

# Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 6, Geographical Setting

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Well, good morning. The peace of Christ be with you. And with you. Thank you. I need it. Let's try that once again. The peace of Christ be with you. And with you.

By the way, at the end of the class today, I get to wish you Shabbat Shalom, which will sort of be the bookend, you know, peace of Christ, and then Shabbat Shalom at the end of the class, Sabbath rest. Sabbath peace, sorry.

Notice the announcements. It might not be terribly peace-inspiring to talk about exam.

I hope you had a wonderful day on Wednesday. Did you have a wonderful day on Wednesday? Get out and enjoy the snow? We do have to do a little compression as a result of that, because I do want to try and 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, and that's my reason for doing it.

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. So, we'll draw some theological lessons from it.

Form for the exam, you can read this for yourselves. I always try and give a little bit of a hint ahead of time in terms of what the essay question will be. This is a 100-point exam, and the essay question is worth 20 points.

And when I tell you ahead of time what it's going to address, that means I want to read some real substance. If it's totally out of the blue, you can get by with some fluff or faking it. But if you know ahead of time that this is the topic, please prepare.

Know what Youngblood says about these issues. Know what we say in class. Think about biblical examples.

Think about how it applies to your life because that's going to be the force of the question. So do some preparing ahead of time on that. Then, a series of exam policies are posted in the Blackboard Announcements section.

Please have a look at those, because there are some significant things with regard to what happens if there's a fire drill and so forth and so on. So do notice those. It's always kind of fun in the first exam in this class, because certain of the policies have to do with where the exams are.

In other words, they're going to be on your chairs, et cetera, et cetera. And you can always tell who's been skipping class regularly and who hasn't paid attention because they come in and they don't know what to do. So, you know, you can be kind of nasty and smile at me next Friday if that should happen to be the case.

I know that's a little bit rude, but we'll have our own private little smile together. I'm not going to sing today. I need one more day.

We'll sing on Monday, Lord willing. 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 or segue into the lecture for today. And, of course, then it gives us some good grounds on which to pray together as well.

So, if you've got your Bibles and if 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 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, here it goes. That's the verse we're going to sing eventually, all right? How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity. Well, let's carry on just a little bit.

Wait a minute. I mean, what's so nice about having someone come and pour oil all over your head? It 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 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 of things. On the oil thing, how are you going to interpret that? There are two levels at which we can understand that, and they're both exceedingly important. Any thoughts? Mary? I'm sorry, say it once again.

And particularly the anointing of whom in this case? It's Aaron, isn't it? And Aaron, of course, is the high priest. He's the mediator between us and God, and, of course, the anointing there has a profound theological significance in terms of our access and our relationship with God. There is a lot more to say about that.

Anything else about oil? Well, you know, take yourself to a very hot, dry climate. It might be a good thought right now since you've just come in from the outdoors, but Israel's a very hot and dry climate. In fact, as you look at some of the works of art from Egypt and ancient Egypt, there are carved-in-stone pictures of people bringing bowls of oil to pour on heads as an offer of hospitality.

When your skin is cracked and dry, this is a really soothing kind of thing. So, you know, think of these two levels in terms of oil poured on the head, and that being a figure to represent unity, soothing, and restorative.

We're going to say more about olive oil a little bit later on today. So, at any rate, a lot more I could say about that in terms of preaching from it and unity, but I won't go there right now.

Let's take some time to pray together, and then we'll get on to 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 a 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 it 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 we love one another. We ask these things in Christ's name with thanksgiving. Amen.

Well, let's go on and see what we can do for the day. Here, we talk about geographical and historical backgrounds.

We're going to move fast, I know that. I feel that, in some cases, we've 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 and make our way through this entire lecture today.

Hang with me. Having said that, however, doesn't preclude your asking questions. If you've got questions, please, please, by all means, ask.

Here's one for you. Just to get us started, you know, you've done some study on your maps. I hope you've downloaded those maps and done the assignments there.

Which of the following cities is located in northwestern Mesopotamia? Who'd go for Ur? Any votes for Ur? Nobody's going on Ur. Does anybody go for Shechem or Shechem? No votes for Shechem. How about Sumer? Got a couple of 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? I'm glad you know it, that's great. Is that a hand-up? Abraham is going to have... Yeah, he's going to go actually from Ur, but he's going to land along with Terah and his family in Haran for quite some time. And when he sends his servant back to get a wife or his son, that's the area they're going to go to as well.

