

CHAPTER 2

GEOGRAPHY

2.1 Introduction

Understanding the geography of the ancient Near East is very significant in helping to comprehend the archaeological sources from the various sites which are discussed in this dissertation. The subject material in this part will include: the ancient Near East; the overview of the major roads and routes of transportation; major longitudinal zones of Israel; and the geography of Israel (Canaan).

Information for the subject in this chapter is easily obtainable from several modern publications. The general geography is commonly agreed upon by most authors. They reach the same overall conclusions regarding location of key cities and boundaries. Therefore, in this dissertation on the archaeological sources, the individual books will not be cited for each fact regarding generally accepted geography of the lands of the Bible. The books selected for reference on this topic by this writer are as follows:

Y. Aharoni, in his book, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, 1979b, covered details on the land of Israel in his chapter, titled, *The Land of Many Contrasts*. He also gave detailed information in the chapter titled, *Boundaries and Names*. This was an excellent source.

Carl Rasmussen, author of, *NIV Atlas of the Bible*, 1989, provided wonderful maps that were good for explaining the tribal distribution of the land of Israel according to Joshua.

Barry Beitzel, author of *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*, 1985, had very good maps showing and explaining key cities located in the various tribal areas of Israel. Another great feature was the details of important events that occurred during the historic times covered in this dissertation.

James Monson developed the *Student Map Manual: Historical Geography of the Bible Lands*, 1979. This was the manual that the writer of this dissertation used while studying at the Institute of Holy Land Studies in 1985. It is an invaluable resource of information with excellent maps and charts!

2.2 The Middle East and the Fertile Crescent

2.2.1 The Middle East

The primary countries of the Middle East include: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the island of Cyprus.

Much of the Middle East, in its more limited Old Testament sense is desert. Large portions of modern-day Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia include desert wastes such as the Syrian Desert, the Nafu, the Arabian Desert and the Ruba al-Khali. These huge deserts cover some 487,000 square miles (1,261,330 sq. km.) or about half of the total

area of these countries. This figure does not include the desert wastelands of the Negev, Sinai, and Egypt.

Besides the huge deserts in the region, the seas and gulfs that help outline the Middle East on the south, east, and west have greatly influenced life in the area. The most important of these bodies of water is the Mediterranean Sea. It brings rains to the Middle East.

Climatically, the Middle East is divided into two major seasons: the dry season (the summer months) and the wet season (the winter months).

The amount of rainfall varies in different regions. Generally speaking, the northern areas receive more rainfall than the southern ones, higher elevations receive more rain than areas of lower elevation, and the regions closer to the Mediterranean receive more rain than those distant from the sea. Winter rains nourish the grain crops that grow throughout the area in places where the total rainfall is more than 12 inches (300 mm.) annually.

The amount of the moisture and dryness in specific location has an influence on survival of certain delicate items of the material culture, such as artifacts made from papyrus, cloth, wood, and other plant materials.

Normally, springs, wells, and cisterns supply many of the inhabitants of the Middle East with drinking water throughout the year. The other significant sources for fresh water, apart from rain water, are the great rivers of the Middle East, the Nile of Egypt and the Tigris and Euphrates of modern-day Syria and Iraq. Some of the earliest civilizations developed along the banks of these rivers where the people could irrigate their crops with river water. Of these great civilizations, the Bible mentions the mighty powers of Assyria, Babylonia, and

Egypt. The Jordan River carried water over a much shorter length and in a smaller area and no great civilization developed along its length.

2.2.2 The Fertile Crescent

The Fertile Crescent may be divided into two topographic areas, known as the Levant and Mesopotamia. The western area, the Levant, consists of a narrow band of high hills and mountainous outcroppings that flank the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. Longitudinally, the Levant actually comprises a series of three mountainous areas. (1) Beginning in the north near the Antioch basin and stretching as far as the Tripolis-Homs-Palmyra depression is the Nusariy (Baryglus) mountain range. This mountain range comprises the modern Syria-Lebanon border in the area of the el-Kabir River valley. (2) The Lebanon mountain range extends south of the el-Kabir valley as far as a deep gorge created by the Litani River (just north of Tyre). (3) The mountains of Galilee, Samaria, and Judah, are known as the central mountain range of Israel. All three ranges are actually limestone highlands, with steep rocky ridges and deep wadi beds. Following these mountain ranges is a deep, slender valley that separates them from other high ranges further inland. In the north, the Nusariy Mountains fall abruptly, more than 3,000 feet, into a gorge known as the Ghab. The Ghab is drained by the Orontes River. In its northern stretches it descends to a depth of 650 feet below sea level, thereby being flooded through the rainy winter months and remaining as a swampland throughout a large portion of the year. Opposite the Lebanon range this gorge is referred to as Al Biqa (Bekaa, "valley"). From the area of Ba'labakk northward, Al Biqa is drained by the crest of

the Orontes River. Going south of Ba'labakk, the Biqa is drained by the Litani River. Despite a watershed that rises at Ba'labakk to an elevation approaching 3,000 feet above the sea, the shape of a deep depression remains distinct. The mountains of Lebanon rise to heights in excess of 10,000 feet. The Anti-Lebanon Range, which lies immediately inland from the Al Biqa and runs parallel to the Lebanon mountains, itself reaches 9,000 feet and also falls off steeply into the valley. The gorge is called the Arabah, (wasteland). The section between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea is also known as the Jordan Rift Valley. The depression goes as far as the Gulf of Aqaba.

The Levant has natural barriers on all sides: the Mediterranean Sea on the west, mountains ranges, deep gorges, and arid wasteland surround it to the north, south, and east.

