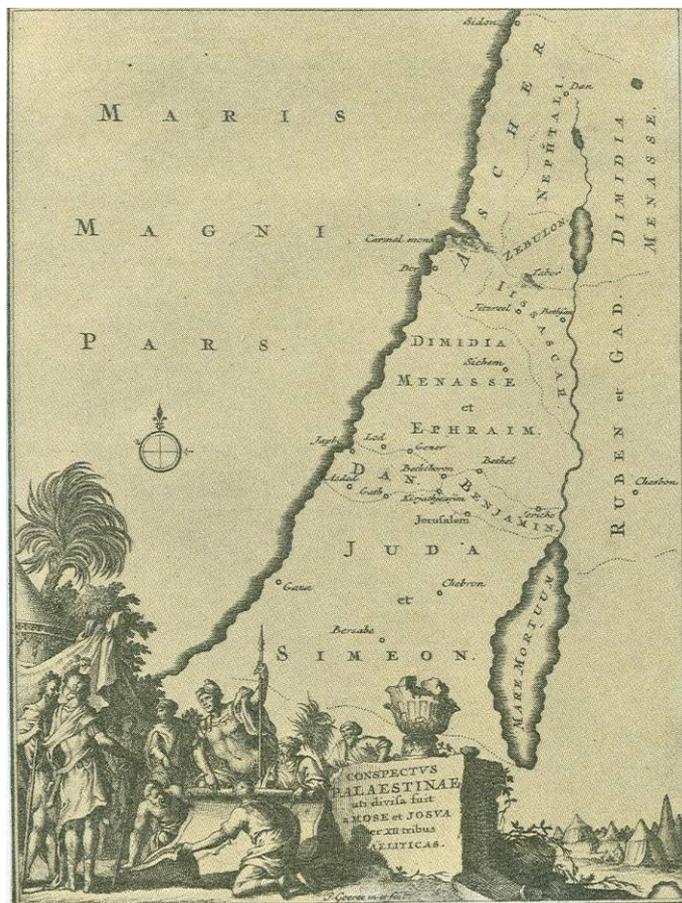


THE "NESI'IM" PROJECT
Borders of the Tribes of Israel

Defining the Borders and Site Marking
English summary



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March 2008

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Methodology	5
The site, description and meaning	7
4. Gey Ben Hinnom	9
10. Beit Shemesh	10
24. Gezer	11
34. Tavor	12
An exemplary track	13
A portray of the tribes	14
Sign design	15
Appendix – maps	17



Introduction

The concept of this work is in-situ marking of the borders of the tribes' lands, using maps and explanations as well as posts in appropriate areas. The desired goal is to facilitate hikers' and visitors' knowledge, of the affiliation of the tribes of Israel to their lands.

The territorial division of the land, to the twelve tribes, is described in the book of Joshua; chapters 13-19. This division is described in three different occasions: the lands of Reuven, Gad and half the tribe of Menashe on the plains of Moab; the land of Judea, Ephraim and half the tribe of Menashe in the Gilgal; the lands of the seven remaining tribes in the Gilgal.

The notion of the division of the land is already present when Jacob blesses his sons in Parashat Vayechi, and is mentioned once again in Moses' blessing in Vezot Habracha. Those writings and others, teach us that there was an ancient tradition concerning the land's division, which is being actualized in Joshua's division. The Scriptures emphasize the tribes' bond to their land, by saying: "the land shall not be passed inheritance (land) from one tribe to another, every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep his own inheritance" (Numbers 36, 9). The idea of each tribe having a position is also manifest in the orderly fashion in which they camped around the Mishkan (Numbers 2)

The settlement of each tribe in its land is a prerequisite to the observance of the edict of the Jubilee, which is valid only when each tribe dwells in its own land, "and not while they are mixed". (Talmud Erchin 32;b) . Additionally, there are halachic laws which relate to lists of walled cities in the times of Joshua.

Maimonides gives an explanation for the division of the land - "It was for this reason that Joshua and his judicial court divided the land to tribes despite the fact that the land had not yet been conquered; that each tribe should not act as an individual and attempt to conquer its tribal lands alone." (Trumot chapter 1 law 2)



All these illustrate the entrenchment of this division in the history of Israel, in Halacha, in Midrash, and in the actual holding of the tribes to their lands. With the exile of the ten tribes - all of Israel, the significance of the bond between the tribes and their lands became an abstract notion. Today, as recognition and perception of the historical foundations of this bond in the Hebrew heritage grows, and in light of a growing desire to know the land intimately, it is fitting to renew and revive the ancient bond between the tribes of Israel and their lands.



Methodology

The following booklet includes two main parts:

Part one - drawing the Borders and Marking the sites

First, we introduce the sites that represent the borders between the lands of the tribes. Each site is presented along with its biblical reference, literature, a description of the site and its current condition and its context in a country-wide travel and hiking alignment.

The text in the book of Joshua includes two components in the definition of the tribes' lands - a description of the borders themselves, and a list of cities that are located within the tribal territories.

