

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 8, Sharon Plain, Mt. Carmel, Jezreel Valley

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This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 8, The Sharon Plain, Mount Carmel, and the Jezreel Valley.

We are moving forward in our regional studies.

Just to remind ourselves, we've actually made our way through and covered as much of the southern part of the country as we can in this short period of time. We've also got a handle on the center, and I'm going to review it in just a moment. But as you can see from the title slide, we're actually moving north and west from where we were in our last study.

So, just to review, it always helps to review; we've been talking over and over again about the land between major power circles, and the fact that it is where it is in so many ways makes it the testing ground of faith. Our first regional study dealt with that slice across the country from the wilderness in the east through the Judean hill country, Philistine Plain, Shephelah. Then we took a bigger approach, if you will, to Negev, biblical Negev, and greater Negev, Sinai, and Egypt.

In the preceding lecture to this one, we spent our time in the hill country, and we focused on those areas of the hill country that are so significant, excuse me, in terms of God's tribe, the tribes of God's people planted in half-tribe of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Benjamin. As we move on, one of the things that we need to hang on to is the significance of the move that we talked about in the preceding lecture of the capital of the northern kingdom to the place called Samaria. Farther west, more open to embracing the cosmopolitan cultures coming from the west and from the northwest in particular.

So, as we move forward, here is our map that we are now quite familiar with, and our first focus is going to be on the Sharon Plain. So, just to remind ourselves, when we talked about the coastal plain, we were talking about a Philistine Plain. Now, we're going to be working on an area that's called the Sharon or Sharon Plain.

So, just to connect with our last lecture, this was the area of the half-tribe of Manasseh. Now we are moving out here, and we have basically a region that is going to extend technically from this point right here, the northern boundary of the Sharon or Sharon Plain, is a little place called Nachal Tananim. That's the river of Tananim, which means crocodiles, interestingly enough.

There seems to be evidence that there were, in antiquity, and even up until the 19th century, vestiges of crocodiles being seen. At any rate, north of that point is a small part of the coastal plain. As you can see, it really narrows out until it disappears, and Mount Carmel, to which we're going to return later, will jut right into the Mediterranean Sea.

This is the plain of Dor, and it's defined specifically by a little town. It shows up in the Old Testament very seldom, but it's there. That's the plain of Dor, and Dor is the city.

On the south, we have the Yarkon River that is going to be our definitive boundary. So we're talking about a sweep here that's about 30 miles in length. That'll be important.

The eastern boundary of the Sharon Plain, or Sharon Plain, are these foothills, as we've seen. Specifically, this area right here is going to be an important recognition for us. And then, of course, the west is the Mediterranean Sea.

Let's figure out what we already know, probably simply by looking at this map. If we're clued into geology, we don't have bedrock that is exposed at this point. We're talking about alluvial soils and sand dunes, and you may remember, we've got to dial back just a little ways now, this expression called kurkar.

Kerkar spelled with a Q or with a K. Kerkar ridges, and those are made up of calcified sandstone. It's like a natural cement, and that's going to be important as we move on. We certainly have alluvial soils, because over the millions of years and the millennia of rain in our hill country area with the watershed here, our water flowing off into that area will be very rich soil components.

But, of course, because there are ridges along the coast, several lines of these kurkar ridges, this natural cement stuff, that means that we're going to have swamps backing up behind those ridges. So, Sharon Plain doesn't show up a lot in the Old Testament, and the reason for that is that a good deal of it was indeed swampy. There are some things that grow there, but not a lot of cities in that area.

As we've said, probably three or four lectures ago, our major route that went through this area would hug right along the edge of the foothills, and then what would be swamped there. So, they would go like so, and then, as we're going to see later on, cut through the Carmel Range. A moment ago, I indicated that there's precious little going on in the Sharon Plain in the Old Testament, and it will be with our particular New Testament period that we have this place called Caesarea.

I'm thankful to Carl Rasmussen's Holy Land Photos site for this particular map, where you see Caesarea front-loaded there and highlighted. Just for now, there are multiple Caesareas because they're named after Caesar. For our purposes, we're going to

encounter two, one of them today, Caesarea Maritima, which is Caesarea by the sea, and then tomorrow, or sorry, our next lecture, we're going to be dealing with Caesarea Philippi, which is going to be up in the area of Mount Hermon.

So, let's focus on this particular Caesarea right now and notice that here we are all over again with Herod the Great. Just remind ourselves Herod the Great is associated with the Herodian. Herod the Great is associated with Jerusalem in making that Augustan temple complex.

Herod the Great left a footprint in Samaria called Sebast at that particular point in time, and now we're going to see Herod's footprint big-time in Caesarea. I've said this before, but I need to reiterate it because it really is important to note this as we move through this material. Herod had very much of a megalomaniac complex.

