

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament History, Lit., and Theology, Lecture 6

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A. Preliminaries

Well good morning. The peace of Christ be with you. Let's try that once again. The peace of Christ be with you. By the way at the end of the class day I get to wish you Shabbat shalom which will sort of be the book end. Peace of Christ and then Shabbat shalom at the end of the class--Sabbath peace. Notice the announcements. We do have to do a little compression as a result of [the snow day] because I do want to try to stay on schedule. Actually one of my reasons for trying to stay on schedule is that I really don't like to give exams on Mondays because that forces you to study on Sunday and although you may be doing that anyway I don't want to be the cause of it because I'm sort of a Sabbath person. So we'll talk more about that later, but at any rate I want to keep the exam on Friday. So we will indeed compress the lectures that are on Isaac, Jacob, on the one hand, and then Joseph and as I said in my email to you I think that's really quite doable because I suspect most of you know the Joseph narratives fairly well. We'll draw some theological lessons from it. The format for the exam [details here have been left out of the transcript]

B. A "Geography" Psalm

But I do want to take some time to introduce you to a historical geography psalm. There's a bunch of them. But this is my favorite one. We're going to talk just a little bit about this psalm because it's a perfect intro into the lecture for today and it gives us some good grounds on which to pray together as well. So if you have your Bibles and you're interested in turning to Psalm 133, that's what we're going to do. One of my reasons also for addressing this psalm is that it's a great one to sing together. So by the time we learn this one, we'll have, once I'm in voice again, two psalms that we can sing as we start class. But at any rate, Psalm 133: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers" – and that includes sisters as well – "dwell together in unity!" That's the verse we're going to sing

eventually. “How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard” –wait a minute. I mean, what’s so nice about having someone come and pour oil all over your head? Sounds like something I would have done to my sister when I was mad at her. It doesn’t sound like a blessing, does it? Or, like “sisters dwelling together in unity!” “Precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down on the collar of his robes.” Let me finish the psalm and then I’ll say a couple things. “It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, life forevermore.”

On the oil thing, how are you going to interpret that? There are two levels on which we can understand it, and they both are exceedingly important. Any thoughts? Mary. [student answers] And particularly the anointing of whom in this case? It’s Aaron, isn’t it? And Aaron, the high priest, was the mediator between people and God. Of course, the anointing there has a profound theological significance in terms of our access and our relationship with God. A lot more to say on that. Anything else about oil? Well, take yourself to a very hot climate. It might be a good thought right now since you just came in from the outdoors, but Israel is a very hot and dry climate. And, in fact, as you look at some of the works of art from ancient Egypt, there are carved in stone pictures of people bringing bowls of oil to pour on heads as an offer of hospitality. Because when your skin is cracked and dry, this is really soothing. So think of these two levels in terms of oil poured on the head and that being a figure to represent unity-- soothing, restorative. We’re going to say more about olive oil a little bit later on today. Let’s take some time to pray together and then we’ll get onto our topic for the day.

O gracious God our Heavenly Father, Precious Redeemer, most Holy Spirit of truth, we do ask as we open the Scriptures today in the context of geography and in the context of history that you would teach us. Father we pray for the filling of your Spirit. Help me to teach clearly. Help each one of us to learn well that the Scriptures may come alive in a new and different way. And Father, we would pray as we are exhorted by this psalm, that you would indeed help us to work hard at living together, and living together

as brothers and sisters in Christ, as members of His body. We pray that for this class, we pray that for this campus. We would ask for your people that you would help us to be a beacon of light that people would know that we love you and that you love us and that we love one another. We ask these things in Christ's name with thanksgiving. Amen.

C. Introduction to Historical Geography

Well, let's go on and see what we can do for the day. Here we are talking about geographical and historical backgrounds and we're going to move fast. We have kind of gotten a slow start on this semester because Monday's class was short as well and then we missed Wednesday. So we're going to try to make our way through this entire lecture today. Hang with me.

My having said that however doesn't preclude your asking questions. If you have questions, please by all means ask. Here's one for you. Just to get us started. You know you've got some studying on your maps or I hope you've downloaded those maps and done the assignments there. Which of the following cities is located in Northwestern Mesopotamia? Who would go for Ur? Any votes for Ur? Nobody is going on Ur. Anybody go for *Shechem*? No votes for *Shechem*. How about *Sumer*? Got a couple votes on Sumer. Three or Four. How about Haran? Okay, most of us are going for Haran. Why is that important? Those of you who said Haran, does anybody want to say why this is important? Is that a hand up? [student answers] Abraham is going to go actually from Ur but he's going to land with Terah and his family in Haran for quite some time and when he sends his servant back to get a wife for his son, that's the area they're going to go to as well. So the family is going to be located there. It does become fairly important. Super.

D. Definitions

How about some definitions first of all? These are overly simplistic definitions. Okay? But at least they are kind of going to get some framework for us. When we're talking about "geography" we're talking about the study of the land. There are, of course, two

parts of that word which is derived from Greek mean “study of the land.” In other words, this is the spatial dimension. We’re talking about space-time; this is about spatial dimension. I’ll have more to say about the implications of that in just a moment.