New geographical studies show that the descriptions of the borders are extremely accurate, and describe the land continuously, leaving no crack or crevice between the tribes' lands. The precise and winding border lines are evidence of this (Zacharias Kalai 1970).

Nevertheless, descriptions of the tribes' lands are not equally detailed. For example, the description of the borders of the tribe of Judea is very detailed and even contains a subdivision, whereas the descriptions of other tribes' lands are far less detailed and far more general in nature.

In the historiographic literature of the time of the Bible, various explanations and meanings were given to the positioning of the boundaries, and therefore a different interpretation of their exact location was derived.

Additional sources worthy of mention are maps sketched by the sages of Israel, which include their interpretation of the location of the borders. For example, there is a famous map attributed to the Vilna Gaon. This map as well as others will be used, whenever possible, to support the marking of the borders. The first step will demand, therefore, an understanding and a decision regarding the exact lines of the borders of the tribes' lands, their location and their marking on modern maps.



1. A Summarizing table

The sites mentioned in this report are summarized in a table, which gives the general picture; it shows the biblical name of the site, the verse in which it appears, its modern name and whether the identification is certain or disputed (We did not include that part in this translation).

2. An exemplary track for travel

After sketching the borderlines, we came to realize that hiking tracks going through them can be easily located. The most striking illustration for this is the northern border of Judah. We therefore added as an appendix, an example for such a track, on this border. It is a simple track that could be integrated in the framework of theme tracks in Israel. Similar tracks could be located also on the other borders.

3. A portrayal of the tribes

Finally, we portray each of the tribes according to relevant sources. These portrayals are then used for the design of the sign.

4. Sign design

Suggestion of a basis for general design of the signs .



5. The site, description and meaning

In the following chapter, the sites that note the borders of the tribes are presented. A map is added to each tribe, showing its location and also the following information:

1. Source

The relevant verse in the book of Joshua referring to the site in the description of the borders.

2. Identification

Identification of the site based on the first part of the project. This paragraph includes only the bottom line choice and not the indecisions and deliberations, which are presented in the appendix to the first step.

3. Description

A geographic description of the site. A datum point as elaborated as possible and related to a set of roads, cities, activity centers and existing treks.

4. Meaning as a trekking and learning site

This paragraph includes geographic emphasis relating to treks, scouting and orienteering in the area. It also refers to the possibilities of integration in the tracks in the area, in the context of archeology, history, nature, etc...

