petra valley itself. Tradition strongly favors this location (called locally the Valley of Moses), the mountain where Aaron is buried is only a few miles away, the Spring of Moses is nearby, and Petra affords a location that was easily defendable and, therefore, would have been safe for the Israelites. Also, as opposed to the Negev site, it would have been outside of the boundaries of ancient Egypt and, therefore, not easily reached by an Egyptian army that might have chosen to attack after several years had elapsed since the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. As mentioned previously, the subsequent locations are all on the eastern side of the rift and, therefore, strongly support the Petra location as authentic. Pre-Mosaic citations of Kadesh, such as the attacks of the five kings, also support a location on the eastern side of the rift. Also, we are told that it is eleven days journey from Mt. Horeb via Mt. Seir to Kadesh-Barnea; a timing that fits well with the eastern location.</p> <p>Kadesh was the place from which the spies left to evaluate the promised land. This citation could apply to either the Negev location or the Jordan location. It was also the place where Miriam died and where the rock gave forth the water.</p>
<p>Wilderness of Zin</p>	<p>Kadesh-Barnea is in the wilderness of Zin, a general term that is applied to the greater region where the Israelites camped. Note that some confusion has occurred in the two Biblical different accounts of the stopping places of the exodus. One of the accounts has many more locations than the other. It has been suggested that when the translator/copier got to the Wilderness of Sin (one of the locations) somehow this person lost attention and skipped to the Wilderness of Zin (another location), thus eliminating all the sites in-between. (An interesting explanation.)</p>
<p>Amalekites</p>	<p>The Amalekites are a people who dwelt in the southern part of the promised land and are descended from Esau through his grandson Amalek. The Israelites fought the Amalekites and were saved from defeat only because Moses held up his arms (or had his arms held up for him) and that caused the Israelites to be victorious. Later, King Saul fought and defeated the Amalekites but brought the anger of Samuel when all the people and their goods were not destroyed. King David also fought against the Amalekites.</p>
<p>Teman/Ma'an</p>	<p>Teman is a town in Edom that is named after the grandson of Esau. It is associated with the modern city of Ma'an, a major transportation and trading center in southern Jordan. It is the place where the King's Highway and the Desert Highway cross as well as a major station in the Hijaz Railroad. During WWI Ma'an, was a key site for controlling the destruction of the Hijaz Railroad fought between the Arab army, captained by Lawrence of Arabia, and the Ottoman Turks.</p>
