

1. The Land

With its north/south mountain ridges (Atlas 11), the Land is not suitable as the homeland of a great power. It is rather a refuge *from* the great powers. Its map is dotted with refugee settlements, like the Hittites, who had fled the old troubles in Hatti, but also with local communities like the Harodites, Palites, Tekoites, Ahohites, Pirathonites, and Arbathites; the homesteads and hamlets of no importance from which David drew his personal army, his "mighty men."

What can be done by way of more modest kingships is defined by the four geographical divisions west of the Jordan. The northern three are fertile, and support agriculture and a residential lifestyle. The fourth, the Negeb dryland,¹ requires a portable lifestyle. In times of drought, all might seek relief in Egypt, where the Nile River, fed from upstream, provides constant water. The four are:

- **Galilee.** The Hebrews never occupied Galilee; it was an *outland*. The native tribes included Asher, Naphthali, Zebulun, and Issachar.² It was home to local seers like Elijah of Tishbe and She of Endor, who was consulted by Saul.
- **Samaria or Israel,** the *highland*, bounded on the north by the Jezreel Valley, with its fortress city Megiddo. The Samaritan ritual center was at Shechem.
- **Judah,** the *lowland*. Its highest point is at Mt Zion at Jerusalem. David and his son Solomon ruled from Jerusalem.
- **Negeb.** The southern *dryland*. The town of Beersheba was a major contact point on the frontier with Judah.

The coastal plain was inhabited by the Philistines.³ They attacked Egypt, but were defeated in c01190 and settled in Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza. To these they later added inland Ekron and Gath, near to Judah. The Philistines broke free from Egypt in 01150, and thereafter became a threat to Judah.

The Land was dominated in turn by Egypt and Mesopotamia. From Egypt, the military and commercial route (Atlas 16 and 37) ran north along the coast, turned east to follow the Jezreel Valley, north again along the Jordan, and then northeast past Mt Hermon to Damascus, Haran, and finally to Mesopotamia. Smaller parties could follow the Transjordan uplands northward from Elath, descending to the level land in the Jordan Valley. Hebrews from the south, perhaps in small parties, took that route, through Moab and Ammon (Atlas 73), crossing the Jordan at a point near Jericho, nine miles northeast of Jerusalem.⁴ In due time, and after some preliminaries, they would *conquer* Jericho.

We will next look at the three kingships established *within* the Land.

¹See the maps at p288 and Atlas 23.

²Atlas 58. For detail on the major native peoples, see §16, The Twelve Tribes.

³For more on the Philistines, see §44.

⁴For the location of that entry point (now called Khirbet el-Mastarah), see §39.