

The Nations¹

Judah & Israel's southeastern and southwestern borders were hedged by the ancestral blunders of Abraham (Midianites via Ishmael), Lot (Ammonites & Moabites via his younger and older daughter, respectively) and Jacob (Edomites through his duplicity toward his brother Esau).

Ammon

- Descendants of Lot and his younger daughter (Gen.19:38; c.f. Moab);
- Ordered by God to leave them alone during the conquest, Deut. 2
- Located east of southern Israel

Arabia

- A general term for the nomads living in the deserts of Arabia² or a general term for peoples living east of Israel (Judges 6:3).
- Included the following tribes: Amalekites, Buzites, Dedanites, Harites, Ishmaelites, Kadmonites, Kedarites, Kenites, Meunim or Meuites, Midianites, Maamathites, Sabeans, and Shuhites.

Aram (a.k.a. Syria)

- Descendants of Shem, son of Noah (Gen.10:22-23)
- Located north & east of Israel
- Damascus was the capital city of the Aramean territory

Assyria

- An early kingdom of Mesopotamia; prominent from 900-600 BC
- Bounded on the west by the Syrian desert, south by Babylonia and on the north and east by the Armenian and Persian hills
- Language: Assyro-Babylonian (aka Akkadian)
- Their history is very bound up in the history of Babylon

Babylon (a.k.a. Chaldeea)

- Civilization can be dated in this region from 5000 BC
- Located south of Assyria between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and bounded at its southern border by the Persian Gulf
- The city of Babylon is located in the land of Shinar (Gen.10:10) in modern Iraq. According to Genesis the city was founded by Nimrod
- The nation of Babylon waxed and waned in power from its inception until its destruction by the Medo-Persian Empire in 539 BC; it's final period of ascendance was between 626-539 BC.

Caananite (c.f. Phoenecians)

- Refers to the area west of the Jordan and Syria
- The people called Caananites were those in this land area from various people groups including Hittites, Ishmaelites, Amorites, Edomites, etc.

Cush (a.k.a. Kush or Ethiopia)

- South of Egypt

¹ Most of this material was derived from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Volumes 1-4, Zondervan Press.

² Present day Saudi Arabia

- Founded by Cush, a son of Noah

Edom

- Descendants of Esau (Gen.36:9)
- Ordered by God to leave them alone during the conquest, Deut. 2
- Located south and southeast of Judah
- During the divided kingdom they had a long and uncomfortable relationship with Judah. Judah largely controlled them during this period and apparently did not permit them to tax goods passing through Edomite borders from the port of Ezion-geber to Palestine.
- God judged Edom for supporting the destruction of Israel. History & archeology tells us that Edom fell shortly after Jerusalem. By 500 BC the settlements of Edom were demolished. Many Edomites continued into the NT times (i.e. the Edumeans). Herod was an Edumean. The last of the Edumeans died supporting Israel when they fought Rome in AD 70.ⁱ
- Major cities included Teman, Bozrah, Ezion Geber & Elath

Ephraim

One of the largest tribes of Israel. Sometimes the name of this one tribe is used for the entire northern kingdom - Israel.

Egypt

- One of the ancient kingdoms of the near east; it's prominence waxed and waned from 3000 BC to 332 BC when it was defeated by Alexander the Great. Until the Greek conquest, it was ruled by 30 successive dynasties.
- Located in the north east corner of Africa
- Bounded by the deserts of Sinai, Paran, Shur and Zin and the Red Sea on the east, the Mediterranean Sea on the North
- It surrounds the Nile valley

Israel (lit. *struggles with God*)

- Israel was the name God gave to Jacob (Gen.32:22-32) after he wrestled with Him.
- Israel was also the name of the nation arising from Jacob's sons.
 - Each of Jacob's sons founded a tribal group: Ruben, Simeon, Levi (priestly tribe), Judah (kingly line), Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph (his two sons became tribes Ephraim & Manasseh) and Benjamin.
 - The only kings of the unified nation were: Saul, David and Solomon
- Israel was also the name of the northern alliance of tribes after the Israeli civil war (it included all of the tribes except Judah, Benjamin & Levi).
 - The first king of the divided nation of Israel was Jereboam.
 - The capital city was Samaria, which fell to Shalmaneser V of Assyria, December 722
 - The contemporary status of these peoples is unknown although Revelation 7:7 indicates that 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes are sealed against the coming doom...Apparently God has not lost track of them.

