

Introduction To Old Testament History

ADDENDA

A BIBLICAL GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Suppose you are reading in the Old Covenant writings and come across this verse from Hosea 9:9: **“They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah. . . .”** What do those words mean to you? Do you know what happened in Gibeah? Of course, you understand from this verse that God is unhappy with the way these people (in this case His own people, Israel) were behaving. It is easy to see that they were doing evil. But what evil? Where was Gibeah, and what event took place there that was so wicked that God still made mention of it several centuries later through Hosea? Without a knowledge of Biblical history and geography (Genesis through Esther), these words of Hosea cannot have their intended impact on your heart. In many of the prophets’ messages, the prophets referred to events in Israel’s history *merely by referring to the place where those events took place!* If you don’t know the Biblical geography and history, the prophetic books will at times be impossible to fully understand! Many have complained of being “bored” by reading the prophets, when the real problem is that the reader is ignorant of the geography and history of which the prophets so often spoke!

Consider this Scripture from Isaiah 1:9, as the prophet mourned for Israel’s wickedness in his day:

“Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”

In this case, most readers can appreciate what Isaiah is saying because we are familiar with the infamous events that transpired at Sodom and Gomorrah. Few of us are able to locate on a map of ancient Palestine where those cities are thought to have existed, but most of us know about the horrible crimes for which God obliterated them. But did you notice as you read that verse, that it is your knowledge of *Biblical geography and history* that enabled you to understand Isaiah’s words? It is only because in your memory bank a certain form of immorality has been associated with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah that you can read the above verse and really comprehend how low Israel had sunk and how grieved Isaiah must have been! If you had never heard of Sodom and Gomorrah and were ignorant of the history of those cities, the full impact of Isaiah’s words could not be felt! Here is another example, from Hosea 11:8:

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboiim?

What does this verse mean to you? For starters, who is Ephraim, and why does God mention him in the same breath with Israel? And then, what happened to Admah and Zeboiim so that God now threatens to bring the same judgment upon Ephraim and Israel? No one can answer these questions without a knowledge of Biblical geography and history. Look at what a knowledge of those elements of the Bible will bring:

We learn in Genesis that Ephraim was Joseph's son who became the father of the leading tribe of Israel, so that many times in the prophets "Ephraim" is used as a synonym for "Israel", as in this verse. Here, by speaking to Ephraim and then to Israel, God is merely repeating Himself! As for the cities of Admah and Zeboiim, they were cities located near Sodom and Gomorrah that God destroyed *with Sodom and Gomorrah*, and for the same reason (Dt. 29:23)! In the above verse, God is grieved because He was about to "give up" Ephraim to cruel foreign armies and "deliver" Israel to utter destruction. Without knowledge of Biblical geography and history, however, that verse could not be understood at all.

To what places and important events in Israel's history were the "holy men of old" referring in these verses?

Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah. We found it in the fields of the woods. We will go unto his tabernacles. We will worship at his footstool. Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou, and the ark of thy strength!

(Ps. 132:6-8)

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

(Hab. 3:3)

Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord?

(Josh. 22:17)

Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, "Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh . . . ?"

(Jer. 26:-8-9)

None of these verses can be fully appreciated without a knowledge of the Bible's geography and history. The next time you hear someone complain about how difficult it is

to read the books of the ancient prophets of Israel, ask that person if he has ever become acquainted with Israel's history and geography. My bet is that he has not. If you are unfamiliar with the words which the prophets use, how can those words seem anything but boring and confusing?

I do not suggest that the mysteries of the kingdom of God will be understood if you learn Biblical geography. After all, many who actually lived in that land and knew it well didn't understand the ways of God. What I am saying is that there is a difference between the mysteries of God and the mysteries that are the result of our own ignorance. For example, the question, "What happened at Gibeah?" is not a mystery of God. The answer is knowable, if we search for it in the Bible. To some it may seem to be a deep mystery, but only because they have not read the book of Judges.

Let us take advantage of what God has revealed, so as to prepare ourselves for what He has yet to tell us!

One of my primary goals is to bring my students to the point of asking the same questions which I ask (and I have many) because if I do that, they will be asking questions based on *knowledge* of the Scriptures rather than *ignorance* of them. The starting point is to learn what God has revealed: the Bible. We are living in a time when the Bible is virtually an unknown book, even among those who should know it best. And often it is slandered as a book virtually impossible to learn! But if the student simply trusts Jesus to help him and follows my simple directions, he will learn this most important of all documents in history!