The eastern area of the Fertile Crescent is known as Mesopotamia. Most of this area lies in what today is Iraq, while the rest is located in Syria and Turkey. Southeastern areas are adjacent to Iran. The name Mesopotamia is derived from the Greek and means the land "between the rivers." Originally it may have referred to the land between the Euphrates and the Habur rivers, for it is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) to refer to Aram Naharaim ("Aram nah rayim" in Hebrew or lit. "Aram of the two rivers"), which was located near Nahor (Gen. 24:10). It includes Haran to which Abraham moved after leaving Ur.

Today Mesopotamia refers to the area between the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers. The land is bounded on the west and south by the Euphrates, on the east by the Tigris, and on the north by the Taurus and Kurdistan mountains. The

low-lying plain is at an altitude of approximately 1,600 feet in some northern sectors and slopes gently toward the Persian Gulf.

The meanings of the names of these two rivers are interesting. Tigris means "arrow" (Douglas 1987:s.v. "Tigris"). The Tigris is generally narrow, rapid flowing and hemmed in on the sides by rocky banks and cliffs. The slower moving, wider, more meandering Euphrates perhaps means "fruitful" from the Assyrian "Purattu" and Old Persian "Ufratu" possibly related to the Hebrew root "ph'ree," (Brown, Frances, Driver and Briggs, 1979: s.v. Hebrew "ph'ree'). Both the Euphrates and Tigris have their origins in the mountains of Armenia and are fed by the melting snows and local rains of this northern area, which receives 20 to 40 inches of precipitation annually. Although the source of the Tigris is within a few miles of where the Euphrates passes, the two rivers diverge and follow different paths. The Euphrates also, known as "the River" in the Bible, is over 1,780 miles long. It begins near Erzurum in Turkey. After flowing through the mountains of Armenia in a southwesterly direction it heads due south as it leaves the mountains. It crosses the North Syrian Plain near Carchemish which is only some 100 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea. It then turns southeast and continues its gradual descent through Iraq to the Persian Gulf. Where the Euphrates passes through the Syrian plain, limestone banks hem it in on both sides from Abu Kamal to Hit, leaving only a narrow alluvial valley for farming. The area only receives from 4 to 8 inches of rain a year.

The Tigris begins at Lake Hazar, Armenia, only 2 or 3 miles from the Euphrates. It is 1,150 miles long. After leaving the mountains of Armenia, the Tigris flows south

and is fed from the east first by the Greater and then by the Lesser Zab rivers. These two rivers in fact double the amount of water flowing into the Tigris. The ancient cities of Nineveh and Asshur are located on the banks of the Tigris River. From the Greater Zab south to near Samarra, there is very little habitation. From Samarra, the Tigris branches into canals to the east and to the southwest. Further southeast it comes into the "delta" or plain region of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The southern part of the plain is where the Tigris and the Euphrates turn into marshland and eventually form a swamp. In ancient times, the Tigris and Euphrates entered the Persian Gulf separately; today they join at Qurna and form the Shatt al Arab, which flows into the gulf. The area is hot and humid. The Ma'dan or the "swamp Arabs," inhabit the area today, living in reed huts constructed on high ground or on floating bogs. Their reed huts, along with their reed canoes, are reminiscent of the life of ancient inhabitants of this area. Archaeological remains are very few in this region.

The northern section of Mesopotamia was identified as Assyria. Assyria is bordered by the Urartian (Armenian) Mountains to the north and east, the Syrian Desert to the west and in the south is Jebel Hamrin and Babylonia. Its main cities were Nineveh, Ashur, and Khorsabad, which were all located on the Tigris River in the present country of Iraq.

Southern Mesopotamia was called Babylonia. At various times in its history it was known as Sumer, Akkad, Shinar and Chaldea. Babylon was a prominent city which is located on the Euphrates River, 50 miles south of Baghdad. Other important cities were Uruk, Ur, and Larsa which were

located near the Euphrates. The cities of Nippur, Isin, and Lagash were located halfway between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers.

Internally, Mesopotamia produced enough food to feed its population, although at times grain had to be shipped from the southern plain to Assyria. The land was water-laid and therefore without stones. Trees were scarce. Clay bricks (burnt or sun-dried) were used for houses. The clay also was utilized for pottery and for tablets used in writing.