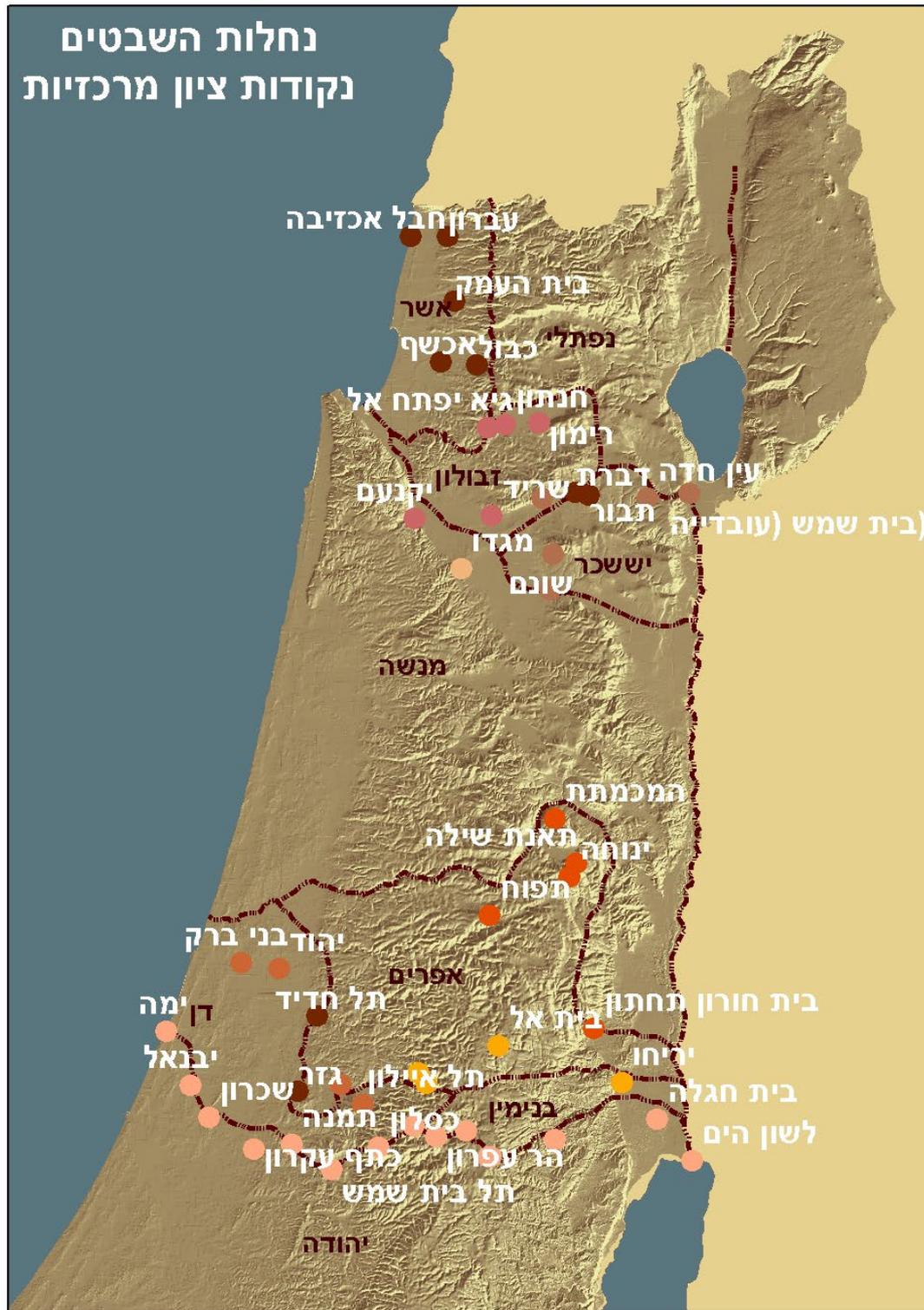
5. Sign

A specific concrete location for placing a sign is suggested here. The location was chosen in such a way that will enable maximum exposure to visitors. The sites that were chosen are attractive ones, in proximity to natural sites, fountains, groves, viewpoints and such.

In this summery we will present 4 of the 46 sites.



נחלות השבטים נקודות ציון מרכזיות

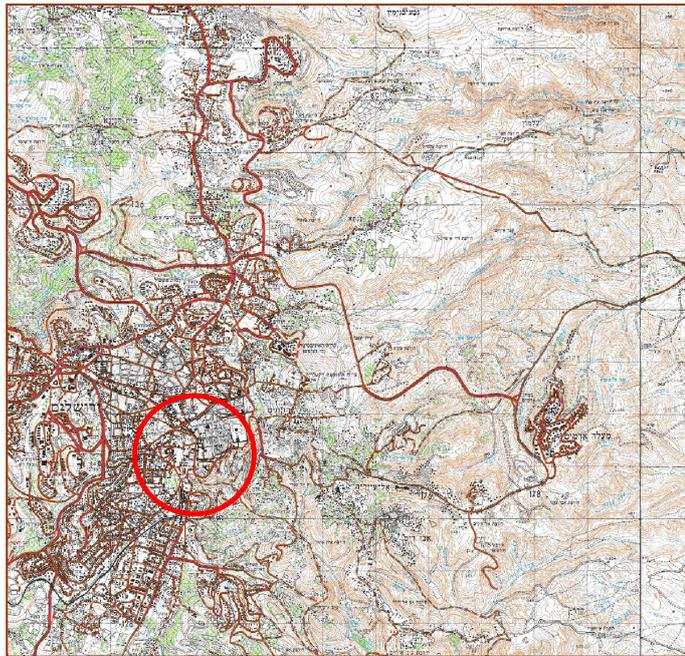


4. Gey Ben Hinnom

"And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem." (Joshua 15, 8)

Identification

The border is situated on the range located west to Gey Ben Hinnom and north to the edge of Emek Refaim, in close proximity to the tomb of the family to Herod.



Description

Gey Ben Hinnom is a valley surrounding the walls of the old city of Jerusalem from the west and south. Its northern part was blocked by a dam built by the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the first, to create what is called today the Sultan's Pool, which was used as a water reservoir. Today, the pool is a popular place for ceremonies and concerts. In the valley one can also find the Jerusalem Cinémathèque, a park, and ancient tombs.

Meaning as a trekking and learning site

The site has great scenic value and it is also important as a historical, cultural site. Israel Antiquities Authority plans the establishment of an open archeological park including the carved tomb caves discovered there. Today, the paved road leading there is narrow and steep, so it is easier to get to by foot. During the independence war a 200 meter long steel cable connected the Israeli station in Mount Zion and the station outside of Jerusalem, located next to the current location of the Cinémathèque.

Sign

The most appropriate location for a sign is around the path descending to the Cinémathèque, viewing the valley. In the future, when the archeological site is established, a sign could be put there as well.



10. Beit Shemesh

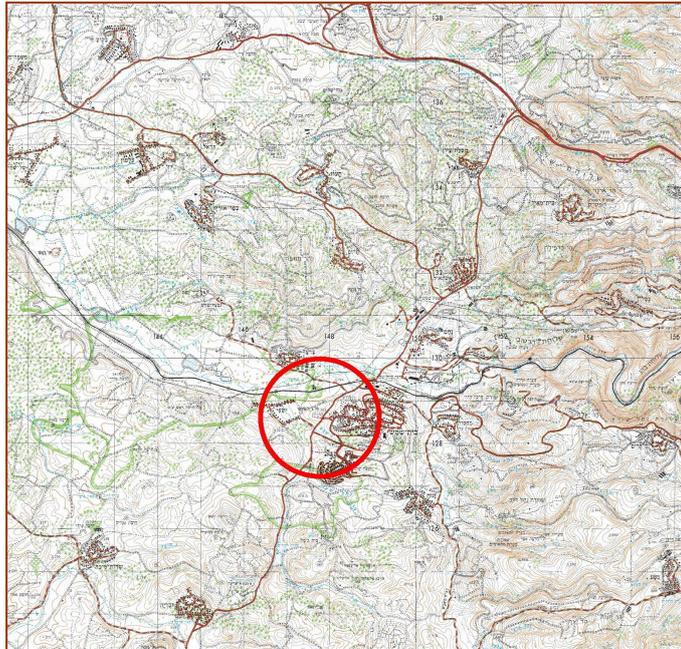
"... and went down to **Beth-Shemesh...**" (Joshua 15, 10)