So, the family is located there. It does become fairly important. Super, you're doing really well.

Well, let's get on with things. That was just an introductory question. It might show up for an exam sometime.

Never know. How about some definitions, first of all? These are overly simplistic definitions, okay? But they're at least going to kind of get the framework for us. When we're talking about geography, we're talking about the study of the land.

That, of course, is what those 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 our 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 the succession of events that unfold. That means the temporal dimension. So, we've got space-time that are going to feed into how we understand this.

Place, if you will. The chessboard is the spatial dimension. How things unfold in that chess game is going to be our temporal dimension.

So, kind of hang on to that a little bit. That might be helpful for us in terms of thinking of these two parts of the discipline of historical geography. Now, of course, if you're thinking, one of the things that you are realizing, perhaps with a sinking feeling in your stomach, is that this means maps and dates.

I don't have you memorize tons and tons of tons of dates, but there will be some that we'll need to know as the semester goes on. You have to do it for history. Okay, here are a couple more things to think about.

Why we study this stuff. 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. So, it shapes where and how people live and helps us understand how 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, okay? Not too many of you. Good, how many of you live somewhere between New York City and Washington, D.C.? Where do the rest of you live? You all are in this kind of megalopolis from New York City all the way down to Washington. Do you think your life growing up was somewhat different from that of our folks from Vermont, New Hampshire, and the Adirondacks? You can bet they were because your population densities are very different, obviously, between those two.

That shapes an awful lot in terms of culture, in terms of language, in terms of worldviews, all those kinds of things. The same is true in Israel. The people who lived in the area between 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, New Hampshire.

Whereas the people who are living out on the coastal plain, Philistines, notably, are the cosmopolitan types of the day. I'm not saying that everybody who lives between Boston and Washington, D.C., is a Philistine. Don't get me wrong, but you get the idea, all right? Okay, history.

Well, the first day that we had class, one of the things I did was to read for you 1 Corinthians 10, verses 1 through 13, where Paul says, 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, and that's simply this. History does indeed contain lessons for us.

Over and 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? Okay, carrying on. Here's a little map, and I guess I better have my little pointer.

What I'm going to do, just in the next couple minutes or so, is take the things that you have on the PowerPoint, or not on the PowerPoint, let's do that again, in the lecture outline, and kind of 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.

All right, 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 could get into that later on if you're interested. But Mesopotamia, anyway, refers to this. And when I use the term Mesopotamia, I'm not using a geopolitical term.

I'm just using a geographical term. The politics gets 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, right there. The second major power locus, landform, is down in Egypt, of course. We'll also talk more about how history unfolded during the Egyptian dynastic period as the course unfolded.

The third one, which is not necessarily so prominent in the text of the First Testament, but nevertheless, we need to acknowledge that it's there because it's terribly important, is Anatolia, right up here. We're going to have some people called Hittites that live up there. There are called Hurrians that are there.

Although we don't always see them in the pages of the Bible, they are not insignificant. So, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Anatolia. I've circled Aram here as well for several reasons.

First of all, it's always kind of on the front lines between this little land of Israel, about which I'm going to say more in a moment, and the major forces in Mesopotamia. Aram has another name. What is it? Starts with an S. Syria, right, Syria.

Aram is the transliteration of the Hebrew Aram, Aram, but often known as Syria. Don't mix it up with Ah-Syria. We'll have more to say about that later.

All right, so it's 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, kind of 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, landforms, and big landforms 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, and therefore people that 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 tigers and Euphrates, but those were not nearly as helpful in terms of growing things for a lot of reasons, such as flooding, salinization, and all that sort of stuff. So, there was often some military traffic through here. Egypt is the same way.

When they start flexing their muscles, well, if we could move up here, boy, you know, we could get our hands on olive oil, mm, grapes, which make into wine, mm, good stuff. And so, there's always traffic back and forth through here, which is military traffic. So, as you think of your big power centers, Anatolia, and Hittites, especially up there, there's going to be traffic here.