I don't think it's unfair to say that, but because he was squelched because he couldn't go win wars and make his name that way, he built and built and built, and once he got himself appointed king, it was a little bit frustrating to not have a kingdom that could be geopolitically powerful. So, he wanted to at least make it look like a bonafide Augustan thing. He also wanted to, as I note for you, bring Roman culture and Greco-Roman culture into Judea.

And so, what better entry point could you have than this place right here? Now, there were several obstacles to doing this, because if you look at that coastline there, there is no natural harbor. It's just a straight-on coastline right here, but in antiquity, anytime you need a harbor, if you're going to do any kind of shipping, and of course Rome was across the Roman lake of the Mediterranean Sea. So, Herod's engineers had to face that problem.

To be sure, we learned from Josephus, that there had been a settlement there. It was called Stratos Tower, but it was small. And so, basically, Herod is going to construct a city that will be his entry point, point of access for Roman culture into Judea.

And to do it, one of the most significant things he's going to do is to build a harbor. No natural harbor, so he builds an artificial one. Of course, as I note for you in the bottom line of that particular slide, the wonderful reversal in the Holy Spirit's planning of things is that he was going to bring his culture in, but the reversal is 180 degrees because it's from Caesarea that the gospel message will go forth across that Roman lake, and certainly well beyond.

We also have, after Herod the Great's death, another Herod that is going to be significant in this context, and I'm putting these passages here at this point. We're actually going to read them and look at them later on, but we have this little Herodian dynasty that will show up in conjunction with our center of Caesarea. And

back to our question: whose kingdom are we building? One just to contemplate well beyond this lecture.

This gives you a little bit of a diagram in terms of what Herod's Caesarea would have consisted of. So, and you can read that sign as well as I can, but he built a temple honoring the city's namesake, Caesar Augustus. Now, this is fascinating, because as you look at, here it is right here, Temple of Augustus and Rome.

The people studying this have noticed something rather interesting. It's not oriented specifically to the line of the shore. Instead, this temple honoring Augustus and Rome is actually oriented directly towards Rome.

It is facing Rome, and so even in the positioning of that temple, we have a statement being made. So that's the first thing to notice. A couple other things that we want to note about what Herod built here.

I said the harbor is our most significant thing. Artificial harbor. And so, Josephus tells us that Herod constructed this.

We learned that to get into the harbor, you had to enter from the north side. That makes a good deal of sense. Prevailing winds, prevailing not winds, prevailing currents would be bringing things up from this direction, right? Prevailing winds are from the west, but coming on the north side would be a lot more protected area.

This could hold a mammoth amount of the Roman fleet. I understand. I'll show you an aerial of the residual parts of it momentarily.

Turns out, as well, that as Josephus describes it, and it is fascinating to read this, as Josephus describes it, we find out there's a lighthouse here that was supposed to be a mimic, or an imitation, of the famous lighthouse at Alexandria, the second largest city in the Roman world. So we have some interesting things going on in that way, as well. This harbor was constructed.

Josephus tells us that Herod lowered great blocks of stone into the sea, but as they were doing the underwater archaeology to actually explore this thing, they discovered that what Herod had actually done was to pour underwater cement. It was a new technology, apparently, and they used volcanic materials, brought it in, and had apparently leather and shafts that they poured down into wooden structures, and it hardened down there. So, the base of this harbor underwater was cement, a new underwater cement technology.

In addition to that, Herod, in his brilliance, has a flushing system actually, so that sediment that would wash up, be brought up by the prevailing currents, would push stuff through a first wall with openings in it, and before it went through, it's almost

an underwater casemate wall, before it went through the second, the sediment because the water had slowed down, would be deposited in there, which means they didn't have to dredge this area quite as often. Really technologically advanced in that. So again, we're going to look at some aerial photos in a moment that give us a sense of the foundations of that as they are left.

Temple, harbor, tremendously important. Herod also built, wouldn't you know it, his own palace, and he built it out on a promontory. It's called the Promontory Palace.

There are little bits left in terms of the actual bedrock here, and you can see where a pool was there, but also we have now excavations done in the 1980s, some reconstruction, so we can see at least the footprint of this part of his palace, and then there was a theater too, so we're going to visit that theater. When Perry and I were first there in the 1970s, this whole area was just sand. There were some residual things of a Byzantine city.

We'll talk about the history of the site momentarily, but Herod had a racing area and a hippodrome. By the way, there's one out there as well, and this has since been uncovered. In Herod's day, it would have been both sides of it.

Now, after 2,000 years of battering by the sea, you only have this segment of it left, but we still get a good sense of another component of a Hellenistic, Greco-Roman, I should say city.

So, let's move on and at least see what a photograph taken from the air looks like. This is very grainy, I know that, but it's good enough for us to see what's going on.

Now, there's a breakwater, but it's small. You can walk out, see it, kind of fun, fish from it, but here are the leftovers of that breakwater that you saw in the diagram. Here's the entrance where the lighthouse would have been on the north side, so we're seeing the immensity of it even from this.