Don't believe the nay-sayers. You can do it—if you want to!

Here are my beginning instructions:

First, pack up your commentaries in a box and put the box in a distant corner of your attic. Do not waste your time reading books about the Bible. You'll never learn the Bible that way. Read the Bible itself. The Bible is so much more easily understood than the books that Christian scholars and teachers write about it! Just get yourself some maps of ancient Israel and READ THE BIBLE! Will learning the Bible take some time? Of course. But you don't have to do it all at once. In fact, you cannot do it all at once. It will require commitment to a goal. It will require patience and faith. But it is an attainable goal, and it is an effort which will pay enormous dividends, not only while you live here but afterwards as well. Make *learning* the Bible, not just spot-reading parts of it, a top priority in your life now.

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES CALLED

GENESIS

CHAPTER 1

IN the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. ^{And} the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Is. 40:13, 14

3 And God said, Let there be ^{light}: and there was light. Heb. 11:3

4 And God saw the light, that *it was* good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

5 ^{And} God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. Ps. 74:16

6 ^{And} God said, Let there be a ^{firmament} in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. land

7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so.

8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

9 ^{And} God said, ^{Let} the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and

let the dry *land* appear: and it was so. Prov. 8:29; Jer. 5:22; 2 Pet. 3:5

10 And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the ^{gathering} together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that *it was* good. Ps. 95:5

11 And God said, Let the earth ^{bring} forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding ^{fruit} after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. Heb. 6:7 • Luke 6:44

12 And the earth brought forth ^{grass}, *and* herb yielding seed after ^{his} kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good. vegetation; plants • its

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

14 ^{And} God said, ^{Let} there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: Deut. 4:19

15 And let them be for ^{lights} in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. luminaries; lightbearers

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule

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soldiers of the king of Babylon who have at present withdrawn from you.^v ²²I will give the command, says the LORD, and bring them back to this city. They shall attack and capture it, and destroy it with fire; the cities of Judah I will turn into a desert where no man dwells.^w

CHAPTER 35

The Faithful Rechabites. ¹This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah: ²Approach the Rechabites* and speak to them; bring them into the house of the LORD, to one of the rooms, and give them wine to drink. ³So I went and brought Jaazaniah, son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, his brothers and all his sons, the whole company of the Rechabites, ⁴into the house of the LORD, to the room of the sons of Hanan,* son of Igdaliah, the man of God, next to the princes' room, above the room of Maaseiah, son of Shalum, keeper of the doorway. ⁵I set before these Rechabite men bowls full of wine and offered them cups to drink the wine.

⁶"We do not drink wine," they said to me: "Jonadab,* Rechab's son, our father, forbade us in these words: 'Neither you nor your children shall ever drink wine. ⁷Build no house and sow no seed; neither plant nor own a vineyard. You shall dwell in tents all your life, so that you may live long on the earth where you are wayfarers.' ⁸Now we have heeded Jonadab, Rechab's son, our father, in all his prohibitions. All our lives we have not drunk wine, neither we, nor our wives, nor our sons, nor our daughters. ⁹We build no houses to live in; we own no vineyards or fields or crops, ¹⁰and we live in tents; we obediently do everything our father

^v Jer 37, 5, 11.—^w Jer 37, 8; 52, 7-13; 2 Chr 36, 17, 19.—^x Jer 32, 33.—^y Jer 7, 13; 25, 3; 2 Chr 36, 15f.—^z Jer 25, 4f. 7.—^a Jer 11, 8f.

35, 2: *The Rechabites:* reactionaries who believed that the Lord could not be well served except by maintaining the original nomadic conditions of Israel's life. Without sharing their convictions, the prophet holds up their fidelity to their ideals as an example to put to shame his faithless countrymen. *In the days of Jehoiakim:* probably in 599 or 598 B.C.

35, 4: *The sons of Hanan:* probably the disciples of this man of God or prophet. *Maaseiah:* possibly the father of the priest Zephaniah (Jer 29, 25; 37, 3). *Keeper of the doorway:* a priestly function of responsibility; cf Jer 52, 24.