Now, you're going to say, why through there? Well, that brings us to our barriers. Arabian Desert, significant barrier. Precious few water sources.

Now, of course, we can fly over it. You can take a Humvee through it, all those kinds of things. Couldn't do that then, so as people traveled, 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. Arabian Desert, huge barrier.

Sinai Desert, smaller barrier, but still a barrier right there. Too small for me to write something in. And then, of course, that's one barrier.

The other barrier is going to be the Mediterranean Sea. There is not a lot of sea traffic in the early centuries that we're talking about when we're talking about Old Testament. More later on, no question about it, but not in our earlier centuries.

So, sea traffic then is funneling through here. Am I making sense of that? And therefore, you've got a land bridge right there. That has an awful lot to do with what we talk about, and I'm going to say more about this later when we talk about Israel as being a testing ground of faith.

God has chosen to plant them at a place where life is a bit tenuous from the geopolitical context. There's always a threat of enemies going through here. The blessings and the curses in the covenant tie into land, and one of the aspects of land is security or insecurity.

If they're obedient, 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, so we 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 our Mesopotamia, excuse me, Egypt and Anatolia, deserts, the Mediterranean Sea, the land between. This is the phrase I want you to have in your heads—land between.

That's what Israel is. It's the land between these geopolitical entities, and there's always going to be some importance in that. It's the land between some other things as well.

I'm going to get to those in a moment. Land between or testing ground of faith. Am I speaking English? Are we good here? All right.

Let's add on to that a little bit, because not only do we have geopolitical issues we need to talk about, we also need to talk about fertility, water. Water is obviously necessary for civilization. I've circled the names Tigris and Euphrates right here so that you can actually see them, because those in the back may not be able to see Tigris and Euphrates.

The two major rivers probably give the 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've got to think of helpful little hints. Tigris is on top, T and T. Does that help you at all? Tigris is on top.

So, as you're thinking of the Tigris River, it's this one that goes right up over here. The Euphrates, once they separate, go their separate way and go up in this direction. And



there are some other significant rivers, Khabur River, that come in there, which makes this area, well, you don't have to know this, but some people think that when the term Mesopotamia was first coined, it didn't refer to this whole region right here.

It simply refers to the two rivers between the Euphrates, that branch of the Euphrates, and Khabur there. But that's another story. Don't worry about that.

At any rate, the Tigris and Euphrates make this area something of a, well, agriculturally fertile area. Again, there were problems because when the Tigris and the Euphrates silted up and flooded the floodplain, they didn't do the kinds of things that the Nile does. And I'll talk more about the Nile in a moment.

So, the city-states in Mesopotamia had to deal with dredging and canals, problems with salt in the soil, and so forth, which was not nearly as fertile. Down here we do have the Nile. Again, it's probably kind of hard to see, but I've tried to circle it.

Nile is a remarkable river. The Nile, as it 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.

It brings wonderful, wonderful enriched silt and soils, deposits them on the floodplain down in Egypt proper, or I should say up in Egypt proper, and then once those floods recede, this is a perfect area for growing. When you see pictures of Egypt, once you get beyond the Nile Valley, it's barren, with the exception of a few oases out 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 lots 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 travel stuff that it was considered to be a deity, especially in the former count. One of the major deities in the whole Egyptian polytheistic understanding of things. Sun was another, you know, 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 ellipse here, this one right here. You don't see any major rivers.

I mean, 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 1,200 to 1,300 feet below sea level, right? A mere 12 miles to the west in the city of Jerusalem, you are about 2,500 feet above sea level. Nobody's going to be hauling their water from the Jordan River up into that hill country area.

All right, so the fertility of this area does not come from the Jordan River, although some people might be tempted to say that. It's primarily coming from rainfall, and I'll explain more of that in just a moment. Rainfall in the wintertime, 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 through, well, October, actually, through the beginning of April, and we'll say more about early and later rains in a moment.

If it's a bad year, then it may only be raining December through March, but rain and then dew. So those are our three sources of fertile crescent. Now, let's talk about these.

Well, let's just say I've mentioned this already. 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. Okay, ready to go ahead? I see some of you kind of racing there to write.

Make sure it's all there. Okay. We're going to talk about the topography of this little slice of land in a 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, 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, whenever you're living near a great body of water, it's going to be humid, and therefore, the moist air over the Mediterranean Sea is going to rise. It moves. The prevailing winds are from west to east.

