

### Geography of the Divided Kingdom Era

**Gilead** was the name of Israel's territory on the east side of the Jordan, occupied by Reuben, Gad, and part of Manasseh. It was fertile pastureland. The former inhabitants were the Amorites of Bashan and Sihon. Gilead's location made it susceptible to attack, and it was the first land lost in Israel's decline.

**Phoenicia** comprised the city-states of **Tyre** and **Sidon**, located northwest of Israel along the Mediterranean coast. Their involvement with other nations was primarily trade rather than war. The idolatrous influence of the Sidonian princess, Jezebel, was brought into Israel by King Ahab around 870 BC.

**Syria**, or Aram in Hebrew, was located north of Gilead and Ammon. Damascus was its capital. Syria's territory includes northern Gilead on many maps due to shifting borders in that region. Syria warred with Ahab, king of Israel, but also allied with Israel against Judah and Assyria. Assyria conquered Syria in 732 BC.

**Philistia** was a coastal region between Judah and the Mediterranean Sea. It had six chief cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. They were a powerful adversary during the Judges and early United Kingdom periods but were only rarely mentioned in the Divided Kingdom narrative.

**Edom** was located south of Judah and Moab. Though related to Israel through Jacob's brother, Esau (also a nickname for Edom), they were hostile toward the Israelites. They had intermittent conflicts with Judah, which at times asserted domination over Edom. Edom liberated itself and carried on as a strong nation until they were conquered by Babylon in 553 BC. They were arrogant, because their barren canyon terrain made them difficult to invade. They celebrated and took advantage when Judah was attacked by others. Edom's doom was the subject of Obadiah's prophecy. Prominent places used as representative names for Edom included Mt. Sier, Teman, and Bozrah.

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**Ammon** was east of Israel, sharing its border with Gilead. Its capital was Rabbah. It was related to Israel through Abraham's nephew, Lot. Ammon had lost its territory along the Jordan to Sihon before Israel took it. Ammon still viewed it as their homeland and fought for it. They joined with others in attacking Israel and Judah many times. Its chief god was Molech (or Moloch).

**Moab** was also related to Israel through Abraham and Lot. Moab was located east of Judah, across the Dead Sea. They warred frequently with Israel and Judah.

**Egypt**, known as Mizraim in Hebrew, was an ancient nation and a major world power. When Assyria and others threatened Israel and Judah, these turned to Egypt for help in exchange for tribute and loyalty, despite God's explicit prohibition not to seek help from Egypt. Egypt tried to help Assyria save its crumbling empire, but the alliance was defeated. Immediately after the fall of Assyria, Egypt fought Babylon for control of the smaller kingdoms, like Judah, but lost.

**Assyria**, or Asshur, arose as an empire in 911 BC, twenty years after Israel divided. The empire's border reached Syria and Israel. It conquered Syria in 732 BC and took land from Israel. It conquered Israel's capital, Samaria, in 721 BC. Assyria threatened Judah in 701 BC but was miraculously thwarted. Babylon and Media led attacks against Assyria in 612, 609, and 605 BC, resulting in the fall of the empire. Nineveh was Assyria's capital from 705 to 612 BC and the subject of Jonah and Nahum.

**Babylon** was an ancient Mesopotamian nation which became subject to Assyria. They revolted several times and were finally successful in 626 BC. They defeated an Assyrian-Egyptian alliance in 605 BC and vied with Egypt for control of the smaller kingdoms between the two. Babylon won and dominated the western region from 605 to 539 BC, when it fell to Persia. The Babylonians were known ethnically as the Chaldeans.

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**Ethiopia**, also known as Cush, was a large nation on Egypt's southern border. They attacked Judah around 900 BC but were defeated. Ethiopia ruled Egypt from about 750 to 650 BC. Ancient Ethiopia corresponds primarily to modern Sudan. Some maps also include modern Eritrea, Djibouti, and part of Ethiopia.

The **Arabs** were tribes of people east of Gilead, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, extending southeast to the tip of the Arabian peninsula. They were mostly merchants and traders. At times, they raided Judah and allied with its enemies.

**The Euphrates** was often simply called **the River**, as reflected in some translations. "Beyond the River" referred to Mesopotamia, especially Assyria and Babylon.

**Palestine** and **the Levant** are often referred to in extra-Biblical literature. Palestine was a term used by Greeks and Romans for the strip of land around the Jordan River, roughly synonymous with the territory of Israel in the United Kingdom period. "Levant" comes from Latin for rise and referred to the sunrise (east). The Levant is not a strictly defined area. It encompasses Palestine and the surrounding areas, namely ancient Syria, Cyprus, and Nabatea. In modern terms, it borders Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Although the Greek equivalent term is Anatolia, the region of Anatolia was northwest of the Levant, in what is now Turkey.

**The Negeb** (or Negev) was the desert in southernmost Judah.

**Galilee** was the northernmost territory of Israel, comprising the tribal lands of Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali.

**Lebanon** was a Phoenician mountain range and forest known for its cedars.

**Israel** was known representatively by its capital, Samaria, and Ephraim and Jacob.

**Judah** was known representatively by its capital, Jerusalem, also called Zion. Its people were known as the Jews from the exilic period on.