<p>Mt. Seir</p>	<p>Mount Seir is a range of mountains and a district in southern Jordan that may also contain a particular mountain called Mount Seir. The area is likely the home of the Horites, the tribe that lived in Edom prior to the arrival of Esau. It is from Mount Seir that Esau traveled to meet with Jacob when they reconciled, and it is to Mount Seir that he returned.</p> <p>Mount Seir is near Kadesh-Barnea from whence they were to move northward.</p>
<p>Paran/Wadi Arabah, Wadi Rum, Mudawarra</p>	<p>The Wilderness of Paran is where Hagar, the second wife Abraham was sent and where she lived with her infant son, Ishmael. The Bible indicates that Paran is east of the Jordan River and, therefore, is likely in southern Jordan or possibly in Saudi Arabia. Islamic tradition puts Paran farther south, but that is because tradition has Hagar and Ishmael building Mecca. However, the journey to</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Site</p> <p>Ancient Name/ Modern Name</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Notes and Explanations of Biblical Sites (by Geography)</p>
	<p>Mecca could have been later in their life and so locating Paran in southern Jordan is logical.</p> <p>Several events in the life of Hagar are worth relating as they give context to the journey to Paran. Because Sarah could not get pregnant, she gave her Egyptian handmaid to Abraham as a wife and Hagar became pregnant. Sarah became jealous and treated Hagar poorly, causing Hagar to flee to the wilderness. There Hagar met an angel who counseled her to return to Sarah and gave Hagar a blessing for her son, Ishmael. The well at which Hagar met the angel was Beer-Jahai-roi. This site is a well that is between Kadesh and Bered on the way to Shur, likely in the Negev desert south of Beersheba. Hagar returned to Abraham and bore her son. However, after Isaac was born, problems again arose between Sarah and Hagar. At this time Sarah insisted that Hagar be sent out of the community and, after consultation with God, Abraham agreed because God indicated that Ishmael would be the father of great nations. When Hagar and Ishmael had eaten all the bread and drunk all the water given her by Abraham, she and the baby were on the verge of death. Muslims believe that Hagar searched for water by running between two hills. On the seventh trip, she returned to see that Ishmael had struck the ground with his heel and a spring emerged. This event is celebrated in the Hajj. The Wilderness of Paran, perhaps a very large area, was where Hagar and Ishmael lived.</p> <p>Many of the desert tribes trace their origin to Ishmael and, likely, the Nabateans who controlled the area from the 7th century BC to the time of the Romans, trace their name and origin to the sons of Ishmael.</p> <p>The likely extent of Paran extends from Jordan south into Saudi Arabia. This covers parts of Wadi Arabah (the main valley south of the Dead Sea) and Wadi Rum (the valley southeast of Ma'an towards Saudi Arabia). A Bible reference suggests that Paran was on the highway between Midian and Edom and Egypt. The modern city of Mudawarra lies in the general area. It was an important battle site in WWI between the Arab army, with TE Lawrence, and the Ottomans.</p>