Second basic definition: “history.” Again, for those of you who are history majors and you are taking or will take a course in historiography, there’s a whole lot more to say about the definition of history and I know that. But for our purposes, when we’re talking about history, we’re talking about succession of events that unfold. That means the temporal dimension. So we’ve got space and time that are going to feed into how we understand this place. The chessboard is the spatial dimension. How the things unfold in that chess game is going to be our temporal dimension. So kind of hang onto that for a little bit as it might be helpful in terms of thinking of these two parts of the discipline of historical geography.

Now, of course, you are realizing perhaps with a sinking feeling in your stomach that this means maps and dates. I don’t have you memorize tons and tons of dates but there will be some that you need to know as this semester goes on. You have to do that for history.

E. Rationale for Study

Okay, why do we study this material? I’d ask you that question except you have it in your lecture outline in terms of the answer. So let me just flesh these things out just a little bit. Geography, whether we realize it or not, is more than simply the study of a map because as you think of where you live it shapes who you are to a large degree. It really does. It shapes where and how people live. It helps us understand how the history unfolds. Here’s just a garden variety example: how many of you live somewhere in the mountains? New Hampshire, Vermont, upstate New York? Something like that. How many of you live somewhere in between New York City and Washington DC? Where do the rest of you live? You all who are on this kind of megalopolis from NYC all the way to Washington, do you think your lives are somewhat different than our folks from Vermont or New Hampshire or the Adirondacks? You can bet they are because your

population densities are much different obviously between those two. That shapes an awful lot in terms of culture, in terms of language, in terms of world views - all those kinds of things. The same is true in Israel. The people who lived in the area of Shechem, just mentioned it a moment ago, all the way down past Bethel, past Jerusalem, past Hebron down to Beersheba - those folks are living in a hill country area that would be the counterpart of Vermont and New Hampshire. Whereas the people who are living out on the coastal plains, Philistines notably, they are the cosmopolitan types of the day. I'm not saying that everyone that lives between Boston and Washington DC is a Philistine, don't get me wrong. But you get the idea.

In terms of history, the first day that we had class one of the things I did was read for you 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 where Paul is saying "these things that happened to the Israelites are there as lessons for us." Remember that? And so here we have kind of a summary of that without the reference. That's simply this: history does indeed contain lessons for us. Over and over again, we see God's people redeemed, delivered at the Red Sea, stumbling and faltering, just as we do over and over again. So there are lots of important lessons there. We see the patience and grace of God as well, because God does indeed intervene on behalf of his people. So these two things are small little snippets of a rationale for studying historical geography. Any questions before we go on?

F. Major Land Structures, Barriers and the "Land Bridge" in the Ancient Near East

Here's a little map. What I'm going to do just in the next couple minutes or so is take the things that you have on the PowerPoint and in the lecture outline and put them on this map and then we'll look at them in print as well. So first of all major land masses, if you will. Here's Mesopotamia. It means "between the rivers." Most people think that's referring to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. There is some difference of opinion on that. We can get into that later on if you're interested. But Mesopotamia is referring to this area and when I use the term Mesopotamia now I'm not using a geo-political term. I'm just using a geographical term. The politics get in there when we start talking about

Babylonians and Assyrians and all those guys. They're living here in Mesopotamia. One major power circle then is right there. The second major power locus, land form, is down in Egypt. We'll say more about how history unfolds in the Egyptian dynastic shifts as course unfolds.

The third one, not necessarily so prominent in the text of the First Testament, but nevertheless we need to acknowledge it's there because it's terribly important, is Anatolia. Right up here. We're going to have some people named "Hittites" who live up there. There are also the Hurrians who are there and although we don't see them much in the pages of the Bible, they are not insignificant. So Mesopotamia, Egypt and Anatolia. I've got Aram circled here as well for several reasons. First of all, it's always on the front lines between this little land of Israel (about which I'm going to say more about in a moment) and the major forces in Mesopotamia. Aram has another name. What is it? It starts with an S. Syria. Right. Syria. Aram is the transliteration of the Hebrew "Aram" but is often known as Syria. Don't mix it up with Assyria. We'll have more to say about that later. So kind of a buffer zone here. It's also circled because it's the area that we mentioned just a moment ago when we talked about the location of *Haran* and Abraham's family settling in there and therefore that being the place to which there'd be some travel back and forth. Now those are our major political centers - land masses, land forms, big land forms that become political centers and they're important to note. One of the reasons they're important to note is simply this: you know human nature as well as I do and you probably know systemic human nature, in other words, big political systems. Just as individuals are rarely content with what we have, we always want a little more; so also nations have been that way in the past, always wanting a little more. Therefore people who lived in Mesopotamia, such as the Assyrians and the Babylonians particularly, recognized full well that down here in Egypt was the breadbasket of the ancient Near East because of the Nile River. They had the Tigris and Euphrates but those were not nearly helpful in terms of growing things for a lot of reasons: flooding, salinization, all those sorts of problems. So there was often some traffic that was military traffic through here. Egypt was the same way you know. When they started flexing their

muscles thinking “well if we could move up here, we could get our hands on olive oil, Grapes to make into wine. Good stuff.” So there’s always traffic back and forth through here [Israel] that’s military traffic. So as you think of your big power centers Anatolia/Hittites –especially up there- there’s going to be traffic through here.