Identification

Tel Beit Shemesh

Description

Tel Beit Shemesh is one of the most prominent biblical sites in the land of Israel. Ancient Beit Shemesh, one of the most important cities of the kingdom of Judah,



was located in a strategic point controlling the eastern side of Sorek valley, the road leading to Jerusalem. According to the Book of Samuel the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the city, after it was taken by the Philistines, and caused great damage there. According to the digs effectuated at the site it was inhabited, built and destroyed several times throughout history since the Neolithic era, through the Bronze era, the Kingdom of Judah and the second temple, and up to the time of the crusaders. Digs at the site revealed various remains from different times.

Meaning as a trekking and learning site

Tel Beth Shemesh, at the western extremity of the city is not preserved but the remains and antiquities are visible mostly on the west of the road. The Tel is surrounded by the Tsor`a Range from the north-west, the Sorek valley streams from the north and east and the Shephelah hills from the east. There is a good viewpoint on top of the Tel showing its great strategic advantages. According to the new national master plan, a national park will be established there.

Sign

On the top of the Tel there is a small parking place where the sign can be put. Also, signs can be put directing visitors to the site from the city of Beit Shemesh and tourist sites in the area.



24. Gezer

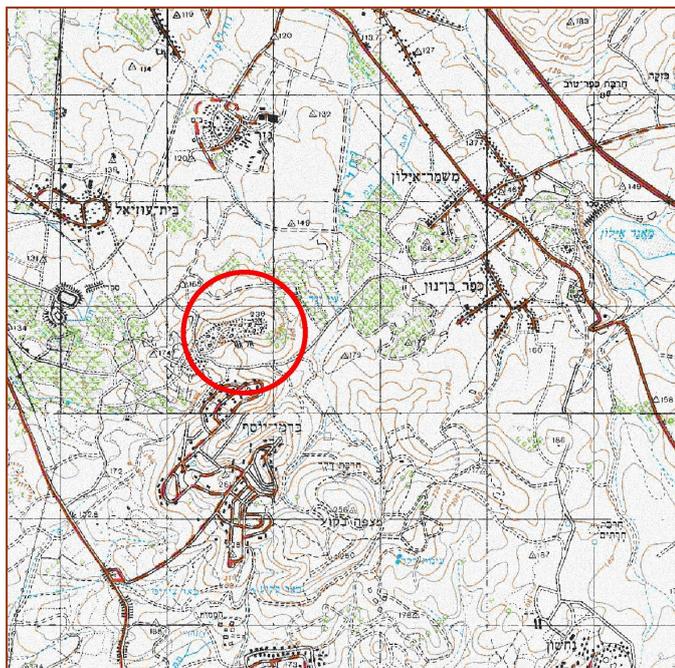
"And to Gezer" (Joshua 16,3)

Identification

Tel Gezer

Description

Tel Gezer is located between Latrun and Ramle, and is identified as the Canaanite ancient city of Gezer. The Tel is one of the most important archeological sites in Israel. Gezer is mentioned in many



writings from the ancient era, such as correspondences between the kings of Gezer and the rulers of Egypt, and various Egyptian inscriptions. The city of Gezer is mentioned in the Bible as one of the cities conquered by Joshua, although it was not in Israelite hands at the time of Saul and David. In 950 BC, the city was handed to King Solomon by the king of Egypt. An interesting finding from that time is the "The Gezer Calendar" – the oldest Hebrew inscription ever found (it is exhibited in the Museum of Istanbul). The city was conquered by the Assyrians, and later by the Greeks, the Hasmoneans conquered it in 142 BC. The status of the city was lessened in the days of King Herod.

Meaning as a trekking and learning site

Tel Gezer is located next to the southern coastal plain. On the top of the Tel there is an excellent viewpoint from which the entire space between Tel-Aviv and Ashdod is visible. The Tel is shaped like a narrow and steep hill. At the foot of this hill there was an important chief road – Via Maris. The shape of the hill makes it easy to protect. The Tel was inhabited for thousands of years, and the remains are visible on the Tel and its surroundings.

Sign

The most suitable place for a sign is in the parking space and the viewpoint facing west.