<p>Ezion-geber, Berenice, Aila/Aqaba</p>	<p>This was the ancient seaport at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba in the vicinity of modern-day Aqaba and Eilat. The city was one of the places Moses camped after leaving Egypt and was also the port of entry for many of the goods for King Solomon. The port was used throughout the period of the kings as the principal trading location for Judah and Africa and Egypt.</p> <p>Aqaba, the Jordanian port at the top of the Gulf of Aqaba, was an important port from the early Bronze Age. It could be used as a way to transport from Arabia to Egypt without going across the northern desert. The Edomites and later the conquering Jews used the port throughout the Iron Age and it was then captured by the Nabateans who controlled trade in the area for centuries. The Ptolemaic Greeks called the area Berenice, and it was Aila to the Romans. The <i>Via Nova Traiana</i>, which paralleled much of the King's Highway, began in Aqaba and ran northward to Syria. Ruins in the city near the sea date from the 3rd century AD and have led some archeologists to believe that it was an early, perhaps the first, prayer center for Christians.</p> <p>During WWI Aqaba became the major thrust target for the Arab Legion in the early part of their campaign against the Ottoman Turks. With the successful capture of Aqaba by travelling overland through the desert from near Medina, the Arabs proved themselves to be a legitimate fighting force and therefore, received additional support from the British who were their economic and equipment backers.</p>
<p>Midianites</p>	<p>When Moses fled Egypt after killing the Egyptian taskmaster, he went to the Land of the Midianites. There he met Zipporah who was the daughter of Jethro, a Midianite priest. Most Bible maps place the land of the Midianites south of Aqaba along the Jordanian/Saudi Arabian coast and inland, perhaps as far as Wadi Rum and the mountains of northern Saudi Arabia. It was, therefore, on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea.</p>
<p>Mt Horeb, Mt Sinai, Mountain of God</p>	<p>The place where Moses saw the burning bush was Mount Horeb and it was within the land of the Midianites or close to it as Moses reached the mountain while he was herding sheep and, therefore, could not have traveled far. It was during this tending of sheep of his Midianite father-in-law that Moses encountered the burning bush. Moses was commanded by God to return to the same mountain, in an area that he knew well, to receive further instructions from the Lord when he led the Israelites out of Egypt. Therefore, it is unlikely that the mountain in the Sinai desert is the real Mt Horeb. The location in Sinai was chosen by Constantine's mother on her journey to the Holy Land in the 4th century. Other references in the Bible are consistent with the location of the holy mountain in southern Jordan (perhaps Mount Baghir to the northeast of Aqaba) or northern Arabia (Mount Al-Lawz in the Land of Midian southeast of Aqaba). Even the reference in the New Testament to Agar (which is the name given to the princes of the Edomites) attests to the Jordanian/Arabia location.</p>