This gives us another approach to it right here, lifted off of Google Earth, modern breakwater, old, ancient, now underwater foundations of the breakwater, the entrance to the harbor. So we have here a really nice sense, and this is recent enough that you can see the parts of the hippodrome that are left, the theater that's right here, and then parts of the promontory palace, the pool section of it, sticking right out into the water, and also the footprint of the palatial structures itself. By the way, work continues to be done on this, and the temple to Roma Augustus, which isn't much right here, just ruins and stuff, they are now reconstructing so that you get a sense of the monumental staircase that goes all the way up there.

Well, let's carry on and see what we need to know. Oh, sorry, I forgot about this one as well. This is 1970s, just to give you a little bit of a sense of what's going on.

Harbor area, that's where the amphitheater is in this photograph, still under the ground. Pretty much behind where we see the word site back in the 1970s, there were some bits of Byzantine street left and a couple of standing statues. Much more of that is accessible now, and then right out here, Herod's promontory palace.

All right. Theater, amphitheater, and one thing that we haven't looked at yet; well, we actually saw this when we talked about water systems way back when, but the aqueduct. Now, when you have that many people living in a large place, and a lot of them seem to be military personnel, and as we're going to see through the centuries, Caesarea had a prominent place, both in terms of Roman presence and in terms of Christian presence.

This first series of arches that you see on this side carried a water channel up here, and again, bringing waters from the foothills of Mount Carmel, which is a fur piece up the road, but the Romans, the engineers, got the grade just right, so he brought it all the way down. That was under Herod's construction and in the couple of generations that followed him. The first Jewish revolt, which we've talked about in terms of the destruction of Jerusalem in the temple, was A.D. 70.

In the second century, from 132 to 135, A.D. 132 to 135, there was a second Jewish revolt, and to quell that revolt, the emperor, Hadrian, brought in a lot of Roman forces. He brought in so many Roman forces that were stationed in Caesarea that on the back side of this particular channel, they actually added a second channel coming in. It gives you a little bit of a sense of the need for water and the fact that there wasn't any, and it had to be brought, so they created a second channel.

That's one aqueduct. You also have another aqueduct, which is right about over here. It's called the Lower Aqueduct.

It's a covered channel as well, and that was added in the Byzantine period to bring even more water down because, in the Byzantine period, this was a highly populated city, as we're going to see momentarily. Before we do that, however, let's take a little bit of a look at the theater. As I think we've already figured out, theaters were a major component, sort of part of the template, for any Greco-Roman city.

Most of them had more than one. This particular one has been reconstructed, and it's in use. In fact, this is an older picture.

Now, every time you go to Caesarea, you'll see a permanent backdrop here of all kinds of highly technological stuff for performances that take place. Obviously, that would not have been the case in the first century, and even well into the 1970s, we still were able to sit on these seats and have performances here. And if you look

really carefully, you can see in a couple of places right down in here some of the original stone seating that has not been reconstructed.

But here's what I want us to see. I mentioned Acts chapter 12 a moment ago. Herod Agrippa shows up in this context, and then I mentioned Josephus, who is also going to describe Herod Agrippa.

So let me read you the Acts 12 passage first. When the text says Herod, we're talking about Herod Agrippa here. Herod the Great is long off the scene.

It's the name that is continued. Acts chapter 12. On the appointed day, Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne.

And by the way, this is taking place at Caesarea. You probably realize that. He delivered a public address to the people.

They shouted this is the voice of a god, not of a man. Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. That's Luke's rendition of that narrative.

Now, let's see how Josephus presents it. Josephus gives us lots more details. And this is great because we see, I mean, the point of Acts, as you know, is to track the spread of the gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit through the Roman Empire.

They're not going to spend a lot of time on Herod. Josephus, obviously, is going to get a little more elaborate. He uses the term Agrippa.

Luke used the term Herod. It's our Herod Agrippa. Let me read it for you.

Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city of Caesarea, and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar. On the second day, he put on a garment made wholly of silver. I'm going to pause for a moment.

Theaters, back in that day, were not only used for performances. They were used for propaganda, right? Used for propaganda. And so, things that took place had very much of an agenda to them, and it turns out that Agrippa's managers knew how to prepare him for the stage.

Let's keep reading. He put on a garment made wholly of silver. He came into the theater early in the morning, at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over all those who looked intently upon him.

Again, pause for a moment. Think of what we just saw in that picture. He's standing on the stage.

All those theater seats are going up in front of him but behind the people, and the sun is rising over them. As I said, his stage managers knew exactly what to do to create what they wanted to create. Presently, his flatters cried out he was a god, but upon this, the king neither rebuked them nor rejected their flattery.

But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings. Again, with all the superstition and so forth going on in that Roman culture. A severe pain also arose in his belly.