34. Tavor

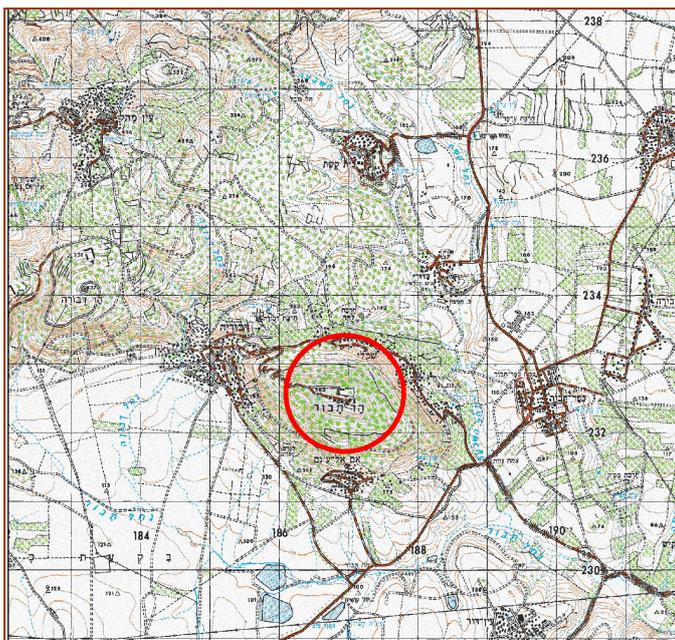
"And turned from Sarid eastward toward the sun rising unto the border of Chisloth-**Tavor**"(Joshua 19, 12)

Identification

Mount Tavor.

Description

The Tavor is a mountain in south Galilee, 588 meter



altitude; its shape resembles half a circle sticking out of the ground. The Tavor Mountain had great importance in ancient times as a site of religious rituals and later as a strategic military spot. From the top of the mountain, one can observe the entire northern part of Israel. It stands on an important ancient road. This mountain is mentioned many times in the Bible.

Meaning as a trekking and learning site

Today, on top of the mountain there is a magnificent Franciscan church, surrounded by a wall, which was built in the beginning of the twentieth century. In close proximity to the church is a Franciscan monastery, in which there is guest house. In the area one can clearly see the remains of more ancient fortresses, one of which goes back to the time of Josephus Flavius.

Sign

The sign can be located on the road going up to the Tavor, and on top of the mountain.



An exemplary track

In this summary we will only show the track without details.

In the original report we elaborate for each site how to access it by car, and what activities are possible for visitors.



The track and the sites



A portray of the tribes

In this chapter, we attempt to portray each tribe. To this purpose we specify the meaning of the name of each son of Jacob as it was interpreted at birth, and his emplacement in the family. We also quote the blessings Jacob and Moses gave the tribe, its location in relation to other tribes, both in the desert and in the land of Israel, the symbol, color and breastplate stone attributed to the tribe, as well as other characteristics according to the Bible or the Midrash.

All these will give the visitor a general idea of the tribe whose land he is viewing.



Sign design

Since the relevant aspect of the site in this project is its being on the border between tribes and not so much its geographic and archeological specific virtues, we suggest that the sign itself will include details of the relevant tribes, as elaborated in the previous chapter.

Following, is an example for a sign that can be placed at "yanviel" , on the border of the tribes of Judah and Dan.





שבט דן

דן היה בנו החמישי של יעקב, הראשון שילדה לו בלהה שפחת רחל. כלומר, בכור בני השפחות

משמעות השם

"ותאמר רחל דנני אלהים וגם שמע בקלי ויתן לי בן על-כן קראה שמו דן." (בראשית לה, ו)

ברכת יעקב לפני מותו

"דדן, ידן עמו--ככאחד, ששכטי ישראל. יהי-דן נחשש עלי-דרך, ששפיפן עלי-ארח--הננשה, עקבי-סוס, ויפל רכבו, אחור. לישועתך, קיויתי יהוה." (בראשית מט, טז-יח)

ברכת משה ערב הכניסה לארץ

"ולדן אמר, דן גור ארצה; יזנק, מן-הבשן." (דברים לג, כב)



שבט יהודה

יהודה היה הבן הרביעי של יעקב, וכן הרביעי שילדה לו לאה.

משמעות השם

"הפעם אודה את-יהוה על-פני קראה ששמו יהודה." (בראשית כט, לה)

ברכת יעקב לפני מותו

"יהודה, אתה יודוך אחיך--דרך, בבערף איבך; ושתחוו לך, בבני אביך. גור ארצה יהודה, מטורף בבני עליתי; ככרע רבץ ככאריה וכלביא, מי יקימנו. לא-יסור ששכט מיהודה, ומחוקק מבין רגליו, עד ככי-בא ששילה, ולו יקחת עמים. אסרי לגפן עירה, ולשרקה בבני אתנו; כבס ביין לבשו, וכדם-ענבים סותה. חכלילי עינים, מיין; וולבן-שנים, מחלב." (בראשית מט, ח-יב)

ברכת משה ערב הכניסה לארץ

"וזאת ליהודה, ויאמר, שמע יהוה קול יהודה, ואל-עמו תביאנו; ידיו רב לו, ועזר מצריו תיהיה." (דברים לג, ז)

