

ABOVE ISRAEL: SAMARIA, JUDEA & DEAD SEA REGIONS

Name	Scripture Reference*	Notation
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SAMARIA (SEBASTE)

(1) Sebastiya Village, Tel Samaria)		The Palestinian village of Sebastiya lies on the eastern side of the ruins of the ancient site of Samaria also known as Sebaste. The village sits atop the hillside where a bishopric and church were established during the twelfth century AD.
(2) Tel Samaria/ Sebaste (Overview)	1 Kgs 16:24 ff 1 Kgs 22:10 ff 2 Kgs 1–23	Flying east to west along the southern side of the ancient Samaria, we first see the busses parked next to the Roman forum, then the acropolis of ancient Samaria at the top of the hill, and the Roman cardo with its protruding pillars along the road leading to the Hellenistic towers.
(3) Sebaste (Forum)	Acts 8	Herod the Great built the forum in about 25 BC. The forum was the central market area used for commerce, courts, and public discourse.
(4) Sebaste (Cardo)	Acts 8	Excavations of the Cardo are visible in the olive groves. Although Herod the Great built the colonnaded street in about 25 BC, the remains now visible date to the rebuilding of the city under Septimia Severa about AD 194. The semi-circular towers at the end of the street are of the Greek period around the second or first century BC.
(5) Sebaste (Church of John the Baptist, Ahab's Palace, Herod's Temple)	Acts 8	The present ruins of the Church of St John the Baptist date to about AD 1150 but its earlier remains date to the sixth century. Although Josephus informs us that John the Baptist was executed at Machaerus (<i>Ant.</i> XVIII 5,2 & 19), the earliest tradition of John's tomb points to Sebaste (Rufinus of Aquileia – d. 410; <i>Ch. Hist.</i> II 28 MPL XXI, col. 536). We next circle the ruins of the palace of Omri and Ahab continuing around steps of Herod the Great's temple dedicated to Caesar Augustus, whose Greek name, Sebastos, provides the name of the site.
(6) Sebaste (Theater)	Acts 8	The theater is located on the northern side of the tell. Built in the side of the hill, its style is indicative of the Greek period and dates to about 100 BC.

SAMARIA (SOUTH)

(7) Mt. Ebal (Excavation)	Dt 11:29 Dt 27:4,13 Jos 8:30–35	Mount Ebal is where Joshua built an altar to dedicate Israel's entrance into the land. The hill of Mt. Ebal sits just north of Mt. Gerizim with the city of Nablus between the mountains. Twelve ancient sites have thus far been discovered on Mt. Ebal.
(8) Mt. Gerizim Mt. Ebal (Nablus)	Gn 12:7 Gn 33:18 Gn 37:14 Jos 8:30–35 Jos 24:25,32 1 Kgs 12:1 Jn 4	The area of Mt. Gerizim, Mt. Ebal, and the city in between, Shechem, is important in the Bible. It was here that God promised Abraham "to your descendants I will give this land" (Gn 12:7). Jacob stayed in the vicinity of Shechem (Gn 33:18). Joseph, having been sent from Hebron by his father, Jacob, to inquire about his brothers, came to Shechem and later Joseph was buried here (Jos 24:32). Joshua reviewed the Mosaic covenant here with the people. After the Israelites defeated Jericho and Ai during the Conquest, they fulfilled a directive in Dt 11:29 to read the blessings and curses from Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (Jos 8:30–35). The brown, excavated hilltop in the foreground of the video is Gerizim. The archaeological excavations are in the vicinity of the NT worship site of the Samaritans mentioned in John 4:5–26. Mt. Ebal can be seen across

		the valley to the north. In between these two hills is the modern city of Nablus built near and over the ruins of Sychar, the place where Jesus first announced his Messiahship to the woman at the well (Jn 4). In the far distance, beyond Ebal, toward the end of the video, are the mountains of Gilead on the eastern side of the Jordan valley.
(9) Mt. Gerizim (Samaritan Temple)	Jn 4:5–26	Looking east towards the mountains of Samaria are the excavations on the western side of the hill of Mt Gerizim. Circling around the walled compound are the ruins of an octagonal Byzantine church built over the earlier Samaritan temple. Swinging west we see the Samaritan village on the ridge next to the ruins with the city of Nablus in the valley below. Mt Gerizim is then visible just north of Nablus with views continuing towards the eastern mountains of Samaria.
(10) Shechem (Tel Balata - Land)	Gn 12:6; 35:4 Jos 24 Jgs 9 1 Kgs 12	Circling above the ancient ruins of Shechem one can discern parallel walls lines, northwest gate, and rectangular temple foundation a short distance from the exposed wall and gate complex.
(11) Shechem (Tel Balata-Land)		The picture begins with a view of Mt Gerizim and pans down to the northwestern wall line and rectangular temple foundation that is positioned behind it.
(12) Shiloh (Overview)	Jos 18 Jos 21:2 Jos 22:9,12 I Sm 1-4	The ancient city of Shiloh is located in the mountains of the territory given to the tribe of Ephraim. Under Joshua's leadership, the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh. During the period of the Judges, Samuel was taken to Shiloh as a young boy and brought up under the priestly leadership.
(13) Shiloh (Excavation)		Both Danish and Israeli archaeologists have excavated here. The exposed ruins begin with the Northwestern sector (Area F, H), continue with the Northern sector (Area K), and conclude with a view of area K looking West.