Biblical and Related References to Jordan

Site Ancient Name/ Modern Name	Abraham, Isaac-Jacob- Joseph	Moses	Joshua- Judges	Kings	Major- Minor Prophets	Christian –New Testament
King's Highway	Gen 12:1-5, 14:5-16, 24:1-10, 51-61, 25:6-10, 27:41-45, 28:1-5, 29:1-4, 31:21-25, 32:9-10, 33:16- 18, 50:10-13	Num 20:14- 21, 21:11-15	Jdg 11:17- 18			Gal 1:17
Other side of Jordan, Over Jordan, East people/Al Ghor/Jordan Rift Valley, Jordan Valley	Gen 10:26-30, 13:5-12, 25:1-6, 25:12-16	Num 32:5	Jdg 6:3			Mt 4:24-25, Mk 3:7-8, 8:10
Decapolis						Mt 4:25, Mk 5:20, 7:31-37
Bashan		Num 21:33- 35, Deu 3:1-11, 14, 4:43	Jos 12:4, 13:29-31; 20:8; 21:27	1Kgs 4:13, Psm 22:12, 68:15, 2Kgs 10:33, 13:25	Isa 2:13, Ezk 27:6, 39:18, Jer 50:19, Zch 11:2, Amo 4:1-2	
Sea of Galilee, Sea of Chinnereth/Sea of Tiberias, Lake Gennesaret, Kinneret		Num 34:11	Jos 11: 2, 13:27, 19:35			Mt 4:13-22, 8:23, 14:13-34, Mk 1:14-20, 4:35-36, 5:1-11, 21, 6:31- 56, 7:31, 8:10-13, Lk 5:1, Jn 6:1
Jordan River	Gen 32:10	Num 34:15, 35:1, 9-10	Jos 3:15-17, 4:1-9, 5:1, 22:10, 22:25, Jdg 7:24, 8:4, 12:5-6	1Kgs 7:46, 2Kgs 2:6- 14, 5:1-14	Isa 9:1	Mt 3:5-6, 13-17, 19:1, Mk 1:5, 9, 3:7-8, 10:1, Lk 3:3, 21, 4:1, Jn 1:28-34, 10:39-42
Gadara, Antiochia,/Umm Qais						Mt 8:28-34, Mk 5:1-20, Lk 8:26- 39
Abila Dekapoleos, Selucia/Hartha, Ain Quweilbeh						
Ramoth- gilead/Ramtha		Num 35:1, 14, Deu 4:41-43	Jos 20:1-8, 21:38	1Kgs 4:13, 22:1-36, 2Kgs 8:28, 9:1-7, 1Chr 6:80		
Arabella, Bayt Arbeel/Irbid					Hos 10:14	
Gilead	Gen 31:21-25, 47, 37:25	Num 32:1-14, 40, Deu 3:12- 16	Jos 12:5	Ps 60:7, 108:8	Jer 8:22, 22:6, 46:11	
Pella/Tabaqat Fahl,			Jdg 10:17,	1Kgs 12:25		

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Site Ancient Name/ Modern Name	Abraham, Isaac-Jacob- Joseph	Moses	Joshua- Judges	Kings	Major- Minor Prophets	Christian –New Testament
Mizpah			11:11, 34			
Brook Cherith/Wadi al-Yabis				1Kgs 17:3-7		John 3:22-26, John 4:1-3
Jabesh-Gilead/Tell al-Maqbara			Jdg 21:8-15	1Sam 11:1- 11, 31:11- 13, 2Sam 2:4-7, 21:12, 1Chr 10:11-12		
Abel-meholah/Tell al-maqlub				1Kgs 19:16- 21		
Tishbe, Listib/Tell Mar Elias (north)				1Kgs 17:1-6		Lk 4:25-26,
Ajloun						
Anjara						Jesus stayed in a cave there
Zaphon/Crossing or passages of the Jordan, Tell al-Qos			Jos 13:27, Jdg 12:1-6			
Khirbet al Samra						
Rihab, Beth Rehob		Num 13:21		2Sam 10:6		
Umm al Surab						
Gerasa/Jerash						
Bostra (nearby)/Umm al- Jimal						
Al Fudain/Mafraq	Gen 10:22-23					
Mizpah-gilead	Gen 31:23-52		Jdg 11:29			
Jabbok/Zarqa River	Gen 32:22, 33:17	Num 21:24, Deu 3:16-17	Jdg 8:4-12,			
Mahanaim, Mihna/Tulul ed- Dhab al-Gharbi	Gen 32:1-23		Jos 13:26, 30, 21:38	2Sam 2:8, 29, 17:24- 29, 1Kgs 2:7, 1Chr 6:80		
Penuel, Peniel, Behlimum/Tulul ed- Dhab al-Sharqi	Gen 32:1-23			1Kgs 12:25		
Succoth, Sukkot, Shochoh/Tell Deir Alla	Gen 33:17		Jos 13:27, Jdg 8: 5-16	1Sam 17:1, 1Kgs 7:46, 2Chr 4:17		
