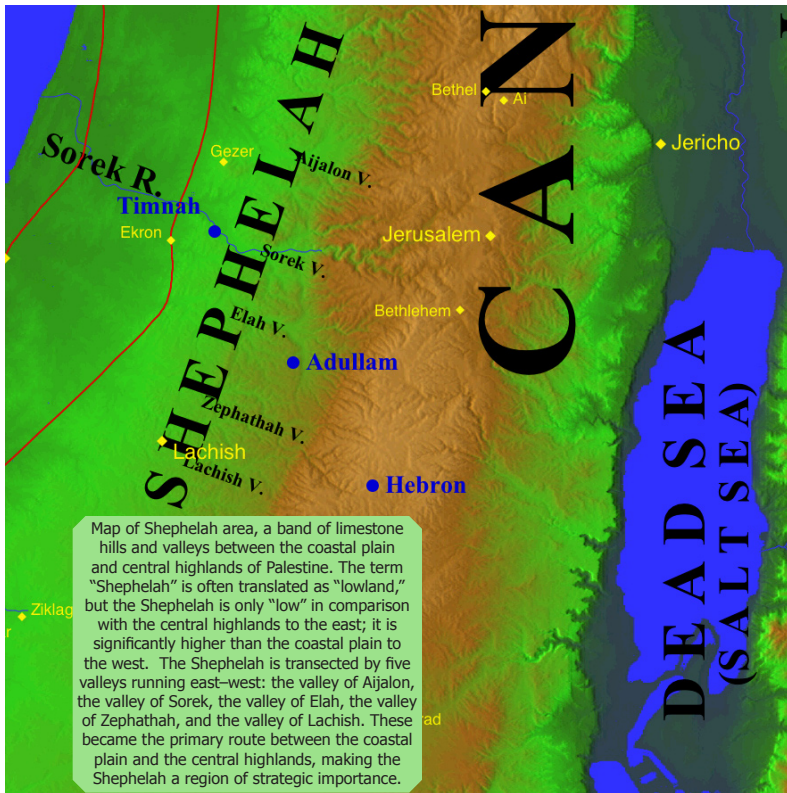


Maps & Pictures Of Shephelah Region



Timnah, in the Sorek Valley. Much of the story of Samson would take place in this same region. This area was coveted for its fertility and strategic military location.

Adullam, located at the eastern end of the Elah Valley. King David would hide in a cave in Adullam after feigning insanity at Gath some time in the future and collect his mighty men here. Adullam seems to have been an ideal spot for refuge.



Map of Shephelah area, a band of limestone hills and valleys between the coastal plain and central highlands of Palestine. The term "Shephelah" is often translated as "lowland," but the Shephelah is only "low" in comparison with the central highlands to the east; it is significantly higher than the coastal plain to the west. The Shephelah is transected by five valleys running east-west: the valley of Aijalon, the valley of Sorek, the valley of Elah, the valley of Zephathah, and the valley of Lachish. These became the primary route between the coastal plain and the central highlands, making the Shephelah a region of strategic importance.

The Hidden Hand

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 24th, 2006 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL, AND
FORGET NOT ALL HIS BENEFITS,
WHO FORGIVES ALL YOUR INIQUITY,
WHO HEALS ALL YOUR DISEASES,
WHO REDEEMS YOUR LIFE FROM
THE PIT, WHO CROWNS YOU WITH
STEADFAST LOVE AND MERCY...
~PSALM 103:2-4 (ESV)**

1) An Unexpected Twist

- A) Without warning, the Joseph narrative abruptly stops and a story about one of Joseph's older brother's, Judah, is begun (Genesis 37:36-38:1).
- B) Why would Moses interrupt the narrative of Joseph* for this

* Because of the abrupt start/stop of the Joseph narrative and the presence of the seemingly disconnected Judah/Tamar story, some scholars believe that Genesis 38 is one of the most obvious "additions" to the text by a later redactor or editor. On many fronts, this looks plausible, especially in light of the presence of some sort of Pentateuchal editor (cf. Deuteronomy 34, obviously not written by Moses). I do not agree with this view though, and believe a singular author is better based on the striking linguistic and thematic parallels of Genesis 38 with the larger corpus of Genesis. For instance, the deception of Jacob (Genesis 37) and Judah (Genesis 38) involves a goat. Both chapters utilize garments (Joseph's multi-colored tunic, Judah's seal, cord, and staff) to establish identity. Jacob's grief over his son can be contrasted by Judah's lack of grief over his son. Tamar is a seductress, as is Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39. Judah is seduced because he lacks devotion to God, which is contrasted by Joseph, who is chaste and honorable. Onan feels about his brothers what Joseph's brothers feel about him. These are just some examples (there are many more) which lead me to support a single author, Moses. (Various sources, esp. *Genesis (NICOT)*, by Victor P. Hamilton, pages 431-432).

story about Judah? Note that if the Joseph story is read without Genesis 38, it flows almost seamlessly (cf. 37:36 & 39:1).