Now you’re going to say why through [Israel]? Well that brings us to our barriers. The Arabian Desert is a significant barrier. Precious few water sources. Now, of course, we can fly over it; you can even take a Humvee through it. Couldn’t do that then so as people travelled, even if you were going to go from Ur which is that black dot, you would have to go up this way and then finally turn down and go to the south and southwest through Egypt. The Arabian Desert was a huge barrier. The Sinai Desert was a smaller barrier but still a barrier. They constitute one barrier. The other barrier is going to be the Mediterranean Sea. Not a lot of sea traffic in the early centuries that we’re talking about. We’re talking about Old Testament times. There was more later on, no question about it, but not in our earlier centuries. So, traffic then was funneling through here. Am I being clear on that?

Therefore you have a land bridge. Right there. That has an awful lot to do with what we talk about. I’m going to say more about this later, when we talk about Israel being a testing ground of faith. God has chosen to plant them at a place where life is a bit tenuous from the geo-political context. There’s always a threat of enemies going through here. The blessings and the curses of the covenant tie into land and one of the aspects of land is security - or insecurity. If they’re obedient, they receive blessings of security, freedom from enemy attack, etc. If they’re disobedient, one of the ways that God uses to chastise his people is going to be enemy attack. And we’ll talk about some of those potential folks a little later on today.

All right, let’s look at that in print. And again you’ve seen all this because we’ve just put it on the map. The large land structures we know. We’ve seen the barriers and we’ve seen the land bridge so here’s Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Anatolia plateau, the Mediterranean Sea, and the land between. This is the phrase I want you to have in your heads, the “Land between”; that’s what Israel is. It’s the land between these geo-political

entities. And there's always going to be some importance in that. It's the land between for some other reasons as well. I'm going to get to those in a moment. Land between or testing ground of faith.

G. Sources of Water

Let's add onto that in a little bit because not only do we have geo-political issues we need to talk about; we also need to talk about fertility and water. Water is obviously necessary for civilization. I've circled the names the Tigris and Euphrates right here so you can actually see them (you in the back may not be able to see Tigris and Euphrates). They are the two main major rivers that give probably most definition to the majority of our Fertile Crescent. I say this every year so I feel like I'm sort of on a broken record mode right now. But if you have trouble remembering which river is which, here's my way of doing it because I'm simple minded and I like helpful little hints. Tigris is on top "T and T". Does that help you at all? Tigris is on top. Because you're thinking of the Tigris River; it's the one that goes right on top over here. Euphrates, once they separate, goes its separate way. It goes up over this direction. And there are some other significant rivers. The Habor River that comes in there which makes this area, well, you don't have to know this, but some people think that when the land Mesopotamia was first named, it didn't refer to this whole region [all the area between Tigris and Euphrates] right here. It simply referred to between these two rivers - between the Euphrates, that branch of the Euphrates and the Habur there. But that's another story. Don't worry about that. At any rate, the Tigris and Euphrates make this area something of an agriculturally fertile area. Again, there were problems because when the Tigris and Euphrates silted up and flooded, they didn't do the kinds of things that the Nile does - I'll talk more about the Nile in a moment. So the cities states in Mesopotamia had to deal with dredging and canals and problems with salt in the soil and so forth. It was not nearly as fertile.

Down here we do have the Nile, again probably hard to see but I've tried to circle it. The Nile is a remarkable river. The Nile makes its way from south to north; that's one of the interesting things. It's flowing from south to north. It has two branches much

farther south than Egypt and every year with incredible regularity, it floods. And it brings wonderful, wonderful enriched silt and soils, deposits them on the flood plain down in Egypt proper, or I should say up in Egypt proper, and then once those floods recede, this is perfect area for growing. When you see pictures of Egypt, once you get past the Nile Valley, it's barren with the exception of a few oases to the west. But the Nile Valley itself is remarkable in terms of its fertility and agricultural productivity. The other nice thing about the Nile is that it doesn't have lot of rapids and so forth. It's great for transportation and communication. Lots of travel back and forth, south to north, on the Nile. Are you getting the picture that the Nile is really important? The Nile was so important in terms of its agricultural fertility as well as all the communication and travel that it was considered to be a deity, especially in the former times. It was one of the major deities in the whole Egyptian polytheistic understanding of things. The sun was another and there were all sorts of them, but the Nile was a major force. Lots of religious festivals unfolded in the context of the Nile River and we can begin to understand why once we get some of those characteristics down such as I've mentioned.

Well there's a third [...] here. This one right here. You don't see any major rivers; if you look carefully, you see the Jordan River sort of behind my white line but believe me that has nothing to do, well it has precious little to do, with the agricultural fertility of the land because the elevation is so much lower. At the south end of the Jordan River, right before it exits into the Dead Sea or the Sea of Salt, it's just about 12-1300 feet below sea level, A mere 12 miles to the west, in the city of Jerusalem you are about 2500 feet above sea level. Nobody's going to be hauling their water from the Jordan River up into the hill country area. So the fertility of this area does not come from the Jordan River although some people may be tempted to say that. It's primarily coming from rainfall.