35, 6: *Jonadab:* a contemporary of King Jehu; cf 2 Kgs 10, 15f.

35, 11: *The army of Aram:* Nebuchadnezzar enlisted the help of Judah's foreign neighbors in his assault on Jerusalem.

Jonadab commanded us. ¹¹But when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded this land, we decided to come into Jerusalem to escape the army of the Chaldeans and the army of Aram;* that is why we are now living in Jerusalem."

¹²Then this word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ¹³Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Go, say to the men of Judah and to the citizens of Jerusalem: Will you not take correction and obey my words? says the LORD.^x ¹⁴The advice of Jonadab, Rechab's son, by which he forbade his children to drink wine, has been followed: to this day they have not drunk it; they obeyed their father's command. Me, however, you have not obeyed, although I spoke to you untiringly and insistently.^y ¹⁵I kept sending you all my servants the prophets, telling you to turn back, all of you, from your evil way; to reform your conduct, and not follow strange gods or serve them, if you would remain on the land which I gave you and your fathers; but you did not heed me or obey me.^z ¹⁶Yes, the children of Jonadab, Rechab's son, observed the command which their father laid on them; but this people does not obey me! ¹⁷Now, therefore, says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: I will bring upon Judah and all the citizens of Jerusalem every evil that I threatened; because when I spoke they did not obey, when I called they did not answer.^a

¹⁸But to the company of the Rechabites Jeremiah said: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Since you have obeyed the command of Jonadab, your father, kept all his commands and done everything he commanded you, ¹⁹thus therefore says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Never shall there fail to be a descendant of Jonadab, Rechab's son, standing in my service.

CHAPTER 36

Baruch Writes the Prophecies of Jeremiah. ¹In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ²Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you against Israel, Judah, and all the nations, from the day I first spoke to you, in the days of Josiah, until today. ³Perhaps, when the house of Judah hears all the evil I have in mind

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reactionary /rɪˈækʃ(ə)n(ə)ri/ *a. & n.* M19. [f. prec. + -ARY¹, partly after Fr. *réactionnaire*.] A *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characterized by, reaction; inclined or favourable to reaction, esp. to the reversal of an existing political state of affairs. M19.

B. JOWETT The fixed ideas of a reactionary statesman. **R.** LEHMANN Franco's abominable reactionary conspiracy.

B n. A reactionary person. M19.

reactionarily *adv.* M20. **reactionariness** *n.* (*rare*) E20. **reactionaryism** *n.* reactionary principles or practice E20. **reactionism** *n.* reactionaryism L19. **reactionist** *n. & a.* (*a*) *n.* a marked or professed reactionary; a person who reacts *against* something; (*b*) *adj.* reactionary: M19.

C

WHEN THE WISDOM AND PROPHETIC BOOKS WERE WRITTEN

History Books	Wisdom Books	Prophetic Books
Genesis	Job (?)	
Exodus		
Leviticus		
Numbers		
Deuteronomy		
Joshua		
Judges		
Ruth		
1 Samuel	Psalms	
2 Samuel (1 Chronicles)	Psalms	
1 Kings (2 Chronicles 1-20)	Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	
2 Kings (2 Chronicles 21-36)		Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Zechariah
Ezra		Haggai & Zephaniah
Nehemiah		
Esther		

Prophets whose time is not specified: Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Malachi

D

Israel and Ancient Trade Routes

The Bible and Trade. The writers of the Bible and their editors were not primarily interested in the economic position of Israel, so that they did not say much about commerce and trade. Still, to maintain their independence as a nation for three or four centuries amongst powerful neighbours, Israel and Judah both relied largely on wealth brought in by the advantageous position of their country.

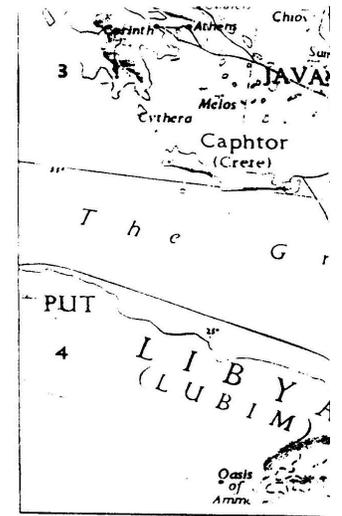
As the map opposite shows, Palestine, small as it is, happens to lie on a part of the coast of Asia through which all merchandise carried by camel or donkey between Egypt or Arabia and Mesopotamia or Asia Minor had to pass. Some of the more energetic of the kings of Israel and Judah, notably Solomon, were able to profit by this geographical fact, either trading themselves or taking a share of the value of goods that passed through their territory.