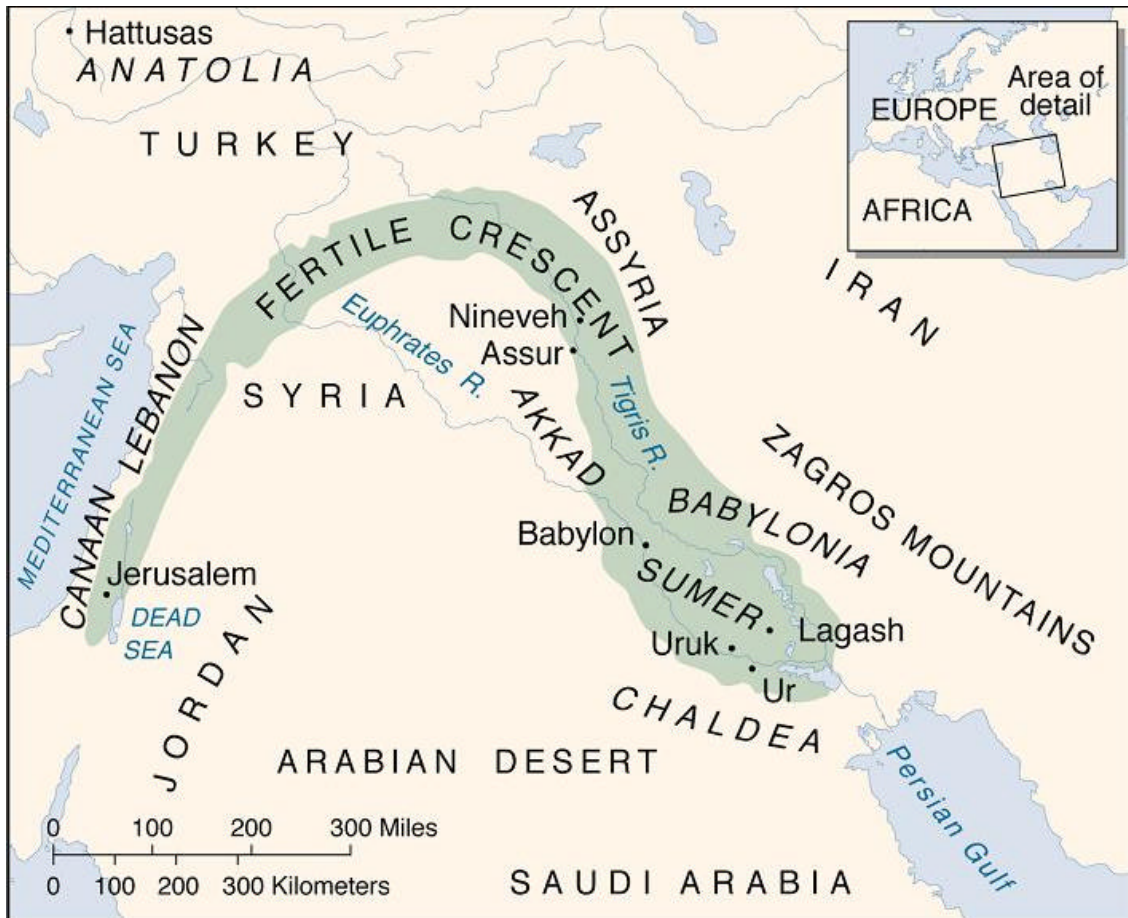
Land transport was mainly by foot or donkey; although the camel was probably introduced by the second millennium BCE. Land transport in the southern plain was impeded by the need to cross the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, as well as by the numerous canals and channels. In addition, the plain was often covered by mud or inundated by flood water during the winter and spring.

The main thoroughfares for travelers going from north to south were the rivers and canals. Bulk goods (such as timber and stone) were transported down the Tigris and Euphrates on rafts. These rafts were basically wooden platforms placed over inflated animal skins and could carry up to 35 tons (39 metric tons) of cargo. After the trip down the river was completed and the cargo had been delivered, the wooden frames were sold and the skins packed onto donkeys for the return trek northward. This type of vessel was used on both the Euphrates and the Tigris, although the Euphrates was a bit easier to navigate. Since in antiquity bridges were almost unknown, people often made use of these rafts (today called kalaks) to cross the rivers and canals. Also used for this purpose were guffahs, large circular baskets covered with bitumen, which could carry up to twenty people. Because Mesopotamia lacked many raw materials, they had to import them. Although the sources varied from period to period, silver was imported from the Taurus Mountains, tin from Iran, Afghanistan, and the

Caucasus regions, common timber from the Zagros Mountains, prized cedar wood from the Lebanon and Amanus Mountains, and copper from many areas to the northeast, northwest, and from sources that reached the Persian Gulf. In addition, luxury items were imported from India (spices and cloth) and south Arabia (frankincense and myrrh), both by overland transport and by sea. (Rasmussen 1989:66).

One of the main routes of international as well as local significance that passed through Mesopotamia began at Nineveh in the north and ran westward via Shubat-Enlil (Chagar Bazar), Guzana, and Haran to Carchemish. Roads led northwest into Anatolia, westward to the Mediterranean, and southward toward Damascus, Israel and Egypt.

From Carchemish, roads led northwest into Anatolia, westward to the Mediterranean, and southward toward Damascus, Israel, and Egypt. At Nineveh, connecting routes led northwest, via Diyarbakir, directly into Anatolia; eastward through difficult passes in the Zagros into Persia; and southward, via the Tigris, to the delta region. In addition, an important route led northwest along the Euphrates, from Sippar in the delta toward Mari. From Mari it continued along the Euphrates to Carchemish, while another branch headed westward across the steppe/desert to Tadmor. From the delta, routes lead east and southeast through the Zagros to the Persian plateau and other points eastward. In the first millennium BCE, routes also led southwest through the Arabian desert toward sources of frankincense and myrrh in southern Arabia. During peaceful times, caravans would ply these and other routes, while in less stable eras the great armies of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, etc., set out on campaigns of conquest and devastation along these same paths (Rasmussen 1989: 67-68). See Figure 2.2-1



The Fertile Crescent

Figure 2.2-1 Fertile Crescent

2.3 Major Natural Routes and Roads

and The Five Major Longitudinal Zones of Israel

2.3.1 Introduction to Roads and Modes of Travel

The roads that developed in the ancient land of Israel can be divided into three major categories: international routes, interregional routes, and local routes. One of the uses of the international and interregional roads was commercial. The roads were used for the transportation of scarce supplies, such as certain foodstuffs, copper, iron, tin, gold, silver, incense, dyes, and pottery. Bulkier items such as timber and stones were usually shipped, where possible, on boats and rafts.

In addition, the international and interregional roads served as thoroughfares for military expeditions, for itinerant tradesmen such as smiths, for the migration of peoples, for the conveyance of governmental and commercial messages, and for the travel of pilgrims to holy places. The people who controlled the roads, whether brigands or of a more permanent central government, could derive considerable income from the traffic on them. The central government could collect tolls from passing caravans, sell food and lodging, and "offer" the services of military escorts that could be hired by the caravans to "insure" their safe passage through "dangerous" territory. Individuals living along the international routes were exposed to new intellectual, cultural, linguistic, and religious influences, and this inevitably led to a degree of assimilation. For example, the ease of travel in and out of Samaria, when compared with the remoteness of the hill country of Judah, may help to explain the openness of the former non-Israelite religious and cultural influences.

This, in turn, eventually led to the deportation of the Northern Kingdom some 130 years before the captivity of Judah.