He was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad everywhere that he would certainly die in a little time. And when he'd been quite worn out by the pain for five days, he departed this life. Now, the things that we want to point out here are the corroboration of the biblical text by what Josephus tells us, but we also see how the theater is functioning in this context, how theaters were used, and how, in this case, Herod is using it to make his case, that, of course, backfired a little bit.

In addition to what we have with our Herod connections, we have something else that's worth noting as well because we've looked at this particular piece already when we're doing archaeology, and I mentioned that we have an inscription. An inscription found in secondary usage means it was once standing up doing something else, probably talking about a Tiberium, which Pontius Pilate, the Prefect of Judea, gave and dedicated, but it got reused as a stone in a step in another part of the place. This, by the way, wasn't found until 1963, but it does give us a very interesting sense that, hey, you know, that Roman governor named Pontius Pilate, entitled Prefect of Judea, is very much involved here, and it's a corroboration again of our text that Luke is telling us.

Generally speaking, but in case you're not seeing it as clearly, here is the Tiberium part of it, and here's the Pilatus of Pontius Pilatus here. We not only have that in terms of our Roman presence there during the first century, we not only have our second-century use of this place of entree by Hadrian for his forces, but we have the church coming in. So after Peter and Cornelius, Acts chapter 10, after Paul's imprisonment, he's in Caesarea, as we know as well, we then have a not only expansion of the church, but expansion of Byzantine Caesarea.

Origen and Eusebius, both significant, very significant church fathers, both of them functioned in the context of Caesarea, and so Caesarea will become a huge center, big library there. Origen seems to have had some rather extraordinary interactions with the Jewish communities. There is some evidence that Rabbi Yochanan, who was a contemporary of Origen, was the church father of Origen and that the two of them had some back-and-forth exchanges over exegetical issues.

And then, of course, we have our church father, Eusebius, who has left us history and has also left us what's called an onomatopoeia, which is a list of names and very helpful in terms of doing geography, names of places. That, for now, is all we're saying about Caesarea. It gives us a little bit of a flavor, but we need to move to Mount Carmel.

The word Carmel means vineyard, and so Caramel, Vineyard of God, some would say. Let's at least map out the three sections of this particular shaft or promontory that's going to jut right out into the Mediterranean Sea. First of all, we see this.

And to all intents and purposes, that is Mount Carmel proper, right? It's the high promontory because of its elevation, because of the fact that it's farther west, it's going to get a fair amount of rain. I want you to be thinking of that because we're going to return to it in a moment. Then, moving to the south and the east, we have another Shephelah area.

We saw one down here in Judah. We now have the Shephelah of Carmel. Different kind of geology.

Still gross stuff, but not nearly as good as you might say. In fact, you can drive from this segment of Mount Carmel to here and see things change, see vegetation change. No surprise there.

And then, down here, a third block of our hard limestone. It's lower than this one here, and it's farther east, so we don't see it being quite as lush as the promontory Mount Carmel proper. Just to give us a sense from the distance of how much of a potential barrier that is, we are actually standing north of Mount Carmel, and we're looking across the Aco Bay right here, and here's the promontory jutting right out into the Mediterranean Sea.

This is really our only natural potential harbor, the Akko Bay, and we're standing in Akko, also in the intertestamental period known as Ptolemaeus, named after Ptolemy. But just hold that in your minds as we start exploring in more detail some of the events that unfold in this context. You see, here's where we were for that last picture, right there, looking across this bay area.

We keep coming back to the fact that this is a land between. And, fine, the road goes like so, this is all good, but you get to that barrier. We've seen the picture of it.

How do you get from there, either up here to Tyre, Sidon, Phoenicia, or go past the Sea of Galilee to Damascus, to Assyria, to Babylon, etc.? How do you get through this particular barrier? Well, here we go. Here's where geology columns are so important because we will remember that in between the green stuff, which is the hard

limestone, in an intervening geological period, there was a layer of chalk laid down. Again, remembering these were laid down horizontal bedding, and then later on, they were uplifted, faulted, and shifted into anticlines and synclines.

The whole point is that you've got a pass of chalk, a layer of chalk at one point, between this and this, and another one between that soft limestone and this other block. Chalk erodes a lot more quickly because it's soft, and so it's going to create a pass. This is more rugged, slightly more rugged, a lower area.

No surprise that our main routes in antiquity, and today, and today, go through those chalk passes. So you've got a major highway, happens to be Route 6 in Israel, happens to be a toll road, comes up here and zips right through that particular chalk pass right there. So keep in mind, there's Jokeam, by the way, it's going to guard this chalk pass here.

If someone wanted to go up to Phoenicia, they'd zip that way and then head right on up here. This is Megiddo. So you'd come through this pass, get to Megiddo, and then decide what you want to do next in terms of what your goal or your destination happens to be.

One more that's important, and that is not just a pass, but a whole valley area. This is wider, you can see it's spread out just a little more, and there's a little more jumbling here. We're going to talk about Jezreel Valley later, but we've got a valley, and it's named after a city called Dotan, and if you read Genesis 37, this is really interesting stuff.