Rainfall in the winter time; dew in the summer. Israel has two seasons; one is the rainy season. If it's a good year, the rainy season lasts from about November, well October actually, through beginning of April. And we'll say more about early and latter rains in a moment. If it's a bad year then it may only be raining December through

March.

And so those are our three sources of Fertile Crescent. I'm going to focus in on the effects of the Mediterranean Sea because that is what's going to be the producer, if you want to put it that way, of our rainfall that's so absolutely important for Israel. We're going to talk about the topography of this little slice of land in moment. And you're going to see the pictures of it but take my word for it now, that running from north to south (with a little bit of a skewing, so that's kind of north/northeast, south/southwest) running from north to south is a fairly continuous mountain range. So just think for a moment; to the west we have the sea. To the east we have the desert and right in-between are mountains. Now, let's see what happens. The rising air cooling over the sea is moisture laden. You know what it's like if you live near the coast, even if you live around here. Summertime in July, do you know what that's like? It's humid, right? So if you live near a great big body of water, it's going to be humid and therefore what you have is the moist air over the Mediterranean Sea rising. The prevailing winds are from west to east. By the way I'm simplifying this terribly, but just get the point in terms of rain and dew. As these moisture laden clouds move from west to east, they rise up over that mountain range. And of course, as they do, the rain is going to fall; there's going to be precipitation on the western slopes and so as you look at all of Israel, your western slope is going to be pretty much where the rain is going to fall. Once you get over the kind of the crest of that hill and get to the east side, you end up with the rain shadow. The wilderness is the rain shadow. I'll show you a map in a moment. Rainfall increases also with higher elevation, decreases from north to south. This is indeed the southwestern part of the Fertile Crescent and so the farther south you go the less rainfall is coming in. It decreases as I've already said from west to east and high elevation to low. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this, but if we're thinking of our land between, notice that we also have a land between climate belts. There's first the cyclone and subtropic belts -that's what contributes primarily to our two seasons that we have here as opposed to the four that you and I have grown up with if we inhabited almost any part of the United States. What this means is (and again I know I've oversimplified it; there's a lot more to say

here), when you have the land between the sea, on the one hand, and the desert on the other, with that very strategic mountain range going there, we have the margins of the Fertile Crescent.

H. Implications for God's Covenant People: the Land Between and the Testing Ground of Faith

It is a perfect place for God to plant his people because, as we will see when we read Deuteronomy 11 very shortly, this is an area that God can use as a testing ground. Just as in the geo-political situation. If they were obedient, God gave them security. Here too, if they're obedient God promises the land is going to produce. You're going to have your new wine, your grain, your oil, all those wonderful things that are part and parcel of what this area of the world produces.

Let's look at it now with a map in hand. Bigger map in hand. Kind of summarizing our land between concept. That's where we're going with this. First of all, it is the land between in terms of what it has to do with the weather and climate. I've already said it between the sea cool and moist and the desert hot and arid, with intervening mountains. So you have that potential for wonderful rainfall if indeed God chooses to bless in that way. By the way, Israel in this last year has had a seriously shortage of rain. So you know they have to struggle with these things in the modern scene as well. It kind of goes up and down. The Sea of Galilee is way, way down. Way down from its normal levels. So life is kind of grim right now in terms of rain as well as some of the political issues.

At any rate, it's also the land between (again summarizing what I just said) between geo-political contexts because it's between particularly Mesopotamia and Egypt and those tensions that I described to you earlier with superpowers always trying to hold on to this buffer zone land bridge in between and get to the area beyond it.

It's also between west and east. Now this takes us in a slightly different direction. I'll only mention a couple of things here. You can still see this today, by the way, if you go to Israel. There is tension in the Israeli state itself between people who are coming from

families that have come from the west like immigrants from the United States, from parts of Europe, etc. - those folks who are called Ashkenazi Jews. And those who come from families that lived in Eastern countries Sephardim. They don't always get along very well; there's a cultural clash there. They're all Israelis, but they don't get on terribly well. And of course, there are all the other things that are a part of this very complex area as well. People who are coming from the west generally invade Israel in one form or another, not always militarily. So for some examples for our purposes, as we read the Old Testament, I mentioned the word Philistines about five minutes ago. That's a group of people that have come from somewhere over in here. There's a lot of debate about where exactly the Philistines originated, but they've made their way to this area probably through Turkey with perhaps some stopping places in Cyprus which was a real hub for lots and lots of things back then. But they settled right along here in what's called the Philistine plain. They are invaders from the west if you will. And if you've read the Old Testament you know they make life really miserable for God's people. On the other hand, as God's people are planted right in here as God brings them into the land, you have characteristically semi-nomadic people that are making life miserable coming in from the desert! Perhaps you recognize the names: Midianites, Ishmaelites, and Amalakites. You know, they're going to make sweeping raids in here, notably during the period the Judges and other times, making life miserable. So west and east and doing things in that way as well to make this a testing ground of faith.