Besides walking, early modes of transportation included the use of donkeys, solid-wheeled carts, and chariots. Camels eventually began to be used to carry heavy loads, especially in caravans. These animals on average could carry 400 pounds (180 kg.) of cargo. Horses were used in the second and first millennia BCE to draw chariots and to serve in cavalry units. During the Persian period (538-333 BCE) and later, their use for everyday travel became more common. The spring and summer seasons were "the time when kings go off to war" (2 Sam. 11:1) because the roads were dry and the newly harvested grain was available to feed troops. In Old Testament times, roads between urban areas were prepared, but not paved. Basic building operations included the removal of stones from the path, the clearing of trees and bushes, the maintaining of shallow fords in the river beds, and possibly the construction of trails along steep slopes (1989 Rasmussen:12).

In ancient Near Eastern geographical research, certain largely unchanging physiographic and hydrologic factors determine the routes followed by caravans, migrants and armies. Those routes remained relatively unaltered throughout extended periods of time, except when things were temporarily disrupted by geo-politics. Deeply incised canyons cut by sometimes raging rivers were an impediment to travel to be avoided in all periods or, if unavoidable, to be forded at places offering a minimum of difficulty. Densely forested mountain slopes often times with twisting

gorges were consistently navigated at passes, however narrow those passes might have been (1989 Rasmussen: 27).

2.3.2 The International Route North-East to South-West

The north-east to south-west international route is known as The Great Trunk Road and sometimes as "the Way of the Sea" (Isa. 9:1) or in Latin as the "Via Maris." These are slight misnomers. Only portions of this route ran to or along the Mediterranean Sea coast. It seems that although portions of it were named in ancient times, the whole route did not have one special name. The portion leading from Egypt across the Sinai to the Philistine coast was called the "way of [to] the land of Philistines," (Ex. 13:17 RSV), (Aharoni 1979b:45-46).

This major international route proceeded approximately, 1,770 miles (2850 km.) from Thebes in southern Egypt to Ur in southern Mesopotamia. The route, after crossing northern Sinai, proceeded from Gaza through the Philistine and Sharon Plains to the area of the city of Yaham, avoiding such obstacles as sand dunes, low-lying muddy spots, the Yarkon River, and the swamps of the Sharon Plain. In order to proceed from Yaham to the Jezreel Valley, a traveler had to follow one of the passes that led through Mount Carmel, such as the one that ran from Aruna to Megiddo.

The most inclusive document which actually describes all the main branches of the Trunk Road is the geographical section in the letter by the Egyptian scribe Hori during the reign of Ramses II. It is titled Papyrus Anastasi I (Aharoni 1979b:46-47).

In the Papyrus Anastasi I, the cities from Sumer in the northeast to the Plain of Acco in the southwest are

listed first. From there the description turns inland to Hazor and Yeno'am which dominate the main fords in the Jordan Valley. It continues northwards to the Lebanese Al Biqa; as far as Kadesh, reaches the Damascus region, returns via the Golan to the Beth-Shean area. From here the scribe turns his attention to Megiddo, describes the Wadi' Ara, and continues to Joppa. In the last part of the letter, the desert section of the road from the Egyptian border to Raphia is described. These were the most important routes passing through Canaan during the New Kingdom period, the Trunk Road and its various branches, and the Egyptian scribe was acquainted with them even though other portions of the letter are of a peculiar nature.

The starting point of this route from the Egyptian border is Sile (Egyptian:t-r). Silu is the name given in the Amarna letters. Tell Abu Seifeh is nearly two miles east of Qantarah. This place is mentioned as the jumping-off point for many Egyptian campaigns, and one of the eastern Nile canals ran out to it. In Papyrus Anastasi I the place is called "the fortress of the ways of Horus," the ways of Pharaoh, the living embodiment of the god Horus on earth. Pharaoh's route, like the "King's Highway," was the established line of march for Egyptian troops heading northward. Therefore a chain of forts, way stations, and wells were established on it at fixed distances to facilitate the passage for the army and caravans and to give protection to the route. The "map" of Seti is more detailed than the "itinerary" of Papyrus Anastasi I, but most of the names are parallel. The probable reason is that Seti designates the forts and their adjacent water sources

by separate names while Papyrus Anastasi I only gives one name at each station (Aharoni 1979b:46-47).

Great importance was attached to the cities along the southern border of Canaan which become the strongholds of Egyptian authority, Raphia (Tell Rafah), Laban (Sheikh ez-Zuweid), Sharuhen (Tel el-Far'ah), Yurza (Tell Jemmeh), Beth-eqlaim (Tell el-Ajjul) and especially Gaza, the Egyptian capital in Canaan (Aharoni 1979b:48).

The Trunk Road (Via Maris) did not pass right along the shore line because of the strip of creeping sand dunes near the beach. For this reason most of the major towns were founded at a distance of three to four miles from the coast, along the line of the highway.

The most complete description of the towns along the The Trunk Road in the northern Shephelah and the Sharon is preserved in Thut-mose III's list. From his "annals" we only learn that he covered the distance of about 75 miles between Gaza and Yaham (Khirbet Yemma in the Sharon) in eleven or twelve days. Some of the significant Canaanite cities that were mentioned in Thut-mose III's list included: (61) Mahoz (m-h-s); (62) Joppa; (63) Gath; (64) Lod; (65) Ono; (66) Aphek (Tell Ras el-Ain at the sources of the Yarkon); (67) Socoh; (68) Yaham; (69) h-b-d-n (unidentified); (70) Gath; and (71) Migdal (Aharoni 1979b: 48-49).