By the way, I'm simplifying this terribly. There's a lot more to it, but just get the point in terms of rainfall 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, then the rainfall is going to precipitate if you will.

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 kind of the crest of that hill and get to the east side, you end up with a rain shadow. The wilderness is a rain shadow.

I'll show you a map in a moment. We'll get there, all right? Rainfall also increases with higher elevation and decreases from north to south. This is indeed, you know, the southwestern part of the Fertile Crescent, and so the farther south you go, the less rainfall is going to come in.

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 this, notice we also have a land between climate belts. There's first the cyclone and subtropic belts.

That's what contributes primarily to the two seasons that we have here, as opposed to the four that you and I have grown up with if we've inhabited almost any part of the United States. Okay, what this means is, and again, I know I've oversimplified it. There's a lot more to say here, but what this means is when you have the land between the sea on the one hand and the desert on the other, with that very strategic set of mountain ranges going there, we have the margins of the Fertile Crescent.

Perfect place for God to plant his people because, as we're going to see when we read Deuteronomy 11 very shortly, this is an area that God can use as a testing ground. Just as in the geopolitical 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. All right, let's look at it now with a map in hand, bigger map in hand. Kind of summarizing our land between concept, okay? That's what we're going with this.

First of all, land between in terms of what it has to do with weather and climate. I've already said it. Between the sea, cool and moist, and the desert, hot and arid, 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 serious 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. Sea of Galilee is way, way down, way down from its normal levels. So, life is kind of grim right there 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've just said, between geopolitical 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, and 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, et cetera, those folks who are called Ashkenazi Jews, and the ones who have come from families that live in eastern countries, Sphardim. 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 then, of course, there's all the other things that are part of this very complex area as well.

People that are coming from the west generally invade Israel in one form or another, not always militarily, but generally do. 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 in terms of where exactly the Philistines originated, et cetera. But they've made their way from 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 end up settling 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, who are those who are here. On the other hand, as God's people are planted right in here, once 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, Amalekites. They're going to make sweeping raids in here, notably during the period of the judges and other times, making life miserable. So west and east are doing things in that way as well to make this a testing ground of faith.

We good so far? Okay. Now, we've looked at this in sort of its big picture. Let's see if we can kind of bring it down and focus right in on the land between.

I know this map is the tiniest 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, if you can't see everything, and I'll try and point stuff 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 sort of has the characteristics that the coastal plain in our country has. Again, take your sweep from New York City right on down to Washington.

That's 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 coastal plain 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 around it because it doesn't necessarily extend 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 do all the things we want to do with Mount Carmel when we do the story of Elijah. But anyway, getting back to Shephelah, if you think of this whole area, I described to you as kind of a big, long, north-south, basically, 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 the southern New Hampshire mountains. But still, significant, significant. Shephelah comes from a Hebrew word that means to be low, bowed down, if you will, shrapnel.

And so, what we're talking about is the perspective of people living up here looking down over that and saying, those are the lowlands, those are the foothills. In fact, I think your NIV will translate this, foothills. So, our Shephelah are going to be foothills below the hill country that's right here.

Again, don't pay attention to the green line. We'll say more about that a little bit later on. Now, this hill country, Shephelah, is on the east, bowed by, what's the right word I want? To the east of it is the wilderness.

So 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, and therefore, you're going to have decent agriculture out there.

There are many things that have to do with soil types, too. Take Introduction to Biblical Studies. We do a whole lot with that.

This is all we can do with it here. On the eastern slope, however, I mentioned rain's shadow earlier. Your clouds pretty much dissipate as they go over the top of the hills, and so here we've got a broken pointer.

There it is, right there, the wilderness, and I'll show you photographs in a moment. Wilderness, you know, those of you, again, from upstate whatever, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, don't think bears and woods and all those kinds of things. This is a vastly different kind of wilderness.

Well, carrying on a little bit, again, still moving west to east, we have the Rift Valley. This whole sweep, all the way. In fact, the Rift Valley, how many of you know of the Rift Valley Academy? Do you have any friends that have studied there? Where is it? Do you know Catherine? Yeah, you're absolutely right, it's in Kenya, and that's the same geological formation.