Judah

- During the time of the division of the Hebrew peoples, this term designated the southern tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi.
- See notes on the tribe of Simeon
- The first king was Reoboam, son of Solomon

- The capital city was Jerusalem
- Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, 597 BC
- Around 10% of the captured Jews or their offspring emigrated back to the land in one of three waves of migration under the Medo-Persians

Midianites

- A nomadic people generally located to the south and west of Judah
- Sometimes lumped together with the Ishmaelites; Gen.17:20; Jgs.8:22-24; a people located to the south and east of Judah & Israel; the Bedouin peoples

Meunites

- A desert tribe of uncertain origin
- Lived in an area around the southeastern part of the Dead Sea near the Edomites.
- Their chief city was Ma'an (not to be confused with Maon in Judah)
- They harassed Judah during the time of Uzziah, were defeated and enslaved to the temple priests then. They appear among the temple servants (Nethinim) after the exile (Ez.2:50, 8:20, Neh.7:52).

Moab

- Descendants of Lot and his older daughter (Gen.19:37; c.f. Ammon)
- Ordered by God to leave them alone during the conquest, Deut. 2
- Located east of the southern half of the Dead Sea

Philistia

- A people living in an area corresponding to modern Lebanon
- The Philistines were a part of a larger group known as the Sea Peoples. After a confederation of Sea Peoples forces failed to take over the Egyptian Delta, Pharaoh Ramses III settled them in Egyptian garrisons, with the Philistines being located in and around the south Canaan Egyptian administrative city of Gaza.
- There was constant friction between Philistia & Israel.
- Major cities included Joppa, Gaza, Ashkelon & Jabneh
Ashkelon was a major east Mediterranean port city since the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1900 BC). During the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1500-1200 BC), the populace was influenced by Egypt's New Kingdom. While fairly cosmopolitan and wealthy the citizens practiced customs abhorrent to the Egyptians, including child sacrifice, a ritual later associated with Phoenician/Punic culture. With the arrival of the Sea Peoples around 1200 BCE, the influence of the arriving Aegean culture dominated the later development of the city. It became one of the great cities of the Pentapolis controlled by the best known of the Sea Peoples Groups, the Philistines.

Phoenecia (a.k.a. Sidonians (Josh.13:6, Jgs.3:3))

- Located on a strip of land between the Mediterranean and the Lebanese mountains
- Major cities included Tyre, Sidon & Zarephath

Sabeans

A people in the southern Arabian peninsula; modern Yemen

Simeon

This is one of the tribes of Israel. Many maps place it squarely in Judah and so the question becomes, if Judah consisted of the tribes of Judah, Levi and Benjamin...where is Simeon?

- This tribe and Levi, by means of deception, executed vengeance upon Shechem (Gen.34:25-31). This angered Jacob so much (34:30) that he predicted their descendants would be scattered throughout the land 49:5-7 because of their progenitor's violence.
- Over half of this tribe was killed during the wanderings after the Exodus. It was not given a separate inheritance in the land after the return from the wanderings Josh.19:1-9. Instead, it was given several border cities in southern Judah. This group may have migrated or been absorbed into Judah...it is not mentioned as a separate tribe in Judges, Kings or Samuel.³
- 1 Chronicles 4:29 indicates that they lived in their cities until the reign of David.
- During Hezekiah a group migrated to a region southwest of Bethlehem - Gedor and another group migrated to Edom (1Chron. 4:39-43)
- In 2 Chronicles 15:9 and 34:6 the tribe appears to be lumped with Ephraim and Manasseh as typifying the Northern Kingdom v. Judah and Benjamin typifying the Southern Kingdom.

ⁱ Some believe that the Edomites became part of the Khazars who converted to Judaism 600 - 800's AD. The Khazar Jews were the progenitors of the vast majority of today's Jewish people. [The Jewish Almanac](#) (1980) in the chapter, *Identity Crisis*, states, "Strictly speaking, it is incorrect to call an ancient Israelite a "Jew" or to call a contemporary Jew an "Israelite" or a "Hebrew." p. 3

- "they [the Edomites] were hereafter no other than [non-Israelite] Jews." Flavius Josephus, [The Antiquities of the Jews](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Dregel Publications, 1960) Book XIII, Chapter IX, Verse 1, p. 279
- "In the days of John Hyrcanus the [non-Israelite] Edomites became a section of the Jewish people." see, *Edom, Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, Israel: Encyclopaedia Judaica Company, 1971) Vol. 6, p. 378.
- (Edomites) "were then incorporated with the Jewish nation" *Edom, Idumeneae, The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York & London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1904) Vol. V, p. 41
- "from then on they [the non-Israelite Edomites] constituted a part of the Jewish people, Herod [King of Judea] being one of their descendants." *Edom (Idumea), The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977) p. 589 ; If true, it might help understand the 2nd prophecy against Edom in Ezekiel 35. Although, Jewish converts would be no less Israel.

³ Though not explicitly stated, the loss of Simeon may be the reason that the 13 tribes (remember Joseph's sons were each designated a tribe of Israel) became the 12 tribes of Israel.