The Trunk Road had two branches between Megiddo and Capernaum. The first one turned eastward from Megiddo and followed the course of the northern flanks of Mt. Carmel and Mt. Gilboa before arriving at the strongly garrisoned city of Beth-Shean, across from the mouth of the Yarmuk River. That section of the Road appears to have run along the edge of the valley during the dry season, but took to

the higher ground during the winter months to avoid the marshes of the lowlands. At Beth-Shean, the roadway veered northward and proceeded up the Jordan valley for about 15 miles, before it encountered the southern end of the Sea of Galilee. This branch of the Road then ran northward along the western perimeter of the Sea as far as Capernaum. At Capernaum, the Great Trunk Road proceeded up the western flank of the Hula valley and approached the preeminent fortress city of Hazor, which guarded Israel's northernmost regions. From there, the roadway turned northeast in the direction of Damascus, passing the edge of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range and attempting to avoid the basaltic land surface of the Golan and Hauran. A regional thoroughfare also extended northward from Hazor, navigating the entire Al Beqa past Ba'labakk before merging with the Trunk Road at Qatna.

Along the way to the city of Qatna, a shortcut from the Great Trunk Road to the Euphrates could carry someone past the oasis at Tadmor. From Qatna, the Trunk Road essentially followed the course of the Orontes River to Hamath, where it set off on a directly northern course.

2.3.3 The King's Highway

A second route of importance that passed through Israel in the Old Testament times was the King's Highway (Num. 20:17; 21:22), and later outside the Bible as Trajan's Highway and later as the Sultan's Highway. It was the emperor Trajan who converted this route from a track into a road in the second century CE (Aharoni 1979b:54). This passageway stretched from the north end of the Red Sea at Ezion-geber and essentially rode the watershed of Edom and Moab, past the cities of Bozrah, Kir-hareseth, Dibon

and Heshbon, before coming to Rabbah-ammon. The city was very important because whoever ruled this city also controlled the King's Highway. The Highway made its way from Amman across the Gilead and Bashan plateaus to Damascus, where it joined the Great Trunk Road. A double watershed exists along the whole length of Transjordan: most of the wadies descending westward from the highlands are short, and the watershed between them and those running eastward is only 13 to 16 miles from the Arabah and the Jordan Valley. Along with these, Transjordan also has four large wadies with much longer stream beds which have carved deep canyons which run 25 to 30 miles in length. These wadies, which divide Transjordan into its principal geographical sectors, are: the Yarmuk, Jabbok, Arnon and the Zered. The disadvantage of this route is that it is so far to the west. This road has the advantage of passing through a region replete with settlements and water sources, but it has the disadvantage of the difficult fords across the large wadies. The western course was the main one used during most periods. As mentioned before, at Rabbath-ammon the two lines meet (Aharoni 1979b:55).

The important settlements of Transjordan were always located along the King's Highway: Naveh; Karnaim and Ashtaroth in Bashan; the Ammonite capital and Heshbon, the ancient capital of Sihon, King of the Amorites; Medeba and Dibon on the Moabite plateau north of the Arnon; Madmen and Kirhareseth in central Moab; Sela and Bozrah in northern Edom. From here two branches go out across the desert to Egypt: (1) the northern route passes through the wilderness of Zin to Kadesh-barnea and reaches Egypt via "the way of the wilderness of Shur" (Gen. 16:7); (2) the southern route continues southward through the Edomite hill country

in close proximity to Teman and Rekem and descends to the southern end of the Arabah at Elath. From here it crosses the wilderness of Paran and Qal' at en-Nahl, arriving at Egypt near the present-day Suez (Aharoni 1979b:55-56).

The King's Highway therefore went a much greater distance into the desert than the "Great Trunk Road." Archaeological research in Transjordan has proven that settlements did not flourish along this route during every period, in contrast to the general picture with regard to the "Great Trunk Road." In biblical times, a thriving population is indicated along the length of the King's Highway in two periods: first, at the end of the third millennium BCE and second during the occupation of the Hebrew tribes from the thirteenth century to the end of the Iron Age. During the long period of occupation decline there were mainly nomadic tribes there (Aharoni 1979b:56).

On the other hand, in northern Gilead near the junction of The Trunk Road and the King's Highway, no such habitational gap exists. From the vicinity of Ramoth-Gilead northward, one again finds the continuous settlement as in the other regions of The Trunk Road. Here the influence of this important route on the founding, growth and historical continuance of settlement is clearly seen. The periods of settlement in the central Negev highlands (south of the biblical Negeb) are shorter, being limited to a brief space of time at the end of the third millennium, and to a later period from the eleventh or tenth to the seventh centuries (Aharoni 1979b:56).

The King's Highway was of special importance, therefore, mainly in the particular historical periods when those sectors were settled. However, even in the absence of a permanent settlement, the desert nomads used it not only

in their travels, but also for the transport of their own commercial caravans and the exchange of agricultural and manufactured products between the settled areas. Luxury goods such as gold, frankincense, and myrrh were brought from southern Arabia to the Near Eastern commercial center of Damascus (Aharoni 1979b:57).

During the Israelite Monarchy, a special importance was attached to the King's Highway by virtue of the commerce with southern Arabia that passed over it. There was stiff competition between Israel and Aram-Damascus over control of the King's Highway. At every opportunity the Arameans tried to gain control of this region (2 Kings 10:33 and 16:6). When the Assyrians conquered Damascus they also invaded Transjordan and Arabia (Aharoni 1979b:57).

2.3.4 Interregional and Local Routes

The internal network of roads which served to connect the various regions of the country is also fixed mainly in accordance with the two main routes on the west and east which served both for international and internal needs. Most of the internal roads are latitudinal roads, connecting the main routes to one another. Because of the topographical difficulties there are few longitudinal roads crossing the country between the north and south parallel to the main roads.

One of the longitudinal roads was very important. It ran from Beersheba in the south to Shechem in the north. It passed near: Debir, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Gibeah, Ramah, Mizpah, Bethel, Ai and Shiloh. It is called the "Route of the Patriarchs" because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob traveled its length, while others refer to it as the "Ridge

Route." In many places it follows along the watershed of the Judean and Ephraim mountains.