This is just one tiny little arm of it, but 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, 2,500 feet above sea level, north end of the Dead Sea, 1,300 feet below sea level, in the space of 12 miles, so it's a radical drop. And if you want just a little bit of a continued picture of this thing, once you go down into the Dead Sea at this north end, by the way, it gets shallow down here, but the north end of the Dead Sea is about 1,100 feet below sea level.

Now, let's try that again. It's about 1,100 feet deep water. Okay, so you've got it 1,200 to 1,300 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 it's continuing to go down, but at any rate, another more than 1,000 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? Does 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 stuff washing into this area, millennia. But again, that gives us a picture, some kind of a sense of what a remarkable cleft in the earth this Rift Valley is, even at this point. All right, that's just a little background.

This thing here is probably what you know 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 HaMelech. And interestingly enough, there is life in the Dead Sea. Very small, okay, 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 and, or the Sea of Salt, and this next body of water is the Jordan Valley. That's the Jordan River.

It's a distance of somewhere between 60 and 65 miles, but the Jordan winds all over the place here. It doesn't go straight, even though that map may 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. Don't have a lot to do with the Sea of Galilee in terms of Old Testament. That becomes significant with New Testament narrative, particularly.

And then this area north of it called the Hula Basin. The term Aravah, or perhaps you're going to see it from time to time Arabah, B and V, as we're moving from Hebrew to English, interchange, okay? So you may see it in your text as Arabah with a B, but it's pronounced Aravah, just for a little confusion here. You're going to see that term, and sometimes 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.

All right, here are a couple more things to note. Transjordan, of course, just over here, east of the Rift Valley. And then Negev, another word we want to make a note of.

Negev is going to be important for our patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. It's a word that means both south and dry. It 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.

Northern lands, we've got two up in here. The area that, in terms of our New Testament, we know as Galilee. It's not referred to as Galilee in the Old Testament, but once I know of it,

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? Okay, 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. This actually happens to be Independence Day, so if you look very carefully, you see probably 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 Shephelah, lowlands, foothills.

It fits right in there. This happens to be the Ela Valley. There are snakes around there.

That's the valley going up, and it's always marked by a nice satellite dish there. The Ela Valley is something that we're going to visit big time when we do David and Goliath. Okay, so 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, and the Judean Hills are there. That's the ridge of that whole long expanse of Judean Hills.

And now we're actually in the hill country. I want you to see three things. That's why there are three pictures.

First of all, notice that unlike the coastal plain and unlike the Shephelah, we've got some fairly steep hills. In fact, it's so steep, it's in the shadow. Too bad we've got these bright lights on.

You'd 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, all right? And there are going to be smaller kinds of establishments and 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, we'll come back to that in a moment, you see a modern road going along here, and 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 rosa, red earth.

And once it gets rainfall, it is exceedingly productive. Dates, figs, grapes, olives, important stuff 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, again, the bedrock, is structured in this area such that it naturally terraces. As it erodes, you have terraces that are horizontal terraces, like so, that 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, which has been going on, obviously then, for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. All right, now we also want to notice just 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 kind of a plateau right around here. Hang on to 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 little slice anyway, of hill country. Let's move east. Here's wilderness.

All right, rain shadow, again. On that western slope that we've just seen, things are lush. Soils are great, got rain, great.

Here you are in the rain shadow. Obviously, you can see little bits and pieces of vegetation down there, but there's not a whole lot of it. When we think of this picture, there are two things to think of.

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 hear 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 other titles that he has. 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 area where he is spending some time, not right here, but in the same general type of area. So, David spends time out there. 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 gives 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 to get some sense of distance and perspective. All right? 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. As you know, 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, which is going slightly farther north. It's been raining. This is springtime here.

Notice how green things are in contrast to some of the other things we've seen. And by the way, one of the reasons I say that is it doesn't rain a lot in the Jordan Valley, but they do irrigate. And your 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 to Transjordan, not because there's anything Old Testament associated with this, but, you know, Petra's important if you've watched Indiana Jones. Do you watch Indiana Jones? Are you an old movie aficionado? So, you know this scene.

