

And he took possession of the hill country, but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain, because they had chariots of iron.

(Judges 1:19)

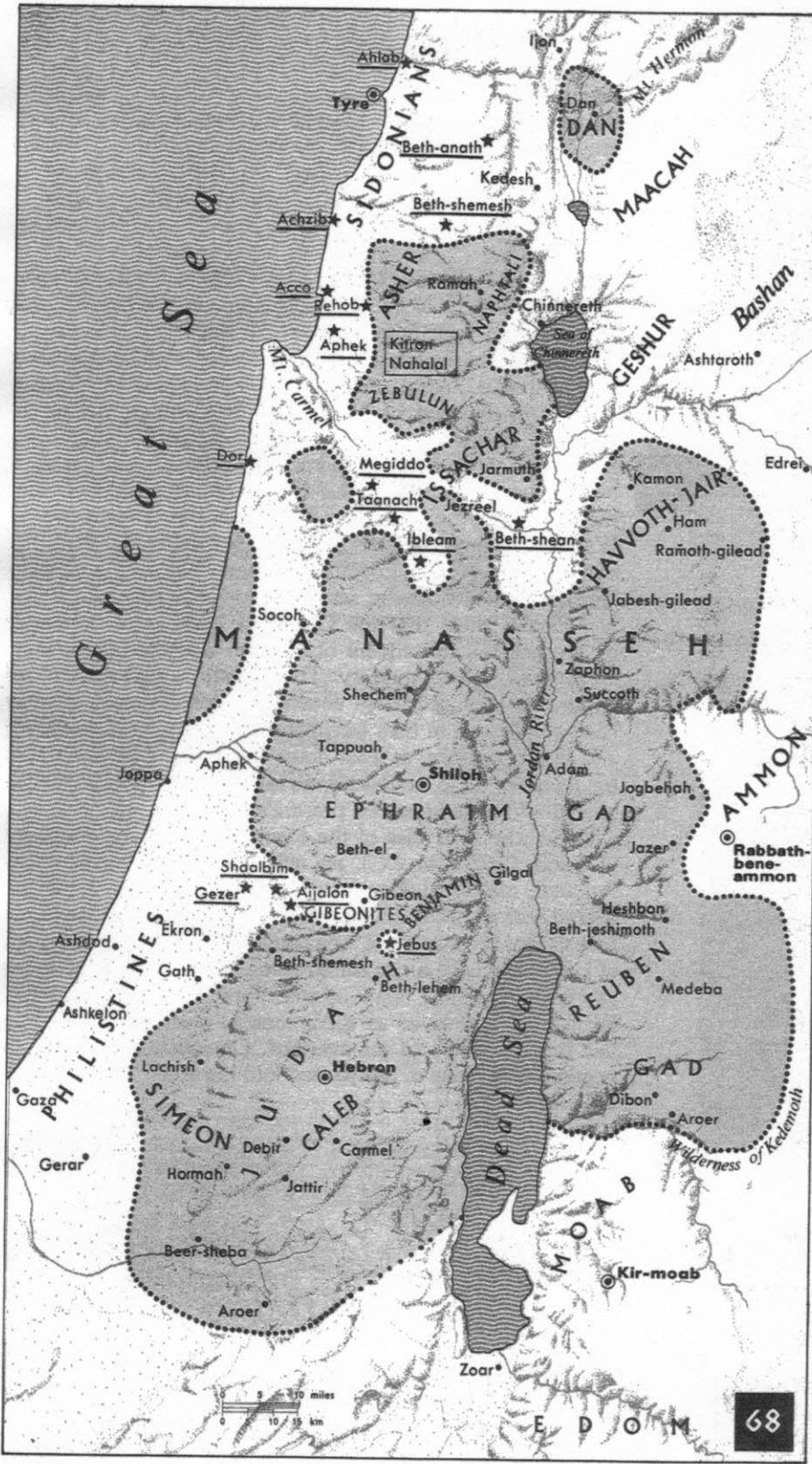
THE LIMITS OF ISRAELITE CONTROL IN THE 12TH-11TH CENTURIES B.C.

By the twelfth century B.C. the principal rival powers in Palestine were becoming well established in their areas: the Canaanites continued to dwell in the valleys and plains, the Philistines (with other "sea peoples" in the southern coastal plain, and the tribes of Israel in the hill country. The biblical tradition confirms that Israel was unable to dislodge the Canaanites and Amorites in these areas, for they had "chariots of iron" (Josh. 17:18); the areas where the non-Israelites continued to dwell are listed in Judg. ch. 1 and similar allusions appear here in the book of Joshua (Josh. 15:63; 17:11-13). Judg. 19 (LXX) confirms that Judah did not subdue the Philistines. Judg. 1:27-35 lists the unconquered areas according to the tribes. The main surviving Canaanite enclaves were in the Jezreel, and along the Phoenician coast. The Asherite acceptance among the Phoenicians (Sidonians), as client farmers for a society whose manpower was committed to maritime activities (Judg. 1:31-32). No tradition exists about the conquest of Shechem, whose situation may have been like Gezer (Judg. 1:19), a Canaanite city living in symbiosis with the Israelites. Jebus-Jerusalem and the Amorite towns that resisted the Danites were the center of the country. Very early traditions report that the Ephraimites came into early contact with the Philistines in the population of the area where the Danites were driven out (1 Chron. 7:20-24; Judg. 1:35). Some clans from Benjamin migrated to the same area (1 Chron. 8:12-13; 2 Sam. 5:5).

Recent archaeological surveys in the hill country confirm the arrival of pastoralists who began their settlements at the fringes of the steppe land, east of the watershed. They expanded and established settlements in the mixed agriculture and eventually moved into the westerly zones where it became necessary to develop terraced plant orchards and vineyards. Thus, originally pastoralists became transformed into a thoroughly sedentary society with varied subsistence strategies. The tribal groups that migrated to Upper Galilee went through a similar process; their culture reflects a certain cultural symbiosis with the Philistines on the coast below.

All of this data confirms the new population brought about in the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C. In the Late Bronze Age the main concentrations of population were in the plains (see Maps 30 and 34); the hill country was largely uninhabited, providing refuge for 'apiru' pastoralists. The latter became more numerous and adopted sedentary ways of life, perhaps as a result of a decline in the overall Canaanite agricultural production.

The dichotomy between Canaanites on the plain and Israelites in the hills characterizes the narratives throughout the books of Judges and Samuel.



Area of Israelite control
 Gezer Canaanite city not conquered (according to Judg. 1)

JOSH. 15:63; 16:10; 17: 11-18; JUDG. 1:21-35