I. Geographical Regions in the Land of Israel

Now, we've looked at this big picture, let's see if we can bring it down and focus right in on the land between. I know this map is a tiny bit small but it has to be to get everything in there. So bring out your telescopes if you're living in the back row there. You can't see everything but I'll try to point sites out. First of all, we're going to work from west to east. Here we've got the Coastal Plain, right here. I'm going to come back to this map a little bit later on and explain the green lines, so don't worry about the green lines right now. We're simply talking about geography, and the Coastal Plain here has the

characteristics the coastal plain our country has. Again, take your sweep from New York City all the way down to Washington. The Coastal Plain area—it's flat, it's level, big cities grow up, easy travel back and forth, not encountering many obstacles whatsoever. And that's what happens with coastal plain then. Cosmopolitan—big cities - think of it that way. So the Coastal Plain is divided up into small little sections, but primarily we just want to think of it in the big picture.

Now, our next word you're going to find it right here—Shephelah—I've got brackets surrounding it because it doesn't necessarily extend along the whole extent of the country. As a matter of fact, to be perfectly honest, the Coastal Plain doesn't either. There's a place where a mountain juts right out here—that's Mount Carmel. We're going to focus on Mount Carmel when we do the story of Elijah. But anyway, getting back to Shephelah, think of this whole area I describe to you as kind of a big, long, north-south mountain range. Those of you from Colorado, don't think mountains in Israel are like your mountains in Colorado. They're not. They're not that big. They're probably more like... southern New Hampshire mountains. But they are still significant. Shephelah comes from a Hebrew word which means "to be low." "Bowed down," if you will. And so what we're talking about is from the perspective of people living up here looking down over that region and saying, "oh those are the lowlands, those are the foothills." In fact, I think your NIV will translate this "foothills." So Shephelah is going to be foothills below the hill country that's right here. Again, don't pay attention to the green line; we'll say a little more about that a little later on.

Now, this hill country borders the Shephelah on the east. "Bounded by," what's the right word I want? To the east of the hill country is the wilderness. Basically, you've got a mountain range like this; the west side gets the rain. So if we've got our rains coming in off the Mediterranean Sea, this is the slope that's going to be fairly well watered. Therefore, you're going to have decent agriculture out there. There are a lot of things that have to do with soil types too. (Take Introduction of Biblical Studies; you do a whole lot with that. This is all we can do in here.) On the eastern slope (I mentioned the rain shadow earlier) your clouds pretty much dissipate as they go over the top of the hills

and so here we've got the wilderness. And I'll show you photographs. Wilderness - those of you from upstate Vermont, New Hampshire, or New York, don't think bears and woods and all those kinds of things. This is a vastly different kind of wilderness.

Well, still moving from west to east, we have the Rift Valley. This whole sweep, all the way, in fact, is the Rift Valley. How many of you know of the Rift Valley Academy? Got any friends that have studied there? Kay, where is it? Do you know, Catherine? Yes, you're absolutely right! It's in Kenya! And that's the same geological formation. This is just one tiny little arm of it; if you look at a map, the Rift Valley goes all the way down into Africa. So an amazing cleft in the earth. As it makes its way through our territory, as I mentioned, even here, it's pretty significant because Jerusalem, right about there, is 2500 feet above sea level. The north end of the Dead Sea is 1300 feet below sea level. In the space of 12 miles, that's a radical drop. And once you go down into the Dead Sea at this north end... by the way, it gets shallow down here [south end]... but the north end of the Dead Sea is about 1100 feet of water depth. Okay, so you've got it. 12-1300 feet below sea level at the surface of the water, then the depth of the water is another.... well depending on the level of the Dead Sea, which has fluctuated a lot and sadly its continuing to go down, but at any rate... another more than 1000 feet depth of water at that point. And then here's the statistic that just absolutely amazes me—they've done core samples at the north end of the Dead Sea. You know, you drill down through the sediment and see how much you've got there. Guess how much sediment has accumulated under the waters of the Dead Sea before they actually hit bedrock? Any guesses? Have you read anything about it? Anybody want to make a guess? I won't laugh, I promise. Thousands of feet? About 25,000 feet of sediment. So we've got a long time of silt and sediment washing into this area. Millennia. But again, that gives us a picture of what a remarkable cleft in the earth this Rift Valley is even at this point.

That's just a little background. You know this mostly as the Dead Sea, but I will try to be careful to refer to it as the Sea of Salt. Because that's actually its name in Hebrew, *Yam Hamalach*, and interestingly enough, there is life in the Dead Sea--very small stuff. But still there's life in the Dead Sea, so we'll call it the Sea of Salt as long as

I remember to do that.

In between the Dead Sea--the Sea of Salt--and this next body of water is the Jordan Valley and that's the Jordan River. Its distance is somewhere between 60 and 65 miles, but the Jordan winds all over the place here; it doesn't go straight, even though that map might make it look like it. So the actual water flow of the Jordan is closer to 120 miles of water flow.

