

# Elijah, the Tishbite

Of Gilead, East of the Jordan

1 Kings 17

Jeroboah, son Nadab

**Baasha**, son of Ahijah, slew Nadab

Baasha's son Elah

**Zimri**, captain of half of Elah's chariots slew Elah

**Omri**, captain of Zimri's host, besieged Tizrah

Zimri committed suicide and Omri reigned

Ahab, Omri's son

1 Kings 16:23–24 (Omri)

1 Kings 16:29–33 (Ahab)

1 Kings 17 (Elijah)

Among the mountains of Gilead, east of the Jordan, there dwelt in the days of Ahab a man of faith and prayer whose fearless ministry was destined to check the rapid spread of apostasy in Israel. Far removed from any city of renown, and occupying no high station in life, Elijah the Tishbite nevertheless entered upon his mission confident in God's purpose to prepare the way before him and to give him abundant success. The word of faith and power was upon his lips, and his whole life was devoted to the work of reform. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness to rebuke sin and press back the tide of evil. (*PK 119.1*)





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**Zarephath**

**Phoenicia**

**Lake Galilee**

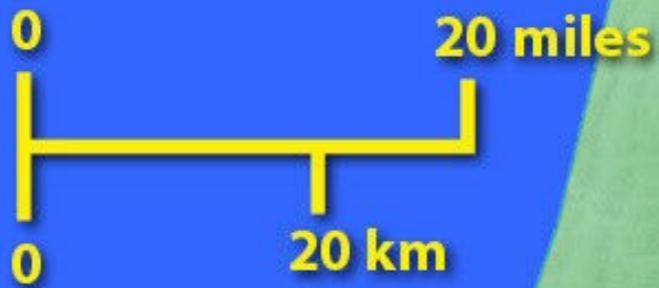
**Israel**

**Kerith Brook**

**Samaria**

**Tishbe**

**Scale**

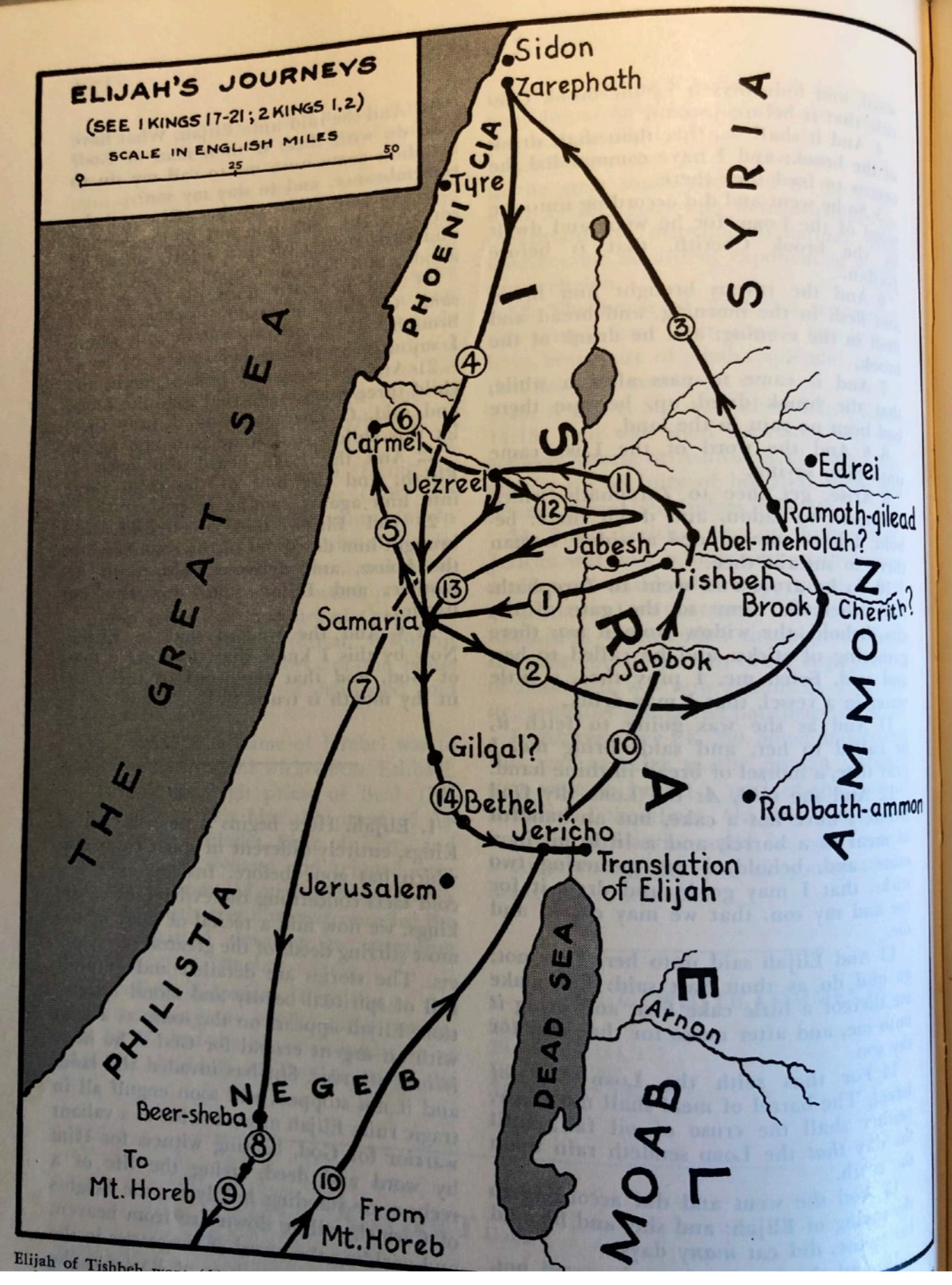
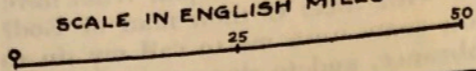