יָבֵן אֵל
"ויצא יבנאל" (יהושע טו יא)

זיהוי האתר

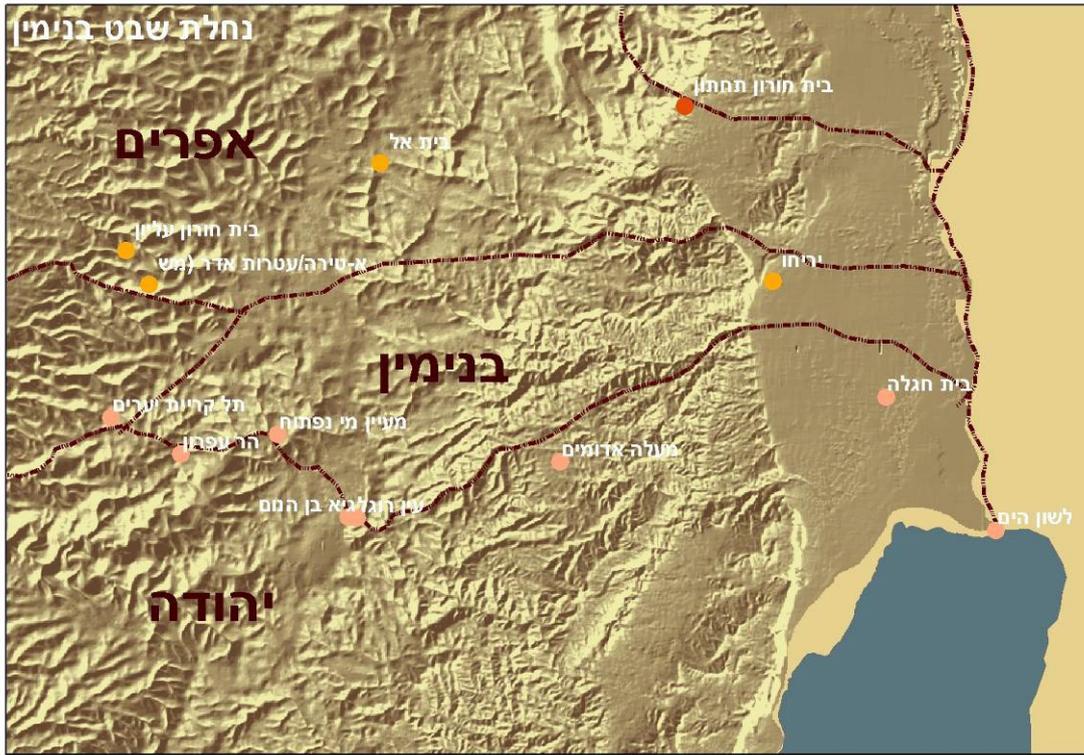
מקובל לזהות את יבנאל עם תל יבנה. שרידיה של יבנה הקדומה נתגלו בתחומי יבנה המודרנית.

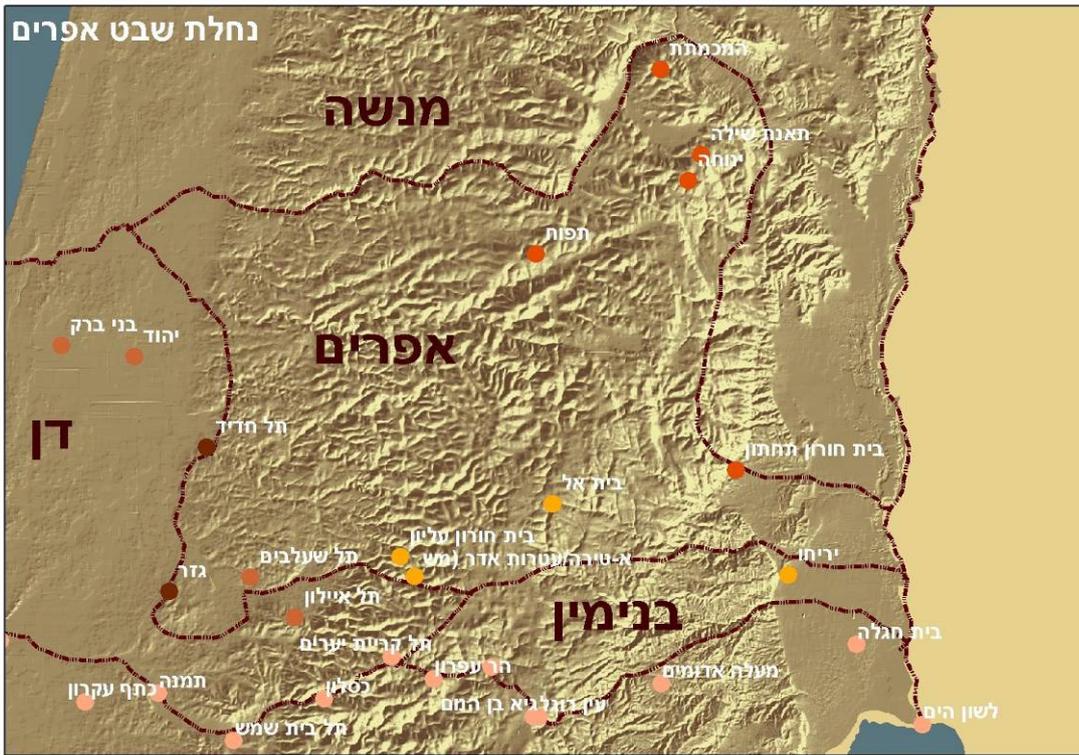
מיקום

האתר מצוי בנחלת שבט יהודה, והוא מציין את גבולה הצפוני.