Then we have Sea of Galilee; we don't have a lot to do with the Sea of Galilee in terms of the OT. It becomes significant with NT narratives particularly. And then this area north of it called the Hulah Basin. The term *aravah* - perhaps you're going to see it time-to-time *aravah*. B and v, as we're moving from Hebrew to English, interchange. So you might see it in your text as *arabah* with a "b" but its pronounced "aravah" just for a little confusion here. You're going to see that term and sometime it's going to refer actually to some sections right up here north, of the north end of the Salt Sea, but it also has to do with this area [south of the Dead Sea].

A couple more things to know – Transjordan is right over here, east of the Rift Valley. And then there is the Negev, another word we want to make a note of. Negev is going to be important for our patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It's a word that means both "south" and "dry." And that's pretty appropriate, because that's exactly what we're talking about. Negev generally speaking is going to get, somewhere between 8, 10, 12, inches of rain per year - that's not a lot. And yet they can do agriculture there--fascinating. In the Northern lands, we've got the area that, in terms of our New Testament, we know as Galilee. It's not referred as to as Galilee in the Old Testament but once that I know of. So we're going to talk about it just in terms of the North, or the northern part of the country. It has a whole lot less focus, interestingly, than the southern part of the country in the First Testament. Okay, so is the map fairly clear?

J. Comments to Accompany Photos of Regions

Now we're going to take just a little visual tour through some of this, just so you get a picture in terms of what some of these things actually look like.

Coastal plain: This happens to be the city of Ashkelon, which was one of the major Philistine cities, as you know. It actually happens to be Independence Day[when the photo was taken], so you see close to a million cars parked out there. But here you get a sense of flatness, the Mediterranean Sea, coastal sand dunes, and the remains of a very major city out there. Moving to the east, I hope you're seeing the things I tried to point out verbally. Now, let's look at them visually as well. Here we're talking about low hills—low rolling hills. So this is the Shephelah, lowlands foothills - it fits. Right in there is the Elah Valley and it snakes around there. That's the valley going up; it's always marked by a nice satellite dish there. The Elah Valley is something that we're going to visit when we do David and Goliath - when we do the David and Goliath story, it's going to unfold here; you're going to see this picture again. Way back here, we're looking west to east, are the Judean hills. That's the ridge—that whole long expanse are Judean hills.

Now we're actually in the hill country. I want you to see three things - that's why there's three pictures. First of all, notice that unlike the Coastal Plain and unlike Shephelah, we've got some fairly steep hills. In fact they are so steep, the valleys are in the shadow. It's too bad we've got these bright lights on it or you could see it a little bit better, but these are steep v-shaped valleys. When you think of hill country, think of it as being isolated, inaccessible, protected. People who live in northern New Hampshire in the mountains have a much more protected environment. Nobody's going to march up there and take over cities, and there are going to be smaller kinds of establishments, towns and villages, that are there. So that's the first thing to notice. This hill country area is going to be a protected area.

The second thing I want you to notice is in this picture. You see a modern road going along here. Interestingly enough, the modern road pretty much follows where the ancient road would have gone because it's going to try and get close to the top of the

ridge and keep as level a direction and route as possible. Alongside of it, notice two things. Notice the color of the soil. It's kind of red, isn't it? The soil here when it erodes from the limestone base is extremely fertile. It's called *terra rossa*—red earth. And once it gets rainfall, it is exceedingly productive. Dates, figs, grapes, olives, important food for the Old Testament diet. And again, God blesses with rain; this is a productive area. The soils help us.

In addition to that, you don't bring big tractors and equipment in here because these are small little plots. The limestone, the bedrock, is structured in this area such that it is naturally terraced. As it erodes, you have terraces that are horizontal terraces like so. The people can come along, clear the rocks out of the soil, help build up the terraces, and therefore have beautiful little plots of soil and ground for cultivating. This has been going on for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years.

Now we also want to notice this one more thing. This is the hill country of Judah that we've been looking at here. Here's the hill country of Benjamin. I'll just say this now for our purposes—that's the city of Gibeon, right there. And Gibeon is located in an area where we have a plateau, right around here. Hang onto that because this is going to be exceedingly important in terms of military strategy when we start talking not only about the conquest of the land, but about how Israel's history unfolds for hundreds of years. So those three pictures give us a fairly decent sense I think, well a tiny slice anyway, of the hill country.

Let's move east. Here's the wilderness in rain shadow. Again, on that western slope that we've just seen, things are lush, soils are great and it's got rain. Great. Here you are in the rain shadow, and obviously you've been seen little bits and pieces of vegetation down there but there's not a whole lot of it. There are two things to think of as we think of this picture. Well, let me ask you. What do you think of as you look at wilderness? Any Bible narratives that come to your mind? Say it again? I still didn't here you, Lucky. John the Baptist, good! Leading into the baptism and then the temptation of Jesus, right? That's probably the one that comes to our mind first. But let me just make one quick connection. Jesus is the Son of David, among his other titles. David himself

spends a fair amount of time out here in the wilderness, especially when he's on the run from Saul. This is the situation where he is spending some time, not right here, but the same general type of area. So David spends time out there and Jesus is going to be in the wilderness when he's dealing with the temptation as the Son of David.