# ELIJAH'S JOURNEYS

(SEE 1 KINGS 17-21; 2 KINGS 1, 2)

SCALE IN ENGLISH MILES



Elijah of Tishbeh

The work of John was foretold by the prophet Malachi: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.”

[Malachi 4:5, 6.] John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to turn the people to the wisdom of the just.

He was a representative of those living in the last days, to whom God has intrusted sacred truths to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ. And the same principles of temperance which John practiced should be observed by those who in our day are to warn the world of the coming of the Son of man. (*CTBH* 39.1)

# Capitals of the Northern Kingdom

- Jeroboam — 1 Kings 12:25 — **Shechem**
- **Shechem.** This city is mentioned in patriarchal history from the time Abraham first entered the Land of Promise (Gen. 12:6; 33:18; 35:4; 37:12, 13). At the time of the conquest of Canaan it became a city of refuge (Joshua 20:7; 21:21), and it was there that Joshua gathered all the tribes for a renewal of the covenant just before his death (Joshua 24:1–25). When Abimelech made himself king over Israel, he had his capital at Shechem (Judges 9:1–20), and when the city rebelled against him, it was destroyed and sowed “with salt” (Judges 9:22–45). Now the city was rebuilt as Jeroboam’s capital.





**Ancient Shechem (Tell Balata): Western end (looking south)**



A large stone placed at the mound is suggested to be the “large stone” Joshua erected at the site (Joshua 24:26).



- **Tirzah** — 1 Kings 14:17; 15:33; 16:8
- **Tirzah.** Jeroboam seems to have moved his capital from Shechem to Tirzah. Tirzah continued as the capital of Israel till Omri founded Samaria (1 Kings 16:23, 24). (*SDA BC*)





Tirzah had ramparts and domestic housing units. The earliest pottery oven of its kind was excavated here. A temple and an olive press were also uncovered.

Excavations have produced numerous artifacts, including various figurines, arrowheads, spindle whorls, a model sanctuary, and Four room houses. The figurines include cow heads, cows nursing calves, horses, tambourine players, and figurines representing Asherah.

- Samaria — 1 Kings 16:24
- **The hill Samaria.** The accession of Omri marked a new period of settled government and prosperity for the northern kingdom. . . . Omri decided upon a new site for his capital. The hill of Samaria, 7 1/4 mi. (11.6 km.) northwest of Shechem, was the site selected. It would have been difficult to find a more perfect spot for the nation's capital. Its position was one of great beauty, commanding a view of the sea and of the country for miles around. It was situated at the heart of the land. Militarily, the hill, with its steep sides, was admirably adapted to defense, as is shown by the long sieges it endured (1 Kings 20:1; 2 Kings 6:24; 17:5; 18:9, 10). The country round about was singularly productive. On the hill were abundant springs of water. Its history vindicated the sagacity of its founder, for Samaria continued as the capital of Israel till the close of the nation's history. Excavations at the ancient site of Samaria date the lowest levels of the city to Omri's day. (*SDA BC*)





One of the excavated walls of the Samaria palace. Photo: Nahman Avigad, "Samaria (City)," *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Ephraim Stern, ed.

