



## Season 1, Episode 2

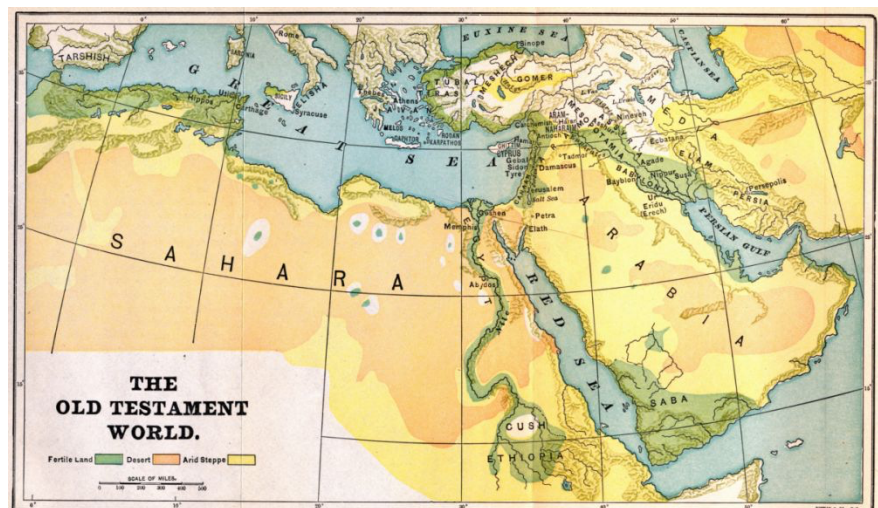
### The Importance of Geography

- The setting is important to understanding a good story
- Geography shapes politics, politics shapes theology
- Israel is about the size of New Jersey, 200 miles north to south
- ancient world included civilizations engaged in trade and geopolitics

### Ancient Near East

- eastern Mediterranean including Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Egypt, Arabia, and Syro-Palestine
- The Fertile Crescent – ideal conditions for settlement
- thought and culture that inhabited region from 3000 to 300 BC
- Ends with Alexander the Great

The OT world centered on the Tigris/Euphrates in Mesopotamia and the Nile River in Egypt. Syro-Palestine (or Canaan ) was the ancient land bridge between these two civilizations along with Asia Minor and Arabia. Hub of international commerce and travel between the great civilizations and major land areas.



*"This is Jerusalem: I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her" (Ezekiel 5:5, NIV).*

## GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS OF ANE

### 1. Mesopotamia - "between the rivers"

- A. Region at the head of the Persian Gulf moving northwest through the broad flat plain of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, mentioned in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2
- B. Sumerian civilization, cir: 3200 BC.
- C. built fortified cities for protection and expansion
  - 1. Ur – Abraham
  - 2. Uruk – King Gilgamesh, the first hero of Western literature
- D. Alphabet, cuneiform writing, base 60 mathematics
- E. Advanced in trade and warfare
- F. Highly fertile with unpredictable climate, flooding
- G. wide, flat plain was inviting to outsiders
- H. Easy to enter and capture, hard to defend
- I. notable groups were Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians

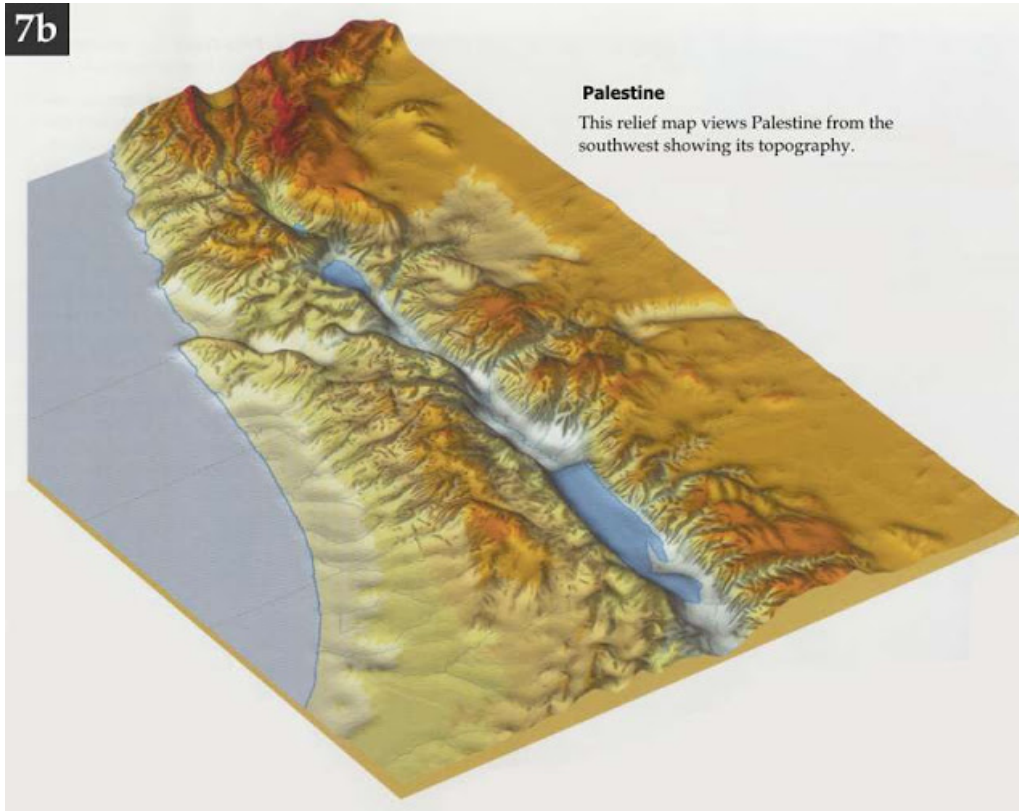
### 2. Asia Minor

- A. Romans (Asia Minor, meant "smaller" Asia), Greeks (Anatolia), modern Turkey
- B. Halys River - longest river border of Asia Minor and Asia proper
- C. high barren plateau surrounded by fertile plains along the coast, broken up by rugged mountains -- extreme weather
- D. Stern, harsh people lived here
- E. Hittites, first to use horses in warfare