The highway from Bethel to Shechem is mentioned in the description of Shiloh (Judges 21:19). From Shechem the road forks out into two branches: the western one passes through Samaria, Dothan, Ibleam and Beth-Haggan to the Plain of Jezreel. The eastern branch reaches the Valley of Beth-Shean via Tirzah and Bezek. The segment of the western branch between Jezreel and Beth-Haggan is called "the way of Beth-Haggan." It passes through the "ascent of Gur" (2 Kings 9:27). South of Hebron the road also forks to form additional branches. The westernmost descends via Debir and Madmannah to Beersheba, it then continues southward past Nissana towards the "way to Shur" which leads to Egypt. The eastern branch turns from Hebron towards Juttah and Eshtemoa and descends towards Arad and Hormah. From there it extends southward through the heart of the Negev past Aroer, Oboda and Bir-Hafir to Kadesh-Barnea to Arad (Num. 21:1 and Aharoni 1979b:57).

A second longitudinal trail runs along the deep Jordan rift from Jericho to the Valley of Beth-Shean. In fact, there are two parallel roads on opposite sides of the Jordan River. However, the eastern one was more important because of the many settlements situated on it, e.g. Adam, Zarethan, Succoth, Zaphon and Pella. This is the biblical "Way of the Plain" (2 Sam. 18.23). A similar route also ran down the Arabah south of the Dead Sea connecting Zoar and Tamar with Elath on the Gulf of Aqabah. Therefore, it is called in the Bible "the Way of the Reed Sea" (Exodus. 13:18; Num. 14:25 and 21:4; Deut. 1:40: Aharoni 1979b:58). Another longitudinal route existed in the Shephelah of Judah. Of special importance was the road running from

Lachish to the Valley of Aijalon eastward of the mountainous ridge, on which were situated Tell el-Judeideh (Moresheth-gath) and Azekah. A strong fort was built on this route in the days of the Judean kings (the southern Khirbet Rasm ed-Dab') serving as a lookout post to maintain contact between three important Judean sites in this region: Azekah, Tell el-Judeidah and Khirbet Tell el-Beida (Achzib).

Latitudinal roads crossing the country from east to west and connecting the Great Trunk Road with the King's Highway are much more numerous. Some of the most important ones in the Negev were: (1) the road connecting Kadesh-Barnea with the southern Arabah evidently "the way to the hill country of the Amorites" (Deut.1.19) and (2) the road descending from the vicinity of Arad to the northern end of Jebel Usdum. This is known as "Way to Edom" (2 Kings 3.20), because this is the main route leading to Edom.

Some of the most important ones in Judah included the following roads: (1) the "Valley of Elah" to Bethlehem; (2) Lachish to Hebron; (3) Valley of Sorek to the Valley of Rephaim; (4) Rabbah and Kiriath-Jearim to Jerusalem; (5) the way of Beth-Horon and (6) the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and eastward to Transjordan (Aharoni 1979b: 59).

2.4 The Geography of Israel and Transjordan

2.4.1 The Five Major Longitudinal Zones of Israel.

There are five major longitudinal zones that have been distinguished in Israel and on east. Moving from the west to east they are the coastal plain, the central

mountain range, the Rift Valley, the Transjordanian mountains, and the eastern desert(Aharoni 1979b:23).

2.4.2 The Geographical Distribution of the Tribes of Israel

The distribution of the land to the tribes of Israel is found in the book of Joshua. Evidence for the book and its author are as follows:

(1) It appears reasonable to accept that the book was basically composed by Joshua. Biographical details are given from the first chapter that only Joshua could have known. Joshua 24:26 records, that Joshua wrote out his own farewell speech which was quoted.

(2) Other references in Joshua point to an early date of composition, even if not precisely within the lifetime of Joshua. Canaanite cities are mentioned by their archaic names; for example, Baalah for Kiriath-Jearin (15:9) Kiriath-Sannah for Debir (15:49) and Kiriath-Arba for Hebron (15:13). Sidon is acknowledged as the most important city in Phoenicia, 13:4-6, this was true during the twelfth century. According to 9:27, the Gibeonite "unto this day" were still "hewers of wood and drawers of water" around the tabernacle as Joshua had appointed them. Years later, during the time of Saul, 2 Sam.21:1-9, some Gibeonites had been massacred. Jerusalem (Joshua 18:16, 28) shows very clearly that at the time of the writing of the book of Joshua, it was inhabited by the Jebusites and had not yet been captured by the Hebrews under King David.

(3) There is evidence of later editorial work as there were events that could have happened only after Joshua's death. Joshua 24:31 "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who lived after Joshua" (15:13-17). Othniel's capture of Kiriath-Arba

(15:13-17) and the migration of a portion of the Danite tribe to the extreme north of Israel (19:4) also indicate an early date.

The tribal territories are described in two basic ways. In some instances the boundary of a given tribe is described as a line running from point A to point B to point C in a dot-to-dot fashion. In some of these cases, the descriptions are very detailed (e.g. Judah's and Benjamin's common boundary in the vicinity of Jerusalem; Joshua 15:7-9; 18:15-17), while in others the information supplied is very brief and sometimes vague.

The Settlement and Distribution of the Tribal Areas

According to the Book of Joshua

1. JUDAH (Joshua 15 & Judges 1:8-18)

Jerusalem remained the capital of the southern kingdom which was frequently in opposition to the northern breakaway kingdom of Israel. In Joshua and Judges, there are listed 132 cities and geographical locations which composed the area of Judah. The list is divided into four major geographical areas. The Negev (Josh. 15:20-32); the Shephelah (vs. 33-47); the Hill Country (vs. 48-60) and the Eastern Wilderness (vs. 61-62).