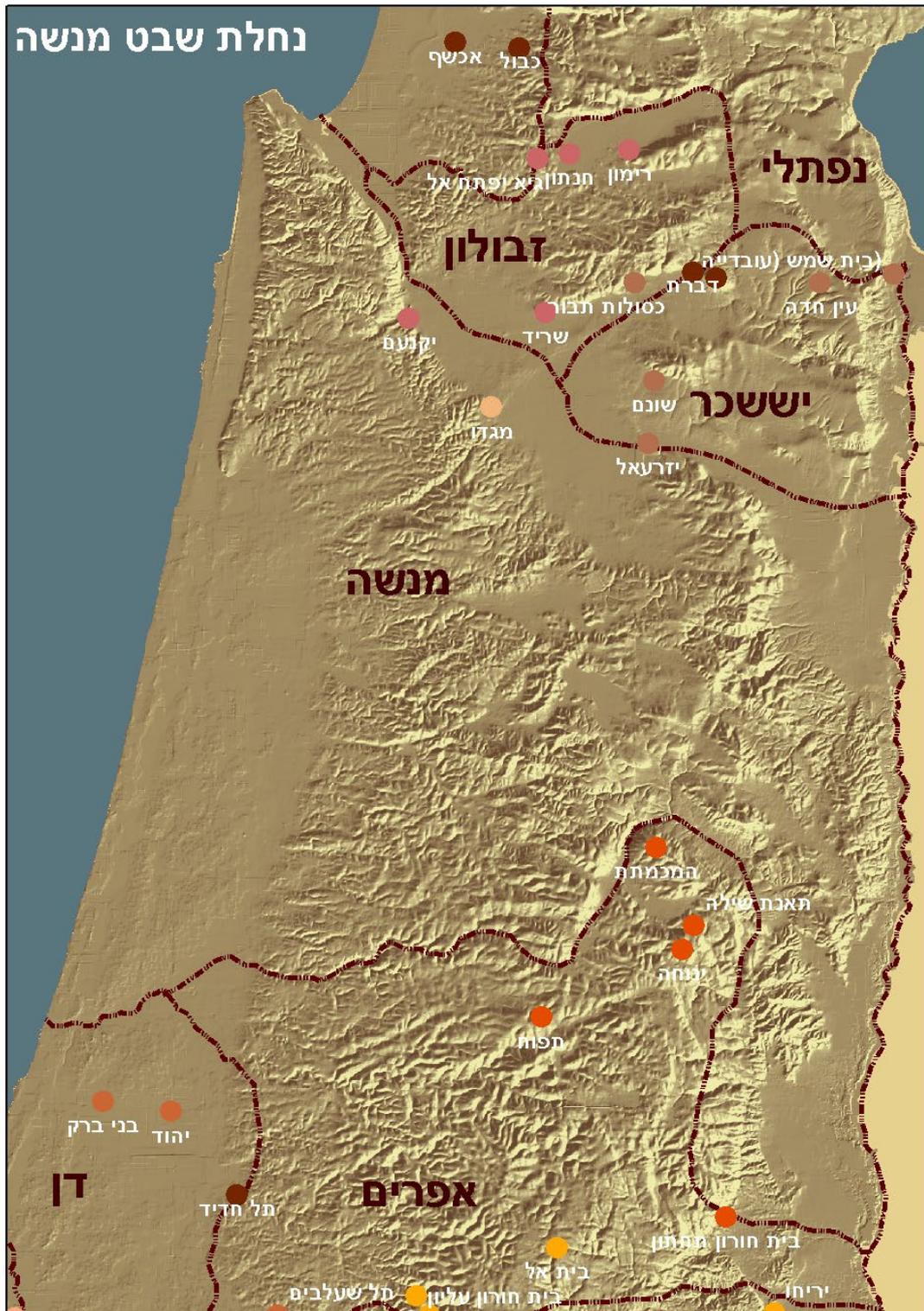


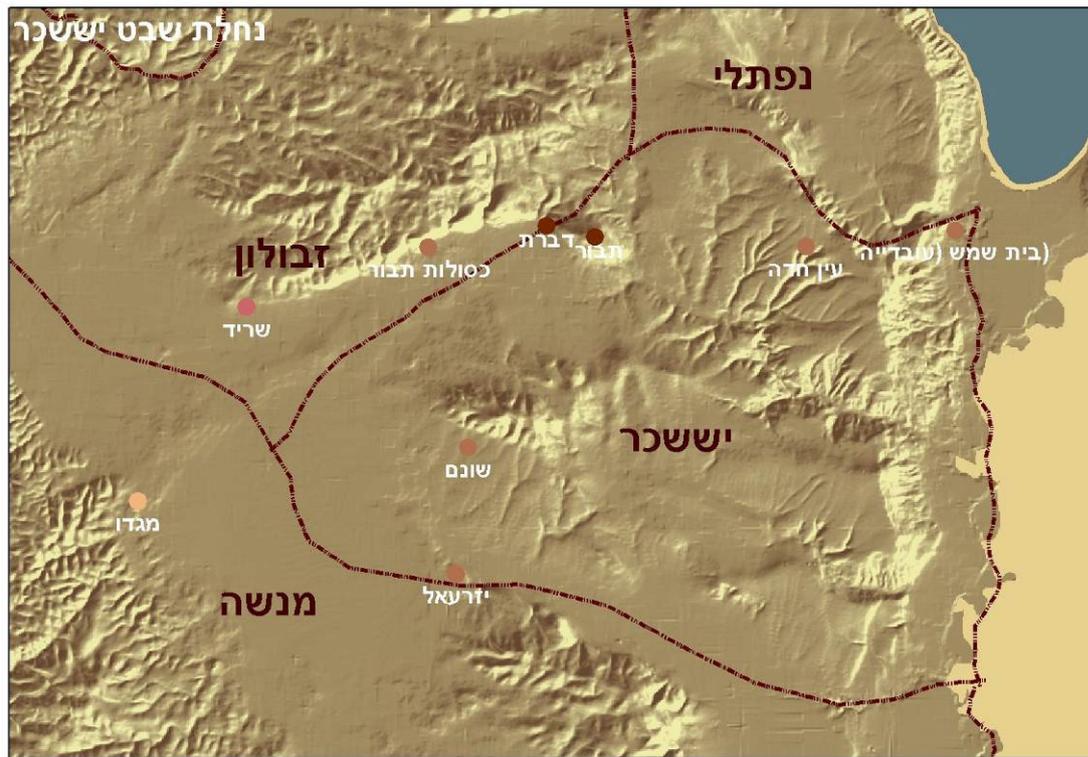