Adam/Damieh (near to Zerathan/Tell as- Saidiyya)				1Kgs 7:46, 2Chr 4:17		
Perea/Jordan River Valley						Mt 19:1, Mk 10:1- 31
Tomb of Gad/Ain	Gen 35:26					

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Site Ancient Name/ Modern Name	Abraham, Isaac-Jacob- Joseph	Moses	Joshua- Judges	Kings	Major- Minor Prophets	Christian –New Testament
al-Jadur, Salt						
Land of the Children of Ammon, Rabbath-ammon, Philadelphia/Rajm al-Malouf/Amman, Kingdom of Jordan	Gen 19:38	Num 21:24, Deu 2:18-22, 36-37, 3:16-17	Jdg 10:6-10, 11:12-33	2Sam 10:1- 19, 17:26- 29, 1Kgs 11:1-7, 14:21, 31, 2Kgs 24:1- 4, 2Chr 26:8	Neh 4:7-9, Jer 40:14, 49:1-6, Ezk 21:28-32, Amo 1:13- 14, Zph 2:8- 9	
Tell Mar Elyas (south), Brook Kerith, Chereth /Wadi Al-kharrar Elijah's Hill, Tell al- Kharrar				1Kgs 17:3- 6, 19:9-18, 2Kgs 2:1-18		Mt 11:14, Lk 1:17
Bethany beyond Jordan/al-Maghtas						Mt 3:1-17, Mk 1:9-12, Lk 3:1-6, 21-23, 3:26, 10:40, Jn 3:22-26, Jn 4:1-3
Bethabara/Israelite crossing			Jos 3:1-17, 4:1-24, 5:1, Jdg 7:24-25	2Kgs 2:8-14		Jn 1:28
Plains of Moab, Abila, Shittim (also called Abel-shittim) and near Beth-peor, Beth-jesimoth/ Abil- ez-Zeit, Al Kafrayn		Num 22:1, 25:1-8, 26:63, 31:16, 33:49, Deu 3:29, 4:3, 34:6-8	Jos 3:1, 22:17	Psm 106:28	Ezk 25:9, Hos 9:10	
Beth-nimra, Tel Nimrin/Shuneh Janoubiah (south)		Num 32:34-36	Jos 13:27			
Abel-keramim/Tell al-Umayri, near Naur			Jdg 11:33			
Amorites	Gen 10:16	Num 21:21- 35, Deu 1:7, 19-21, 2:24- 33, 3:8-11, 31:4	Jos 2:10, 9:10, 12:2, Jdg 11:19- 22	1Sm 7:14, 1Kgs 9:20- 21	Amo 2:9	
Heshbon/Hesbun		Num 21:24-26	Jos 12:5		Isa 15:4, 16:8, Jer 48:2, 34, 45, 49:3, SSol 7:4	
Mt. Nebo, Mt. Pisgah/Siyagha		Num 32:38, 33:47, Deu 32:49, 34:1-5,			Isa 15:2, Jer 48:1-2	
Temptations of Christ/Wadi al- Afreet, Al		Num 32:38, 33:47				Mt 4:1-5, Mk 1:12-13

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Site Ancient Name/ Modern Name	Abraham, Isaac-Jacob- Joseph	Moses	Joshua- Judges	Kings	Major- Minor Prophets	Christian –New Testament
Mukhayyat						
Medaba/Madaba		Num 21:30	Jos 13:15-23, Ru 1:4	1Chr 19:7	Isa 15:2, Jer 48:33	Mt 1:5
Mephaath/Kastrom Mefa'a, Umm ar Rasas			Jos 13:18		Jer 48:21	
Sea of the Arabah, Vale of Siddim, Salt Sea/Dead Sea	Gen 14:3-10	Num 34:12, Deu 3:17	Jos 12:3	2Sam 8:13	Ezk 47:18-21	
Beth-Baal- Meon/Ma'in and Zara		Num 32:38	Jos 13:17-19			
Machaerus/Mukawir						Mt 14:3-11, Mk 1:14, Lk 3:20
Almon-diblathaim, Diblath		Num 33:46-47				
Dibon Gad/Dhiban		Num 21:4-10, 21-32, 32:1-6, 33:45-46	Jos 13:8-10, 17	2Kgs 3:4-8	Isa 15:1-9, Jer 48:1-3, 18-22	
Aroer/Arzair		Num 21:26, Deu 2:24-36, 3:12, 4;48		2Kgs 10:33	Jer 48:18-19	
Arnon River/Wadi Mujib		Num 21:13-15, 24, 22:36, Deu 2:24-36, 3:8-16, 4:48	Jos 12:1, Jdg 11:13-23	2Kgs 10:32-33	Is 16:1-2, Jer 48:20	
Moab	Gen 19:30-38, 36:35	Ex 15:15, Num 21:11-29, 22:1-41, 23:1-30, 24:1-25, 25:1-3, 33:44-50, Deu 1:5, 2:8-29, 23:3, 29:1, 32:49, 34:1-8	Jos 13:32, 24:9, Jdg 3:12-30, 10:6, 11:12-25, Ruth 1:1-22, 4:3	1Sam 12:9, 14:47, 22:3-5, 2Sam 8:2-12, 23:20, 1Kgs 11:1-33, 2Kgs 1:1, 3:4-26, 24:1-2, 1Chr 1:46, 8:8, 11:22, 18:2-11, 2Cr 20:1-23, 24:26, Neh 13:1-23, Psm 60:8, 83:6, 108:9	Isa 11:14, 15:1-9, 16:2-14, 25:10, Jer 9:26, 25:21, 27:3, 40:11, 48:1-47, Ezk 25:8-11, Dan 11:41, Amo 2:1-2, Mic 6:5, Zph 2:8-9	Mt 1:5-7