- C) The story of Judah & Tamar is located in Genesis 38 because if you place it any earlier or later, it wouldn't make sense. The obvious answer is to "why?" is chronological.

2) Judah Takes A Not-So-Quick Trip To See A Friend

- A) Judah, perhaps seeking to get away from his distraught father, travels to Adullam (northwest of Hebron), to visit a friend, Hirah (38:1). While visiting Hirah, Judah meets an unnamed Canaanite woman and marries† her (38:2).
- B) Judah has three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah (38:3-5). When Er came of age, Judah chose a wife for him (almost certainly a Canaanite woman) named Tamar (38:6).
- C) Er was so unmentionably evil in God's eyes, he was killed (by his own sin or directly struck down by God -- 38:7). It is notable that unlike his father Jacob, there is no indication Judah mourns the loss of his son.
- D) Er's death activated a "levirate" marriage‡ where Onan was responsible for producing an heir for Er with Tamar (38:8). Onan did not want Er to have an heir, so that the financial wealth of Judah would come to Onan, instead of Er's heir.

† All of Jacob's sons had long known that both Abraham and Isaac had warned against marrying the daughters of the Canaanites. Abraham made his servant, Eliezer, promise him that Isaac would not take a wife from the Canaanites (Genesis 24:3). When Isaac sent Jacob off to Mesopotamia, he commanded him to not take a wife from the Canaanites (28:1). Judah's decision to marry a Canaanite woman was a clear act of rebellion toward his father, and ultimately, toward God. There is a distinct impression that ever since the Dinah (Genesis 34) & Reuben (35:22) incidents (which involved Judah's three older brothers), Jacob had less and less control over the behavior of his family. Add to this the jealous sin of selling Joseph to traders, and you get a clearer picture of how Judah's life was quickly slipping away from God. (Collected from various sources, esp. *Genesis*, by R. Kent Hughes, page 452 & *Genesis (NICOT)*, by Victor P. Hamilton, page 433).

- E) So, whenever Onan would have intercourse with Tamar, he would "waste his seed" in order to prevent pregnancy. The text makes clear he did this many, many times (38:9). Because of this sin, God also kills Onan (38:10).

3) Judah's Deception

- A) Shelah, Judah's last son, is too young to marry (38:11), so Tamar is sent back to her father's house as a widow. Judah fears Shelah will die like his brothers, so even when Shelah is old enough to marry, he is not sent to marry Tamar (38:14).

4) Tamar's Deception

- A) Tamar, knowing that she has been sinned against and left for dead, takes matters into her own hands by secretly posing as a prostitute and luring Judah (her father-in-law) into sleeping with her (38:15-23).
- B) Upon discovering her pregnancy, Judah orders Tamar burned at the stake for her adultery (38:24). Tamar produces Judah's "identification" (38:25) and Judah simply says, "She is right, I am not. The only sin here is my own" (38:26).
- C) Tamar eventually has twin boys, Zerah (the older with the scarlet thread) and Perez, the younger (38:27-30). As is becoming thematic, the younger son will be the more significant in God's economy (Ruth 4:13-18-22).
- D) Astoundingly, Tamar's sin is transformed by God as part of the line which would lead to Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:2-17).

‡ The levirate law, which would be clarified in later biblical law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10), states that if brothers live together, and one of them is married but dies without children, one of the surviving brothers is to marry or take her as a wife and father a child with her. The child born of this levirate relationship (*levir* is Latin for "brother-in-law") carries on the name of his deceased father and eventually inherits the family estate. The biblical levirate law seems to be more relaxed than at the time of Jacob & Onan (e.g. The levirate marriage could be rejected later, although the man who rejected his levirate duties was open to public scorn which included having the woman he was supposed to marry spit in his face). Ruth's marriage to Boaz was levirate, and levirate marriages existed even into Jesus' day (cf. Matthew 22:23-30).