2. EPHRAIM (Joshua 16:1)

This tribe was one which followed Jeroboam in the Israelite confederacy. The Hill Country of Ephraim is bounded on the west by the Sharon Plain, on the east by the Rift Valley, on the north by the theoretical east-west line drawn along the Kanah Ravine, and on the south by a theoretical east-west line through the city of Bethel.

Primary cities of this area are: Aphek, Lebonah, Shiloh, Lower and Upper Beth Horon, Mizpah, Bethel, Ai (Et Tell), and Jericho.

3. MANASSEH, HALF-TRIBE WEST OF JORDAN RIVER (Joshua 17)

This tribe followed the leadership of the northern tribes and was a part of Israel under Jeroboam and the subsequent kings of Israel. A portion of Manasseh settled in the land of Gilead, the other part settled in Canaan. Only the southwest boundary is described in detail (Josh.17:7-11), and the remaining borders are now difficult to define. Manasseh stretched from the sea to the Jordan River; the southern boundary was next to the territory of Ephraim, while on the north, from west to east, Manasseh bordered on Asher, Zebulun, and Issachar. The boundary with these northern tribes evidently passed through the Jezreel and Harod valleys, which were divided among them. Cities such as Beth-Shean, Ibleam, Dor, Endor, Tanaach, and Megiddo, while assigned to Manasseh (vs. 11), were difficult to capture due to the strength of the Canaanites in the plain, who possessed iron chariots (vs. 16). This was confirmed in the annals of Thutmose III (see Inscriptions in this dissertation). It appears that the Israelites were not able to take control of these powerful cities until the reigns of David and Solomon. Since the land was controlled by the Canaanites, the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim settled in the heavily forested hill country, cutting down trees to secure needed farmland (vs. 15-18).

4. BENJAMIN (Joshua 18:11-18)

Benjamin's territory fell between the two powerful tribes of Ephraim and Judah. The tribe stayed quite faithful to Rehoboam and united with the tribes of Judah and Simeon. Benjamin's allotment is described in two ways: first by a boundary list and then by a list of cities in Benjamin's territory. North of Benjamin's territory was Ephraim and Judah was south. On the east it was bounded by the Jordan River. Instead of extending into the Aijalon Valley, the tribe of Benjamin was confined to the hills overlooking the valley. It is important to note that the city of Jerusalem was in the tribal area of Benjamin, not in Judah, despite the fact that later a Judahite (David) would capture the city and make it his personal possession. Other cities in Benjamin included: Gibeon, Ramah, Geba, Mizpah, Bethel, Jerusalem, Adullam and Jericho. One of the strategic points of importance of Benjamin was the fact that roads from the coastal plain into the hill country ran through the western portion of its territory. On the east, several roads led down into the Rift Valley and joined at the oasis of Jericho and from there proceeded eastward across the fords of the Jordan River into the Transjordan. Benjamin was in the location where invading international powers often entered the hills by the roads from the east or the west. The northern and southern Israelite tribes occasionally met in battle in the territory of the Benjamites as they sought to expand their influence.

5. SIMEON (Joshua 19:1-9)

Simeon received territory within Judah in the Negev area. The tribe of Simeon became a part of the southern kingdom under the leadership of Rehoboam. Fifteen cities were located there and some of the main ones were Ziklag,

Bethul and Beersheba. Regardless of its location, this tribe maintained its identity and was not absorbed into the tribe of Judah. It was still a distinct and growing tribe during the days of the Judean king Hezekiah (1 Chron. 4:41). The chronicler describes its expansion northwestward toward Gedor (Gerar) and eastward toward the Hill Country of Seir (1 Chron. 4:42).

6. ZEBULUN (Joshua 19:10-16)

This tribe became a member of Israel after the split with the United Monarchy. A correct understanding of the boundaries of the tribe of Zebulun is important to understanding the other tribal allotments in the Galilee region. Issachar, Naphtali, and Asher all bordered Zebulun on the southeast, northeast, and northwest. First the southern boundary of Zebulun is given: Sarid, a city near the center of the southern border is the starting point and the boundary is first traced westward from Sarid to Daberath, Japhia and Gath Hopher. The boundary passed through Gath Hopher on the east side and circled around so that its northern portion touched Rimmon and passed through the modern Bet Netof Valley to Hannathon. From there it headed southwest and south, following the Valley of Iphtah then it continued to the Wadi Musrarah to the Kishon. The greater part of Zebulun's allotment was confined to the high ground overlooking the Jezreel Valley to the south. Zebulun was situated near several major trade routes that ran through the Jezreel Valley, the east-west route that ran through Hannathon to Acco and the route that connected Megiddo with Acco via Shimron and Hannathon. It appears that the Zebulunites maintained considerable commercial relations with Mediterranean port cities (Deut. 33:18-19).

7. ISSACHAR (Joshua 19: 17-23)

Issachar became a part of the northern kingdom after the division of the United Monarchy. The description of the allotment of Issachar is composed of a city list, along with very brief boundary descriptions (Joshua 19:22). Its northern line seems to have run from the hills overlooking the Jabneel Valley westward past Mount Tabor to Kesulloth. On the west, its boundary ran from Kesulloth to the city of Jezreel, indicating that only the eastern portion of the Jezreel Valley was within its territory. On the south, its boundary headed southeast from Jezreel, following the Harod Valley to the Jordan, its eastern limit. Issachar's location was such that the major international highways ran close to its southern and western borders, and because of the relatively gentle terrain it would have been easy for armies on the march to invade. Some of the significant cities in this tribal area were: Endor, Shunem, Jezreel, Beth-Shean and Anaharath.