Some passages in the Bible speak clearly of this trade; others only mention it in passing, like the story in Gen. 37: 25-28 of the Ishmaelites who were carrying spices down to Egypt from Gilead, and stopped to add Joseph to their cargo. Other passages, again, only hint at trade relations, as when the writer of 1 Kgs. 16: 29-31 states that Ahab married the daughter of the king of the Sidonians, and leaves us to guess that some commercial understanding lay behind that marriage.

We cannot build up an exact picture of Israel's trading relations, nor distinguish clearly between the times when trade flourished and those when it slackened off. This map, therefore, is not related to any single period of time or any particular book of the Bible. But it tries to show the principal trade routes that were in use between the time of King David and the Exile, or even later, and the principal towns or tribes with which Israel or her immediate neighbours may have had trade relations. Some of the names, especially in Arabia, appear in the Bible as personal names, like the descendants of Abraham through Keturah in Gen. 25. But when we see that Keturah simply means 'incense', and remember that Arabian incense was one of the greatest sources of wealth in ancient times, it becomes obvious that names like Zimran, Jokshan, Medan and Midian, Keturah's sons, represent not individual persons but well-known peoples or tribes connected with the incense trade. Many of those names we cannot place on the map, but a few of them like Sheba (the Sabaeans of Job 1 and of Roman times) or Nebaioth (the eldest son of Ishmael, Gen. 25: 13, and a pastoral tribe, Isa. 60: 7) can be identified with peoples known from other sources, and so located with fair confidence.

Solomon was a national figure, so his ventures in commerce were thought a fit subject for record. In 1 Kgs. 5: 10-11 and 9: 11 he sells wheat, oil and some land to the king of Tyre in return for gold and cedar of Lebanon. In 10: 28-29 he becomes the middleman between Egypt and the kings of N. Syria (the Hittites) for the exchange of Cilician horses and Egyptian chariots. (In this passage Cilicia is called 'Kue' (NEB 'Coa'): the Hebrew text was misunderstood by most translators.) In 1 Kgs. 10 the Queen of Sheba (in S. Arabia) brings Solomon presents of gold and spices, the two great exports of Arabia to the Mediterranean world, and takes back a cargo of unspecified Israelite products ('whatsoever she asked'); this was the prelude to Solomon's profitable traffic with the spice merchants and 'all the kings of Arabia mentioned in 10: 15. South Arabian spices destined for Egyptian and Syrian markets were normally carried overland by camels; the Red Sea was difficult to navigate and

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there was no Suez Canal. Solomon and his partner Hiram (9: 26-28 and 10: 11, 22) decided to break the monopoly of the Midianites and other Arabian owners of camels by building ships at Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, so that the goods could be landed there direct from Arabia and thence be carried on by land under Solomon's own control, thus saving the heavy transit dues and protection money levied by the tribes besetting the Arabian land routes. This astute move could only have succeeded by an understanding with the Queen of Sheba who controlled the ports of origin. Solomon's ships would also call every three years at some Arabian port (e.g. Ophir) and conceivably at an African port (Punt?), to take on ivory, silver, gold and apes (10: 11, 22).

* Later Israelite Kings, lacking Solomon's diplomacy, were not so successful; and Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs. 22: 48-49), refusing the competent Phoenician mariners whom Ahab's son Ahaziah through his affinity with Tyre could have furnished, lost the whole fleet in a total disaster.

No doubt it was the Phoenicians who excelled in trade and nautical enterprise. Ezek. 27 gives a summary of their widespread traffickings. Some place-names in the map are taken from that chapter. Although Ezekiel names them as trading specially with Tyre, they were well-known to Jewish readers, and Israelite merchants would probably have done business with many of the same peoples at one time or another in the past.

Other names in the map are supplied from Assyrian or Egyptian records; and some are of ancient sites that have been recovered by archaeological exploration. All these sources may be used together to build up a picture of the commercial world to which Israel and Judah belonged before they were obliterated by the power of Assyria and Babylon.