When you have Joseph, who was sent by his dad to check up on the brothers, his half-brothers have been shepherding the flocks. Joseph has been still back home. Because it's getting drier, they go from Hebron down here, and they first go to Shechem, and it turns out when Joseph catches up with them, they're not at Shechem anymore.

Oh, lo and behold, they've gone on to Dotan. In God's providence, that's where he catches up with them, and you're saying, what? Here's the what. This is going to be one of those major ways of getting through the barrier, the Dotan Valley, and in this case, heading probably along here and then over to the east.

Why is that important? Well, I've traced it backwards on this map. We've got a band of Ishmaelite Midianite traders, don't we, in Genesis 37. They're on their way to Egypt.

Oh, well, they just happen to take this route. We'll talk about the Herod Valley in a moment. They happen to go this way, and rather than heading all the way over to Megiddo, they are going to go through this valley, which turns out to be a way

around the southeastern end of the barrier of Mount Carmel and connect with the route there, and isn't it fascinating in God's providence that this is where they are when Joseph is in a cistern awaiting the decision of his brothers in terms of what to do with him. They pick him up.

They go to Egypt, and it's a wonderful story after that in terms of their coming to Egypt and so forth and so on until the exodus. One more thing to notice in terms of our basically geological map here. At the northeast side of our Mount Carmel promontory, we're going to see this map, the way it uses English transliterations of Hebrew, and so the Q and the K are again interchanged.

That's this Kishon Valley, but we have the Kishon Brook, and it's that blue thing there that not only flows along the northeastern scarp of Mount Carmel, but actually drains the whole of the Jezreel Valley. It's another one of those things that has tributaries that span the whole of the Jezreel Valley. That's going to be important.

So let's see what we can do with all this. First of all, a critical period in Israel's history is going to be the ministry of Elijah, and I want to focus on this first because it's going to make a connection for us. There are other events, by the way, that take place.

We'll come back to them, but this is going to make a connection, a really important connection, between Samaria from our last study and Phoenicia, and it happens at Mount Carmel. Lovely icon of Elijah, by the way, gotta like that icon because here you have Elijah being fed by, well, most translations say the ravens, and there's the brook and the water, the Brook Kerith and water, but the Hebrew word for raven or crow is orev, and the vowels there, tweaked a little bit, could be arav, and so that might be that the text is telling us that it wasn't birds that feed Elijah, could be, but it could be local tribes, Aravim, who are coming to feed Elijah. You have other references in these kings' narratives to people groups called Aravim, but that's a little bit aside.

Our main point here is that we've got now, as we've said, Ahab, Jezebel, and Baal worship, the state religion in Samaria, which means northern kingdom. Notice a very interesting thing that we can throw in here. Even though this is the northern kingdom, awash in everything that was despicable and abominable in God's sight, he sends a prophet to them.

He's going to do the same thing when he sends Hosea and Amos later on, but here he sends Elijah. Baal, just to remind ourselves, Baal, master, was the god who in Canaanite pantheon mythology controlled rain, thunder, storm, and in an area that could be subject to famine. That was extremely important and extremely tempting to worship Baal, because if you've got rain, you've got agricultural productivity.

If you've got agricultural productivity, you've got economic security. So an incredible temptation, and in addition to the other stuff going on in the northern kingdom, like worship of golden calves and things, Baal worship comes in from Phoenicia, and Phoenicia is an obvious place from which to bring this stuff, because they live right on the seacoast, and so they're going to be very mindful of those things. Well, 1st Kings 17, Elijah the Tishbite comes and declares a famine in the land.

That's going to be serious business. He first hides in Transjordan, illustrated by this, and then he actually goes on to Baal's turf. He hides in Phoenicia, and the events that unfold there are equally interesting.

We won't spend time, because what he does next in God's direction is to go back to the northern kingdom to find Ahab's servant Obadiah and say, all right, it's time for me to meet up with Ahab. They come together on Mount Carmel. Just a reminder in terms of why this is such an important place.

Here again is another version of the map, and we see the height of Carmel. We see its elevation. We see 32 inches of rain.

We know that that means it's very fertile. We also know, and please take my word for it; I'm going to go back and read the king's narratives here. By the time we get to this period in history, Omri, Ahab, etc., those tribes, in particular, the tribe of Ashur, the tribe of Ashur had been settled along the Mediterranean coast right about in this area between Carmel to its south and Phoenicia.

That tribe of Ashur had had something rather interesting happen. Solomon had actually given some cities in this tribal area of Ashur to King Hiram of Tyre, and that seems to have been an ongoing control. All you need to do is think a little bit and recognize that if you have Phoenician control of cities, there's going to be seepage and cultural seepage down through here.