### 3. Egypt -- "The Gift of the Nile"

- A. Nile river was center of life
- B. narrow cultivable strip 10 miles wide along river, otherwise desert
- C. Nile delta was exception; major grain production
- D. 90% of the Egyptian population lived in that strip.
- E. perfect climate, 75 degrees, very little rainfall (irrigation and water from river)
- F. Nile – consistent, predictable flood every September
- G. Natural defenses all around (Sea, desert, Red Sea, falls on south part of river)
- H. Stable, serene, predictable life and culture
- I. Pyramids, embalming – concerned with the after-life
- J. Strong reaction versus Hebrews (Joseph; Exodus) -- threat to status quo.

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#### 4. The Levant

A. 50-60 mile strip along eastern coast of Mediterranean Sea

B. land bridge for three continents; the highway of the Fertile Crescent

##### C. Coastal Plain

1. no natural harbors in south and central
2. fertile due to rain dropping before clouds cross mountain range
3. Plain of Philistia – Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, Ashdod, Gath
4. Shephelah, rolling hills transitions from plains to the mountains, battleground between Philistines and Israelites
5. Central Valley (Valley of Jezreel / Plains of Esdraelon)
6. Breadbasket of Israel
7. Control Megiddo, control the valley, control the country
8. Armageddon, Armageddon

##### D. The Ridge (mountains)

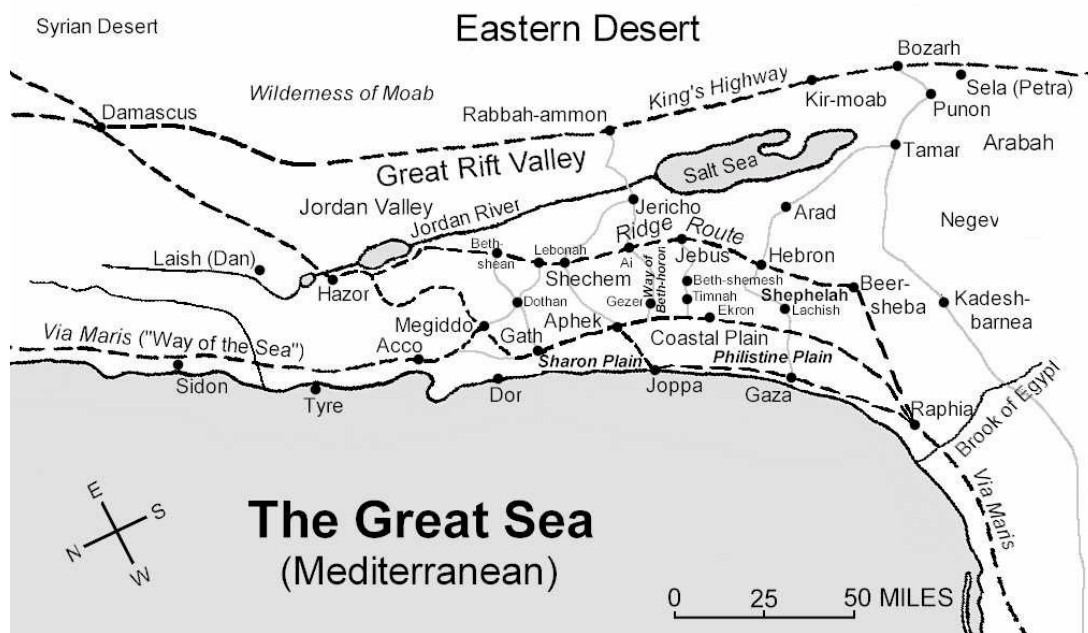
1. North-south ridge to the west of the Rift
2. Upper and Lower Galilee
3. Ridge is interrupted by Jezreel Valley
4. The Carmel (or Central) Range - southwest of Jezreel Valley
5. Central Manasseh/Samaria
6. Hill Country of Ephraim
7. Hill Country of Judah – Jerusalem, fairly barren, desolate

##### E. The Jordan Rift/Valley

1. crack in earth's crust from anti-Lebanon mountains in then north down to the Red Sea; also Rift Valley and Highlands in Kenya
2. East to West travel was difficult
3. both Jordan River & Dead Sea below sea level
4. The Dead Sea - 43 miles long, 9 miles wide; lowest point on the earth's service (1300 feet BSL); no outlet for water
5. The Arabah - 103 miles from Dead Sea to Gulf of Aqabah on the Red Sea; Solomon's naval port; copper mining; land of Edom (David).

#### F. Trans-Jordanian Plateau

1. Bashan (land of the farmer)
2. Gilead (land of the highlander)
3. Moab & Ammon (land of the shepherd)
4. Edom (land of the trader)
5. Hills of Trans-Jordan gets some moisture, but slow slope to desert.



#### Ancient Crossroads

- Surrounded by wealthy empires wanting to trade; Egyptians, Aegean civilizations, Mesopotamia
- Israel is at the economic center of the Ancient Near East; major trade routes by land and sea converge
- Control the highways, control the flow of money
- Ancient nations battled for control of this narrow strip of land between the sea and the Jordan Rift Valley
- God placed his chosen people right at the center of the world's politics, economics, and power. It was here that he determined before civilization ever even emerged that he would reveal himself, his character, and his love for the world!