Rubat Moab, Areopolis/Rabba						
Kir-moab, Qer Harreth, Mizpah- moab/Kerak				1Sam 22:3, 2Kgs 3:4-27	16:7-11, Jer 48:31-36	
Sodom/Bab edh- Dhra	Gen 10:19, 13:10-12, 14:2-22, 18:16-26,	Deu 23:17, 29:23, 32:32		1Kgs 14:24, 15:12, 22:46	Isa 1:9-10, 3:9, Jer 23:14, 49:18,	Mt 10:15, 11:23-24, Mk 6:11, Lk 10:12, 17:29,

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Site Ancient Name/ Modern Name	Abraham, Isaac-Jacob- Joseph	Moses	Joshua- Judges	Kings	Major- Minor Prophets	Christian –New Testament
	19:1-29				50:40, Lam 4:6, Ez 16:46-56, Zph 2:9	Rom 9:29, 2Pet 2:6, Jude 1:7, Rev 11:8
Gomorrhah/Numeira	Gen 10:19, 13:10-15, 14:2- 22, 18:16-33, 19:1-29	Deu 29:23, 32:32			Isa 1:9-10, 3:9, Jer 23:14, 49:18, 50:40, Zph 2:9	Mt 10:15, Mk 6:11, Rom 9:29, 2Pet 2:6, Jude 1:7
Lot's Wife formation	Gen 19:26					Lk 17:28-32
Zoar, Bela/Safi	Gen 14:1-8 19:22-26					
Lot's Cave/Khirbet Al Mukhayyat	Gen 19:30-38					
Plain of Jordan, Cities of the Valley	Gen 13:10-13, 14:1-12					Lk 17:28-32, Jude 1:7
Desert Highway		Num 20:14- 22, Deu 2:3-9	Jdg 11:18			
Zered Valley/Wadi Hasa		Num 21:11-12, Deu 2:13-14				
Lje-abarim		Num 21:11, 33:44-45				
Edom, Idumea	Gen 36:1-43	Num 20:14- 21, Deu 2:1-18	Jdg 11:12- 23	1Sam 14:47, 2Kgs 3:9, 8:20- 22, 14:7, 1Chr 18:13, Psm 60:8, 108:9, 137:7	Isa 34:5-8, Jer 49:7-22, Hab 3:3	Mk 3:8
Atad/Abel-Misraim	Gen 50:7-11					
Oboth, Ain Uber		Num 21:4-11, 33:43-44				
Bozrah/Busayra	Gen 36:31-33				Is 34:6, 63:1- 6	
Punon, Phaino/Faynon		Num 33:41-43				Jn 3:14-15
Shobak/Montreal						
Zalmonah/Bir Madhkur		Num 33:41-42				
Mt Hor/Jebel Haroun		Ex 17:6-16, 24:9-11, 32:1- 35, Num 6:22- 26, 20:22-29, 21:4, 33:37-41				Heb 5:4
Kadesh-barnea, en Mishpat, Sela/Petra, Umm al-Biryā	Gen 14:6-7, 16:14, 20:1	Num 13:1-26, 14:29-45, 20:1-24, 32:8, 33:36-37, 34:4, Deu 1:19, 46, 2:1- 14, 9:23, 32:51	Jos 10:41, 14:6-7, 15:3, Jdg 11:16-17	2Kgs 14:7, 2 Cr 25:11- 12, Psm 29:8	Is 16:1, Ez 47:19, 48:28	

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Site Ancient Name/ Modern Name	Abraham, Isaac-Jacob- Joseph	Moses	Joshua- Judges	Kings	Major- Minor Prophets	Christian –New Testament
Wilderness of Zin		Num 27:14, 33:36, 34:4	Jos 15:3,			
Amalekites	Gen 36:12	Ex 17:8, Num 13:29, 14:25	Jdg 12:15	1Sam 15:2- 7, 27:8, 28:16, 1 Chr 4:42-43		
Teman/Ma'an				1Kgs 11:17- 18	Jb 2:11, Jer 25:23, 49:7, Ez 25:13, Am 1:12, Ob 1:8-9	
Mt. Seir	Gen 14:6, 32:3, 33:14-16	Deu 2:1-22, 33:2		2Cr 25:14		
Paran/Wadi Araba, Wadi Rum, Mudawarra	Gen 16:3-14, 17:20, 21:9-22, 24:62, 25:11-14	Ex 2:15, Nm 10:12, Deu 1:1, 33:2	Jdg 7:12		Is 11:14, Hab 3:3	
Ezion-geber, Berenice, Aila/Aqaba		Num 33:35- 36, Deu 2:8		1Kgs 9:26, 22:48, 2Kgs 14:22, 2Chr 20:36		
Midianites	Gen 25:1-2, 37:28	Ex 2:15, Num 25:6-15, 31:1- 12			Isa 60:6	
Mt Horeb, Mt Sinai		Ex 3:1-18, 4:1-19, Deu 4:10-15,	Jdg 6:1-4	1Kgs 19:8		Gal 4:25

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