So you can pretty much conjecture that by the time we get to the period we're talking about, Mount Carmel because it is a geographical boundary, it feels like a boundary, it's a barrier. This is probably the de facto boundary now de facto between Israel, Northern Kingdom, and Phoenicia up here because Phoenicia has seeped its way down. So there's Samaria, there's the Phoenician area, and here we have two cultural things coming together, and they are going to clash, and they're going to do it at Mount Carmel, which is a perfect stage.

Why is it a perfect stage? Well, it is Baal's turf. It's green, usually, and all the things that are associated with agricultural productivity, but there's been a famine in the land. It's a perfect stage because of the geopolitical potential clash there.

So let's see what happens. First of all, in this context, we now have a very lovely, lovely Carmelite monastery that's there, and they have put up a statue commemorating the Elijah event. So here it is.

As you read 1 Kings 18, the people are ambivalent. In fact, as you read the Hebrew, it's so interesting. Elijah says to them, why do you keep teetering on the branch? Okay, they're riding the fence, basically.

Elijah prepares and prepares, and this is geographically important as well because what is he doing? He's dumping water all over this. We've had a famine for three and a half years by this time. Just remembering back to Amos chapter one and Nahum chapter one, it says that when the top of Carmel withers, things are bad.

Well, that is the case right here, and yet here's Elijah preparing by pouring water all over the sacrifice once he gets to his turn, because of course the prophets of Baal and Asherah have not been able to do what they should have been able in their minds to do. The Lord responds with fire from heaven. The people say, the Lord, he is God.

All the prophets of Baal are taken where? Take all the prophets of Baal, take them down to Kishon's brook, and there let them be slain. That's why we pointed out Kishon as we walked our way through the geography, because basically what's happening here, and we might want to think a bit symbolically, but that water that's draining all of the Jezreel Valley, washing that away, is going to also wash away the filth, symbolically speaking, into the sea, and of course the sea has a number of negative connotations anyway, in terms of what kinds of evils reside there in chaos in the abyss. But all the prophets of Baal, Deuteronomy 13, false prophets are taken down there, and they are slain.

Well, we'll leave Elijah, even though his flight all the way back down to Mount Sinai is a very significant one, and his recommissioning there is a very significant one as well. That is enough in terms of Sharon Plain and Mount Carmel. Now we're going to do Jezreel Valley as our third segment of this lecture.

So we've been here, we've dealt with this as the barrier, but also a very important staging ground, and now before I start putting everything all over this map, just get a look at the shape of this, because if you think a bit schematically, you see an arrowhead, and you see with that thing that's marked the Herod Valley, a shaft of the arrowhead. Hang on to that because, to all intents and purposes, we have battle after battle after battle that takes place in this context. Before we get there, however, interestingly enough, there is a site called Jezreel right here.

We'll return to that in a moment. It, just for the record, is the place where Jezebel was and to which Ahab was riding his chariot after our confrontation on Mount

Carmel, and it actually started to rain in response to Elijah's prayer. So Jezreel is right in this location right here.

Just to get our boundaries, on the north, Nazareth Ridge. That's because there's a little town called Nazareth there. We're going to return to that later as well.

We have a section right out here. It's more of that stuff that is soft limestone. So Nazareth Ridge, soft limestone, north boundary.

To the southwest, in terms of boundarying the Jezreel Valley, we've got Mount Carmel and then our brook. On the east side, and these are going to be extremely important in terms of some of the things that unfold here, you have a little bump. It's right here.

It's called Mount Tabor or Tavor. We will return to that more than once. Going south, this is our arrowhead right here.

We have Mount Moray, right about there. And then across the shaft, we have Mount Gilboa, and then the Hurroad Valley is our arrow shaft. So again, see an arrowhead and use that as an indicator of the nature of this valley so often.

By the way, lest we think it's only battleground. Also, even though it is sometimes swampy in areas, now it's very high agricultural fertility as well. Let's get the key cities down.

For those of you doing the regional study maps, this is one of those maps. It's actually the Galilee map, so that'll help us a little bit. But Megiddo, Megiddo, right there.

A very significant geographer whose name is George Adam Smith, writing at the end of the 19th century. Such a good, called the Historical Geography of the Holy Land. Such a good book.

Calls Megiddo the royal box in one of the great theaters of history. And so he's reading this area right here that we've called a battleground as also a theater. And Megiddo, for its location, is the royal box overlooking all that.

Jezreel, we've already mentioned, that's that location. So just to dial back to where we were a moment ago, the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Asherah is here. And you're going to have Ahab riding this chariot, Elijah running along, and they both get to Jezreel.

You can read the narrative in terms of what happens there. Nazareth. Now, Nazareth is not in the Jezreel Valley.

It's not directly proximate to it, but it's important for us. So here's where we are when we are pointing out Nazareth. When we study Galilee in our next lecture, we're going to do more with Nazareth, but I'm having it on here for a purpose that I hope will become clear to you in a moment.