Well moving east farther, just to give us a little sense of looking from the top of the Rift down into the bottom where the Sea of Salt is. This is half of a full size tour bus right there, if you want you get some sense of distance and perspective. And then we also see Jericho which is a major city of course, just north of the north end of the Sea of Salt or the Dead Sea. That's modern day Jericho there. This is the Old Testament site of Jericho about which we're going to say a whole lot. This is something that doesn't exist anymore. This was a refugee camp established when Jordan controlled this area and Palestinian refugees were there during that time. Israel has since done away with that. If you follow anything about the political situation, these are very, very difficult issues in terms of Palestinian places of living, right of return, all those kinds of issues.

Just another quick look at Jordan Valley, going slightly farther north. It's been raining (this is springtime here) - notice how green things are and the contrast to some of the other things we've seen. And by the way, it doesn't rain a lot in the Jordan Valley but they do irrigate, and the clouds actually regather and you do get rain in Transjordan itself, interestingly. Well, I've skipped over that too fast.

We have to do a quick tour of Transjordan, not because there's much Old Testament associated with this, but you know, Petra's important if you've watch Indiana Jones! Do you watch Indiana Jones? Yes? So you know this scene! For my purposes there's just a couple of things to note. This is a city that was built by folks called the Nabateans who took over this area just around 312 BC. And they built the city probably as a center for spice trade. There's some debate in terms of exactly how that all works. They are lots of things we could say about the red city. I hope you will go on a study tour there. Footnote--up on my soapbox, think 2010, Lord willing Gordon is going to take a group of students not only for three weeks in Israel but two weeks in Jordan as well. So put that on your back burner and start saving your pennies.

One of the reasons I show that is to show how rugged this area is, right around Petra. I want you to see the ruggedness of this because this is the area where the Edomites settled. And the prophet Obadiah in one small chapter has some things to say about Edomites who think they are so secure in the cleft of their rock. Well you know what; their time is coming. We'll revisit these pictures when we talk about Obadiah. One other little thing right up there; see this little white dot? That's the traditional tomb of Aaron. Again, traditions are kind of fun, you know, people put these things up. There's a little a mosque up there. Perry and I hiked up there about four years ago. Took us about eight hours to get up and back. But from there it's the highest point around. It's called Jebel Harun-- Mountain of Aaron--and you get a real sense from there in terms of how desolate and rugged this whole area is--Jebel Harun, Petra.

But moving right along, just a quick look at the Negev. Scorpions, the Lord has something to say about those in Deuteronomy 8. Do you know that? Where he says I led you through that vast and dreadful desert with its vipers and its scorpions. Every time you turn over a rock in some places you find one of those.

Now, moving from the south to the north - and hold this contrast in mind because it's no accident that some of the tribes that settled farther south may have been looking with longing towards the north. Notably one of them was the tribe of Dan, part of which actually migrated up north because they were so taken with the beauty - and water. Here we've got the Sea of Galilee.

Here we have Mount Hermon on a remarkably clear day. It's not always that clear - being able to see it from that distance. Dan is located at the foothills of Mount Hermon so obviously there's going to be a lush supply of water. In fact, you'll see it—the headwaters of the Jordan River. There are four headwaters to the Jordan River but one of the major ones is the karstic spring at Dan pumping out thousands of gallons per second of water. So here are the headwaters at Dan. Well I'll have a lot more to say about that when we talk about the settlement of the tribes and the migration of the tribe of Dan. But we've got more to do.

K. Travel and Communication

I told you we'd come back to these green lines. First of all, they are important in terms of travel and communication. Whether it's military travel or whether it is commercial travel, you need to have sufficient water. Water sources need to be appropriately there. There are some little rivers that flow off these hills as you might expect. If there's rain on the western slopes of the hills, there are going to be small rivers going towards the West out to the sea. You also need even terrain. Now there's a lot more to say about that and the obstacles of sand dunes and all those kinds of things. But by and large, the Coastal Plain is going to be an area through which your major route is going to go. So, the International Coastal Highway is represented by this green line. This is going to head on right down to Egypt and a matter of fact across the northern Sinai peninsula. As we make our way north on the Coastal International Highway, all is well until we get to this point right here. And then you've got to say, "How am I going to get across Mount Carmel?" And we'll talk about it. There are a couple of ways to get across or through Mount Carmel. If you're going up to Tyre and Sidon, you'd go up this way. But your main route actually continues to the east because who's over here? Well it's everybody in Mesopotamia. So most travel that wants to go from Mesopotamia to Egypt or vice versa, is going to come through Damascus just off our map and come just like so. And that's it.

In Transjordan, however, we also have a major route. It's going to break off here and come straight south. Parts of it (down here) in the biblical text are called the King's Highway. Numbers chapter 21 mentions the King's Highway. When we get to that section of Scripture we're going to study that a little bit more. Now there are some further complications to this route that is the Trans-Jordanian Highway. It actually has two branches but don't worry about them for now. We just want to note that we have a major North-South route which has to do with spice trade and I'll say more about that in a moment.