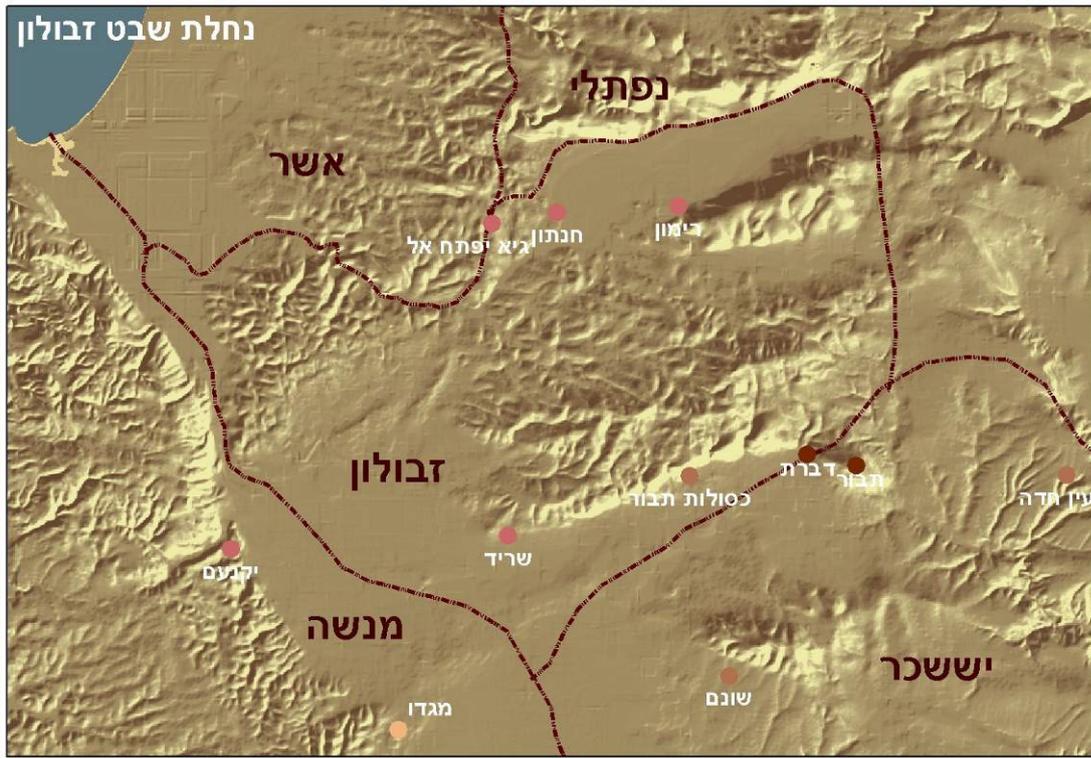
נחלת שבט דן





נחלת שבט מנשה





נחלת שבט נפתלי



נחלת שבט אשר