8. ASHER (Joshua 19:24-31)

The tribe of Asher was in the northwest corner of Israel. It became a part of Israel after the division of the United Monarchy. It was bounded on the south and east by Manasseh, Zebulun, and Naphtali and on the north by Phoenicia. Its territory stretched from Mount Carmel in the south to the Litani River on the north and through the hills of Upper and Lower Galilee. According to Judges 1:31, Asher was not able to take control of seven important cities located on the coastal plain: Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek, and Rhob. Strategically and economically, Asher's territory was very important. The one natural harbor of the whole country, Acco, was located

there. The international north-south route along the coast ran through Asher, as did east-west routes that connected the port of Acco with Transjordan and even Damascus. During the Old Testament period, the maritime powers of Tyre and Sidon took great interest in controlling the area, to the economic detriment of Israel.

9. NAPHTALI (Joshua 19:32-39)

The tribe of Naphtali was bounded on the south by Issachar and on the west by Zebulun and Asher. Its northern boundary is not recorded, but it probably extended as far as the Israelites settled. That is, south of an east-west line that coincided with the east-west portion of the Litani River. Its eastern boundary seems to have been the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee, but the reference to "Judah" in Joshua 19:34 is problematic. The city list contains only sixteen towns and the total is given as nineteen. It seems that three cities were mentioned in the boundary description and these were Heleph, Adami Nekeb, and Jabneel (Josh.19:33).

10. DAN (Joshua 19:40-48)

The tribe of Dan became a part of Israel after the division of the United Monarchy. Dan was actually allotted territory to the west of Benjamin, and Dan's eastern boundary, on the western slopes of the mountains overlooking the coastal plain, coincided with the western boundary of Benjamin. Its southern boundary was identical to Judah's northern one and followed the Sorek Valley out to the Mediterranean Sea (Josh. 15:10-11). Dan's northern boundary is not outlined. Its irregular shape can however be assumed by looking at the city list of Dan and comparing

this with the cities allotted to Ephraim. It stretched to the Jarkon/Yarkon River (19:46). Dan's territory straddled the Aijalon valley through which the major approach road into the Hill Country of Ephraim and Judah ran. In addition, the main international north-south route ran through Dan's western extension. Not until the days of David and Solomon did Israel take control of territory which had originally been allotted to the tribe of Dan, and then only for a brief period of time (1 Kings 4:9). Apparently due to Amorite pressures, some of the tribe of Dan moved northward to Laish/Leshem, which they captured and renamed "Dan" (Judges 17-18). They thought that they had moved from an area of insecurity to one of security and prosperity (Judges 18:7, 27-28); yet later in biblical history this was the very area that invaders from the north (the Arameans, Assyrians, and others) attacked first.

11. REUBEN, GAD, AND HALF-TRIBE OF MANASSEH
(Joshua 13:8-33)

These tribes became parts of Israel after the division of the United Monarchy. The tribe of Reuben received much of the territory across the Jordan River stretching from the Arnon Gorge in the south to the city of Heshbon in the north (in the Moabite tableland). At some point in time, it seems that Gadites settled in some of their cities. The territory allotted to Gad stretched from Heshbon in the south to Mahanaim on the Jabbok River in the north and just east of Rabbah to the Jordan River on the west. In addition it seems that Gad received the whole of the Jordan Valley east of the river, all the way up to the Sea of Kinnereth (Joshua 13:27). About half of the tribe of

Manasseh settled the territory north of the Jabbok and the Bashan, probably north to Mount Hermon (Josh. 13:29-31).

These tribes, although settled in the Transjordan attempted to maintain relations with the other Israelite tribes in the land of Canaan (Joshua 22). They experienced continuous pressure from the people that occupied their territories. These people included the Moabites, south of the Arnon Gorge, Ammonites on the east, the desert tribes such as the Midianites and Ishmaelites, the Arameans of Damascus, and the Assyrians.

Levitical Cities (Joshua 21; 1 Chronicles 6:54-81)

Joshua and Eleazar the priest assigned towns and pasturelands to the Levites. Though not settled exclusively by Levites, forty-eight cities were assigned to the three Levitical clans. About four such cities were designated from each of the tribes. A good number of the cities were old Canaanite centers, some of which did not come under Israelite control until the days of David and Solomon. It seems that Levitical settlement in those cities was probably delayed until that time. By the time of David, the Levites were involved not only with matters pertaining to God but also with "the affairs of the king" (1 Chron. 26:29-32). Because of their attachment to the temple in Jerusalem and devotion to king David, many Levites moved south to Judah and Jerusalem at the time of the revolt of the north in the days of Jeroboam I (931-913 BCE) (2 Chron. 11:13-17).

Cities of Refuge

As part of the allotment process, six cities were set aside as places to which a person who committed manslaughter could flee. There the case would be tried (Josh. 20:4, 6) and if it was indeed judged as manslaughter, rather than murder, the slayer was required to remain in that city until the death of the high priest (Josh. 20:6; Num. 35:9-34; Deut. 4:41-43; 19:1-14). Three of the cities were located to the west of the Jordan River (Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron) and three to the east (Golan, Ramoth, and Bezer). All of these cities were Levitical cities, where presumably the law of God was well-known due to the teaching activity of the Levites. Both sides of the Jordan had northern cities (Kedesh and Golan), central cities (Shechem and Ramoth in Gilead) and southern cities (Hebron and Bezer). The accused could readily find refuge from the hand of the hand of the "avenger of blood" (Joshua 20:3).

2.4.3 The Geography of the Divided Kingdom.

After the death of Solomon (930 BCE) the kingdom broke up into its two divisions, Judah and Israel. The kingdom of Israel was under Jeroboam and included all of the northern tribes: the House of Joseph, the tribes of the Galilee area and those of Transjordan. The southern tribes were under Rehoboam and included Judah, Simeon and also Benjamin. See Figure 2.2-1.



Figure 2.2-2 Kingdoms of Israel and Judah