Well, this may not be as well known as a place called Endor, but let's see if we can get it on the map. There it is. If you see a red asterisk right here, Endor is pretty much to the slight north and east of that asterisk.

Okay. I hope I will come back to the significance of Endor. Now, you know what? I'm going to do it now because it's good to have the map here as we talk about it.

So slight historical digression at this point. When Saul, at the end of his life, was confronted yet again by Philistines, things are getting worse and worse and worse. The Philistines have marched up the coastal plain.

They have gone through this barrier. They have swept across the Jezreel Valley. They actually have a temple in a place called Beit Shan, which we're going to study in another lecture.

So they control all this. Life is not easy. Saul and his sons are encamped on Mount Gilboa.

That's right there. Again, I'm going to mention it in print in a moment, but I think it helps us to see the map as we're talking about the basics of the narrative. Saul's desperate.

You've got Philistines all across here. Says they're on the slopes of Mount Moray. Remember, Tabor, Moray, Gilboa.

What's Saul going to do? He's trying to consult the Lord, not getting any answers. And so, of course, if you know that narrative in 1 Samuel 28, he sends, oh no, he disguises himself, and he goes to a witch, a witch who lives at Endor. Are you catching what's happening here? Saul is so desperate that he goes behind enemy lines.

This is enemy lines. He goes behind enemy lines. Has this witch, and by the way, all the witches, the mediums, and the diviners had been banned from the land, but he goes, finds her anyway, and she gives him a very sobering message to the effect that he is going to die the next day.

But our point is to talk about that looking at the map, recognizing the desperation that's evident in what Saul has done. Going fast forward from Saul, again, thinking of

places now, not a consistent historical narrative, but places that are significant here. We have a place called Shunem.

Shunem happens to be mentioned in conjunction with the Philistines, that narrative I just told you, but it's more important for something else because, you see, it's at Shunem that we have a prophet who's the successor to Elijah. This is named Elisha, and you can read the narratives as well as I can. We have a, 2 Kings, we have a woman and her husband who basically build a bed and breakfast, sorry for that contemporary terminology, for Elisha whenever he's traveling through.

And so he wants to do them a bit of a favor. He says, what do you want? And so it turns out they don't have a son. Long story short, they do have a son, but as the son is probably somewhere between 12 and 15 or thereabouts, he dies.

And at the point that this happens, Elisha is back on Mount Carmel. Seems to be that prophets did go there. And so the woman from Shunem, in her grief but trust, treks across the Jezreel Valley to Elisha, to his servant Gehazi, and asks for help.

He comes back and raises the Shunemite woman's dead son. Why have I gone into that narrative? Well, in the New Testament, it happens to be Luke chapter 7. We have something taking place at a place called Nain. Only Luke records this, which is really interesting.

And Luke will tell us how Jesus is going to this village. He's coming close to it. And here is a procession coming out because there is the deceased son of a widow coming out of Nain.

Jesus will go up and touch the bier. Young man will rise from the dead. And the people exclaim, there is a prophet among us.

And that's really interesting because they probably have the tradition in their hearts and minds, at least some of them do, that just around the corner, frankly just around the mountain, we had seven centuries prior to that, eight centuries prior, a raising of the Shunemite woman's son from the dead and likewise here as well. Nazareth, by the way, in its location, is fascinating because all you need to do is look out over this great royal box in the theater of history and realize it's not only that, but it was Jesus' backyard, right? He would know all of these events that took place in this area. Obviously he knew them in many ways, but even as a human growing up as a young man, the human aspect growing up, he would know these stories and all the things that were happening there.

Likewise, let's presume that his audience, even though not Jesus, would have known their historical tradition, and therefore, again, a prophet among us has risen up. Well, we've talked about these already, so just to kind of get them in some sequence

now, we never want to lose sight of Egypt in this context. So even though Thutmose III, 18th dynasty, is not mentioned in the biblical text at all, we're talking 1400s B.C. here, he is going to make a major foray into Canaan because he wanted Megiddo and he actually wrote about it.

You can read all about his battle for Megiddo, how he went about capturing it, and which pass through the Carmel range he decided to take. It's a fascinating geographical narrative. But moving into biblical material, we've got Deborah and Barak, Judges chapters four and five.

You see, this battle is against Sisera, who is the commanding army of Jabin, king of Hazor. This is a northern kingdom thing. But in terms of the Jezreel Valley, here's the thumbnail sketch.

We find out that the Israelites are encamped on Mount Tabor. They're up on the mountains. Sisera's got iron chariots, they're down in the Jezreel Valley.

But when you read the poem in Judges five, we get some sense in terms of what happened. Because that poem says the stars fought from their courses, and the enemy forces were swept away by the mighty Kishon. When we put two and two together, and it's the Lord, again, who's winning the battle.