From the time of Jeroboam's death to Elijah's appearance before Ahab, the people of Israel suffered a steady spiritual decline. Ruled by men who did not fear Jehovah and who encouraged strange forms of worship, the larger number of the people rapidly lost sight of their duty to serve the living God and adopted many of the practices of idolatry. (*PK 109.1*)

Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, occupied the throne of Israel for only a few months. His career of evil was suddenly stopped by a conspiracy headed by Baasha, one of his generals, to gain control of the government. Nadab was slain, with all his kindred in the line of succession, . . . (*PK 109.2*)

Thus perished the house of Jeroboam. The idolatrous worship introduced by him had brought upon the guilty offenders the retributive judgments of Heaven; and yet the rulers who followed — Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri — during a period of nearly forty years, continued in the same fatal course of evil-doing. (*PK 109.3*)



During the greater part of the time of apostasy in Israel, Asa was ruling in the kingdom of Judah.

Two years before the death of Asa, Ahab began to rule in the kingdom of Israel.

From the beginning his reign was marked by a strange and terrible apostasy. . . . Not content with encouraging the forms of religious service followed at Bethel and Dan, he boldly led the people into the grossest heathenism, by setting aside the worship of Jehovah for Baal worship.

*(PK 114.1)*

And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. (1 Kings 16:31)

**King of the Zidonians.** Tyre was at this time the leading city of Phoenicia (see on Gen. 10:15), but the historic reputation of Sidon led the kings of Tyre to adopt the title “king of the Sidonians.” A dedication bowl found on the island of Cyprus bears this very inscription. (*SDA BC*)

The seaport Sidon, known as “great Zidon” at the time of the Hebrew conquest (Joshua 11:8), named in Egyptian hieroglyphic and Mesopotamian cuneiform texts, was the most powerful of the Phoenician city-states from the earliest times. Many Phoenicians then called themselves Sidonians even when they were actually citizens of neighboring cities. (Ibid.)

The Sidonians occupied Cyprus and founded colonies in Cilicia and Caria in Asia Minor, on various Greek islands, on Crete, and on the coasts of the Black Sea. (Ibid.)

Leadership among the cities of Phoenicia passed from Sidon to its sister city Tyre about 1100 BC

The Phoenicians were friendly to David and Solomon and to the northern kingdom of Israel as well, but exercised an evil religious influence upon the latter. (Ibid.)

The name of Jezebel was to become proverbial for wickedness. Ethbaal, her father, was high priest of Baal (*PK* 114). Josephus calls him the priest of Astarte, who slew Pheles, king of Tyre, and founded a new dynasty and reigned over Tyre for 32 years (*Against Apion*. 1. 18). Jezebel's priestly origin may account for the queen's fanatical devotion to spreading false religion in Israel.  
(*Ibid.*)



Not only did Ahab introduce Baal worship at the capital city, but under the leadership of Jezebel he erected heathen altars in many “high places,” where in the shelter of surrounding groves the priests and others connected with this seductive form of idolatry exerted their baleful influence, until well-nigh all Israel were following after Baal.  
*(PK 114.3)*

Ahab was weak in moral power. . . . Unprincipled, and with no high standard of rightdoing, his character was easily molded by the determined spirit of Jezebel. (*PK* 115.1)

Idolatrous temples and consecrated groves,  
wherein were worshiped the works of men's  
hands, were multiplied. The air was polluted with  
the smoke of the sacrifices offered to false gods.  
Hill and vale resounded with the drunken cries of  
a heathen priesthood who sacrificed to the sun,  
moon, and stars. (*PK 115.2*)

. . . the people were taught that the idol gods that had been set up were deities, ruling by their mystic power the elements of earth, fire, and water. All the bounties of heaven—the running brooks, the streams of living water, the gentle dew, the showers of rain which refreshed the earth and caused the fields to bring forth abundantly—were ascribed to the favor of Baal and Ashtoreth, instead of to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. (*PK 115.3*)

Through **faithful messengers** the Lord sent repeated warnings to the apostate king and the people, but in vain were these words of reproof.

In vain did the inspired messengers assert Jehovah's right to be the only God in Israel; in vain did they exalt the laws that He had entrusted to them. Captivated by the **gorgeous display** and the fascinating rites of idol worship, the people followed the example of the king and his court, and gave themselves up to the intoxicating, degrading pleasures of a sensual worship. (*PK 116.1*)

Viewing this apostasy from his mountain retreat, Elijah was overwhelmed with sorrow. In anguish of soul he besought God to arrest the once-favored people in their wicked course, to visit them with judgments, if need be, that they might be led to see in its true light their departure from Heaven. He longed to see them brought to repentance before they should go to such lengths in evil-doing as to provoke the Lord to destroy them utterly. (*PK 119.2*)