For my purposes, just a couple of things to note. This is a city that was built by folks called the Nabataeans who take over this area just around 312 BC, and they build the city probably as a center for spice trade. There's some debate in terms of exactly how that all works.

Lots of things we could say about the Red City. I would hope you'll go and travel 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 that I said this is that I sort of shortchanged myself there. One of the reasons I show this is to note how rugged this area is, right around Petra. You can hike up and see this particular thing called the monastery.

There are lots of reasons why you could talk further about that. But what I want you to see is 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 clefts of their rock.

Well, you know what? Their time is coming. We'll revisit these pictures when we talk about Obadiah. One other quick 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.

There's a little kind of a mosque up there. Perry and I hiked up there about four years ago. It took us about eight hours to get up and back.

But from there, it's the highest point around there. 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, here's just a quick look at the Negev. Yes, 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. Well, moving from the south to the north, keep this contrast in mind because it's no accident that some of the tribes that settled farther south may have been looking with longing eyes towards the north.

Notably, one of them called the tribe of Dan, part of which actually migrated up north because they were so taken with the beauty. Here we've got the Sea of Galilee, water. 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 right here.

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 hundreds of thousands of gallons per second of water. So here are the headwaters at Dan.

We'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, et cetera. But we've got more to do. I told you we'd come back to these green lines.

A couple of things, first of all, that 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, and 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's going to be small rivers going from west, 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. It's going to head on right on down to Egypt, as a matter of fact, across the northern Sinai Peninsula. As we make our way north on the International Coastal Highway, all is well until we get to this point right here.

And then you've got to say, oh, man, 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. And then, if you're going up to Tyre and Sidon, then 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. And 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 kind of 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 with this route, which is the Transjordanian Highway.

It actually has two branches, but don't worry about them for now. 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 is an important trunk route right across here. Again, we're going to come back to that, but don't lose sight of it now. Recognize that there are going to be major ways to get from this international route to this international route.

Internal travel. Let's say you're a patriarch. Let's say you're Abraham.

Let's say you just came into the land, and lo and behold, you come to Shechem, or Shechem, and the Lord guides you. You go to Bethel. That's all right, 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's called the Way of the Patriarchs. It's that photograph that 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 following right along the top of the ridge.

Does that make sense? I know I'm going really fast today. Are we doing well? We're doing well. Okay, a couple things we need to say about the trade and the commerce that unfold in terms of this region.

Again, land between, land bridge, keep that concept always in your mind. Obviously, just as in our country, whether you're 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, 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 Transjordanian 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 the spice trade. We have a tendency to think of spices as, oh, those lovely little things that sit on our shelf, and they make our food 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 preservation of food. But secondly, equally important, they were used in ritual, religious ritual, funeral rituals, and preservative in that kind of a sense as well.

So, think of this as a culture that's very wound in with their religious observances and their religious rites. Spices, frankincense, all that stuff 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. They're perfectly designed to travel on deserts. I won't say more about them now.

The produce of the land is also terribly important to 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 word for bread, is lehem, often translated as food because that makes up a huge part of what people took in. Estimates that a person would eat about half a kilo a day of grain. It also estimates that as women were grinding grain, it took them about three hours to do enough food for a whole normal-sized family.

Okay, one of those hand-mill kinds of things. So, when it talks about grinding grain, you know, when it talks in Proverbs about the woman who grinds that grain faithfully, she's spending a lot of time doing it—three hours to provide for a normal family.

Wine, wine was important as well, and I note for the reasons why. Water purifier, iron, and 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, 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 where they were pretty much raped away, tragically.

Well, this is indeed a marginal region, and I want to turn to Deuteronomy chapter 11, with which we will close today. I've given you some little charts at the end of this lecture on historical peoples round about, but I've talked about them. You can kind of figure them out, but let's take a quick look at Deuteronomy 11, and as I said, we'll close with this.

Starting at verse 10, the land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt from which you've come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot. Little channels they had, you know, and the channels, there were irrigation channels alongside the Nile. Close them up with a little mud bridge, and open them up with your foot.

The land you're crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys. Got a picture of that now? Land of mountains and valleys. The 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 comes the punchlines.

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 gather in your grain new wine and oil. I'll provide grass in the fields for your cattle. You'll be eaten, be satisfied.

And then verse 16, be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good 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 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.