As the Israelites sweep down from Mount Tabor, the Canaanite forces, even though they've got a technological advantage in iron chariots, are going to bog down in the mud of the Jezreel Valley. Do you remember I said the Jezreel Valley can be kind of muddy? Rich soil, kind of muddy. That seems to be what's happening.

That seems to be why Sisera is fleeing on foot. And then, of course, as we continue to read the prose narrative in Judges four, we see that he loses his life to a woman named Yael, or Jail. Well, there's much more to that, but again, that's our context for this.

Some of you who are marking your maps are going to be putting that narrative on there. We have the story of Gideon, Gideon against the Midianites. That battle, too, is going to take place.

That's going to take place at the spring of Harod, Harod taking its name from the Harod Valley, right at the foothills of Mount Gilboa. And we see Midianites on Mount Moray encamped across there. So, again, just put these historical biblical narratives out in front of you, and as you read through them, you need to do that with your Bible and your map open together.

We've mentioned this one is an extremely significant one. The Philistines saw going behind enemy lines to get to the Wicket Endor, and then sadly, chapter 31, Saul and

Jonathan dying on Mount Gilboa. And frankly, once you finish reading that, we get the sense that the Philistines have almost complete control, almost complete control of this country.

The Israelites are fleeing left and right. Move forward considerably from that terrible time. In the meantime, we've had the consolidation of the kingdom under David passed on to Solomon.

Solomon will fortify Gezer. We've learned that already. Megiddo, here it is.

And we're going to learn when we deal with our next lecture that the third city he fortifies is going to be Hazor. But now that you've seen the location of Megiddo, where it is, it's at the end of that major pass through the barrier of Mount Carmel. It overlooks in its great box office position the whole of this stage, this battleground, this theater.

Megiddo's a very significant place. And then we've already mentioned the fact that Elijah raised a young man from the dead at Shunem and Jesus will do a parallel miracle, prompting the comment, there is a prophet among us. It's also worth saying, although I don't have it on here, that in Revelation chapter 16, we have a battle, the last cataclysmic apocalyptic battle at Armageddon.

And since that is the Greek rendition of Har-Megiddo, the mountain of Megiddo, it seems very fitting that that too is foreseen in this particular location. Interestingly enough, when Allenby came through in the early 1900s, he was made Lord of Armageddon, giving that title to himself in that context. Just some photographs as we draw ourselves to a close.

This is one of those gate areas. It's partial in terms of its being left. We're going to encounter this again when we talk about Hazor.

But I wanted you to see this because we have that classic structure a little bit higher here. This room has been blocked, but we actually see one of the rooms here. There would have been a counterpart to this in this segment right here.

Megiddo, by the way, was excavated not comprehensively but probably more thoroughly than it should have been in the late 1920s or early 1930s. So, some things were taken away, and we can't study anymore. Here, we do see steps from Megiddo, the top of the tell, down in our more recent steps here, our older steps, that go way down into this shaft, which then takes you down even more deeply into the horizontal tunnel.

And here we're looking at the horizontal tunnel cut through bedrock from the bottom of this shaft here, going straight out that direction until folks could access

water. A couple more and then we'll close down with a little bit of a review. This puts onto the ground the kinds of things we've been looking at in the map.

So if you can get your map into your head again and think of standing at Megiddo on the slope of Mount Carmel, we're looking across the Jezreel Valley. We're looking here first at Mount Gilboa. Here is the head of the arrow shaft, the Harod Valley.

Here is going to be Mount Moreh. It's in the haze. So think of Saul and Jonathan.

Think of Philistines all sweeping through here. Think of Endor right about there. Saul going behind enemy lines.

And here, even though it's just a bump in the haze, is the Mount Tabor bump. Sticks up all by itself. You can always recognize it.

That's Mount Tabor. And so in that context, put Deborah and Barak up there and then Sisera and all his forces slogging down in the mud right here. Jesus and Nazareth would be off the map to the left.

Just in terms of an interesting, more contemporary thing to notice, you can see these two runways right here. And actually, they're runways that come out of an underground aircraft area. And if you stand where we are standing long enough, you can actually see planes taking off, apparently, right out of the ground and sweeping up into the sky.

So the ongoing sense of the importance of this area militarily is not lost as we look at that picture. Well, thinking of Jezreel Valley, a clearer picture of Mount Tabor right here. And we are looking at it from the northern side, the Nazareth Ridge.

We're going to revisit this particular slide and this perspective in our next lecture when we talk about the Galilee. Summary and review. So that's a connector to the next lecture.

We've talked about the Sharon Plain, mainly defined by Herod and Caesarea, and then the church traditions that follow. We've talked about Mount Carmel. We've talked about its being a perfect stage for all kinds of reasons.

And we've also talked about the importance of getting through it. And then finally, we've talked about the Jezreel Valley, battleground for millennia past and very well possibly in the future. That closes down this particular regional study.

The next one will be dealing with the Galilee.

This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 8, The Sharon Plain, Mount Carmel, and the Jezreel Valley.