Connecting those two [Transjordanian Highway and International Coastal Highway] is an important trunk route right across here [Jezreel Valley and Harod Valley]. Again, we're coming back to that, but don't lose sight of it. Now, recognize that there's

going to be major ways to get from this international route (TjH) to this international route (ICH). Internal travel. Let's say you're a patriarch. Let's say you're Abraham. Let's say you just came into the land. Lo and behold, you come to Shechem. As the Lord guides you, you go to Bethel. Right about there. You go to past Salem (it's not Jerusalem yet), go to Hebron, and you go down to Beersheba you're on what you call the "Way of the Patriarchs." It's that photograph of what I showed you of the terraces that had the modern road along it. That's pretty much following the Way of the Patriarchs. And it's called that but also the "Ridge Route" because it's going right along the top of the ridge. Does that make sense?

A couple of things we need to say about the trade and the commerce that unfold in terms of this region - again, it is the land between, the land bridge; keep that concept always in your mind. Obviously just as in our country whether you're on the west coast or east coast, your largest communities, your most cosmopolitan communities, your centers of culture, presumably, are built up around major travel routes. Both military and commercial traffic -- and military is obviously going to be the one that always has the red flags and the threats out.

In terms of especially that Trans-Jordanian Highway and some of the connections that I haven't mentioned that go across the Negev and across the land between, our major issue is going to be spice trade. We have a tendency to think of spices as, "Oh those lovely little things that sit on our shelf and it makes our food be kind of fun to eat." Spices have a much more profound significance in antiquity. First of all, as I'm sure you know if you've listened to any lectures or sermons on this, they're preservatives. They're extremely important for that whole area of our intake of food and our preservation of food. But secondly, equally important, they were used in ritual, religious ritual, funeral rituals- preservative in that sense as well. Think of this as a culture that's very wound in with their religious observance and religious rites. Spices, frankincense - all that is going to play a major part in there. Well, obviously, as I said earlier, the sea is not our major

avenue of traffic. So the camel becomes, as I note, the ship of the desert. There's lots to say about camels as they're perfectly designed to travel in deserts. I won't say more about them now.

L. Produce of the Land

Produce of the land also is terribly important for us. And I think you've got all this in terms of what I've put on the Blackboard site so we'll go through it quickly. Over and over again in Scripture (and if we don't have time to read Deuteronomy 11 this morning, go and read it, because it's going to be important), you see God's promising grain, new wine, and oil. Interestingly enough, the grain (the Hebrew for bread is *lechem*) often translated as "food" because that makes up a huge part of what people took in. Estimates are that a person would eat about half a kilo a day of grain. Also, as women were grinding grain, it took them about three hours to do enough food for a whole normal sized family using one of those hand mill kinds of things. So when it talks about grinding grain, it talks in Proverbs about the woman who grinds that grain faithfully, she's sending a lot of time doing it. Three hours to provide for a normal family.

Wine - wine was important as well. And I note reasons why. It was a water purifier and added iron in the diet. Olive oil—well the olive was sort of the wonder tree of the ancient Near East in the Mediterranean area because it was used for many, many different things. We mentioned anointing earlier, for religious purposes, also as a balm for skin, medicinal purposes, food, fuel, and the animals ate the pulp as well.

Scripture also mentions large herds of cattle, notably up in the area north and east of the Sea of Galilee. We know it now as the Golan Heights and because of the time I'm not going to wax long on what happened to the trees. They're being reforested but there were centuries in which they were pretty much raped away tragically.

M. The "Testing Ground of Faith"

Well, this is indeed a marginal region and I want to turn to Deuteronomy chapter eleven with which we will close today. I've given you some little charts at the end of this lecture on historical peoples roundabout but I've also talked about them. You can figure them out. But let's take a quick look at Deuteronomy 11 and as I said we'll close. Starting at verse 10: "The lands you are entering to take over are not like the land of Egypt from where you've come where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot." Little channels they had you that were irrigation channels alongside the Nile. Close it up with a little mud bridge; open it up with your foot. "The land you're crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys." You've got a picture of that now. Land of mountains and valleys. "It drinks rain from heaven. It's a land the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to the end." Now here come the punch lines. "If you faithfully obey the commands I'm giving you today to love the Lord your God and serve him with all your heart and all your soul, then I will send rain on your land in its season, both the autumn and the spring rains." In other words, the early rains to break up the dry ground so they could put the seeds in and then the late rains to give a little bit of a boost to those crops to make it right through harvest time. Those are God's promises. "So that you may harvest in your grain and new wine and oil. I'll provide grass in the fields for your cattle will you eat and be satisfied." And then here's sixteen. "Be careful, or you will be enticed turn way and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you and He will shut the heaven so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce and you will soon perish from the land the Lord has given you." We're going to have a whole lot to say about the meaning of a term called "land grant" when we start talking about Abraham. But for now, I think we need to stop, so Shabbat shalom. Pick up the rest of these charts that are at the end. Just know the people groups that are there; they're fairly straightforward. And thanks for staying with me, in one hour we've done it.

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Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt

Final edit: Elaine Phillips