HILL COUNTRY OF JUDEA

(14) Hill Country Topography	Gn 31:25 Nm 13:17, 29 Dt 1:20 Jos 2:16, 22 Jos 20:7 1 Sm 14; 1 Sm 23:14 2 Chr 27:4 Lk 1:39	The Hill Country refers to the mountainous central region of Judea and Samaria. It is rugged terrain with steep hillsides and deep, east-west "V"-shaped valleys. In OT times, it was heavily forested and much of early Israel's history took place in this region. The steep valleys confined north-south traffic to the watershed road, a route taken by Abraham and the Patriarchs. The rugged and forested hills provided protection from invading armies that marched along the coastal plains. Following the Conquest, some of the Israelite tribes remained in the Hill Country rather than move to their assigned territories.
(15) Bethlehem (Church of the Nativity)	Ru 2 1 Sm 17:15 Mi 5:2 Mt 2:1 Lk 2:2–6 Lk 2:15 Jn 7:42	Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to his hometown of Bethlehem in Judah in order to register for a census. Mary, who was about to give birth to Jesus, accompanied him. Bethlehem is about six miles south of Jerusalem. The ancient village was located in the vicinity of the church complex. Located along a rocky ridge that is clearly visible in this video, residents built their homes using caves as a sub-floor or basement in which to stable their livestock. Tradition holds that it was in such a cave that Jesus was born. The opening and closing moments of the video show the fields that surround Bethlehem in which wheat is grown and livestock grazed. Ruth, of the ancestry of Jesus, met her future husband, Boaz, in these fields. King David, as a young man, watched over his father's flocks here. It was in these fields that the angels appeared to shepherds to announce the birth of Messiah, Jesus, as prophesized by the prophet Micah.
(16) Shepherd's Field (Greek Orthodox Church)	Lk 2:8-20	Shepherd's Field is located about a half a mile east of Bethlehem, adjacent to the Palestinian village of Beit Sahur. The red roofed buildings are located within the property of the Greek Orthodox

		Patriarchate. Excavations in the compound reveal remains of Church structures from the fourth to sixth centuries AD.
(17 & 18) Herodian (General View and Pool); Herodion (Palace Overview)	Mt 2:2-16	The Herodion (Herodium) is a remarkable fortified palace built by Herod the Great in about 20 BC. It was completed before Jesus' birth and is located three miles east of Bethlehem near the Wadi Tekoa that leads down to the Dead Sea. A road following along the southeast ridge above the ravine can be seen at the top of the screen in the opening moments of the video. Herod was therefore in good position to escape if attacked by any of his enemies. Herod constructed this remarkable cone-shaped fort by moving dirt from the top of a nearby hill to this hill and surrounded a double circular wall with the dirt. The double wall rose several stories in height above the earth fill. Visible in this video inside the cone are defensive towers built into the double wall at each point of the compass. Inside the volcano-like mouth of the hill, Herod built a palatial mansion with all the amenities of the finest Roman estates including an extensive water system, bathhouse, and a peristyle garden. The double wall housed many bedrooms on several floors for his family and guests. This well-constructed fort and palace symbolized Herod's concern for his security. However, his greatest threat was a baby, born in a cave-stable, just minutes away, in an insignificant village named Bethlehem.
(19) Hebron (Machpelah-Tomb of the Patriarchs)	Gn 13:18 Gn 23:19–20 Gn 37:14 Nm 13:23 2 Sm 2:1–3 2 Sm 5:3 1 Chr 11:3	Hebron is located in the southern Hill Country. The Bible also names this site Kiriath-arba and Mamre. When Abraham left Egypt, he lived at Hebron, built an altar there, and buried his wife Sarah in the cave of Machpelah, which he purchased. The Machpelah also functioned as the burial location for him, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. The city is mentioned more than 60 times in the OT and the surrounding area was known for its vineyards (Nm 13:23). Jacob dispatched Joseph from Hebron to find his brothers. David settled there after Saul died and it was in Hebron that the elders of Israel proclaimed David king over all Israel. Herod the Great built a large building that enclosed the traditional site of the Cave of Machpelah. His characteristic architecture can be seen in the wall around the building. Today this structure serves as mosque and synagogue.

WILDERNESS OF JUDEA

(20) Wilderness Topography	Mt 4:1–11	An aerial view of the Judean wilderness. The region is the traditional location of Jesus' temptations. This narrow but harsh desert area lies between the Jordan River and Jericho to the east, and Jerusalem to the west. The Dead Sea and Jordan Valley are visible in the distance at the end of the clip.
(21) Wadi Qilt (Winter)		Wadi Qilt runs east from Jerusalem at 2600 ft above sea level to New Testament Jericho at 800 feet below sea level. Water only flows through the wadi during the season of winter rains that provide a short season for grass to grow in the wilderness. The Roman road from Jerusalem to Jericho was located atop the ridge to the right (south) of the wadi. Passing the Bedouin encampment, we encounter the Hasmonean (ca. 150 BC) aqueduct that hikers use to trek down to Jericho.
(22) Wadi Qilt (St George's Monastery)		The present Greek Orthodox monastery, located in Wadi Qilt, was built in the late nineteenth-century AD over the earlier fourth century Byzantine monastery dedicated to Saint George and Saint John.
(23) Wadi Qilt (Cypros)		The fortress of Cypros is located at the eastern end of Wadi Qilt. This fortification, built by Herod the Great and named after his mother, appears as a prominent flat-topped peak on the right-hand side (south) of the canyon. The fortress overlooked NT Jericho and guarded the ancient

		road from Jericho to Jerusalem.
(24) Jericho (Tel es-Sultan)	Jos 2–6 1 Kgs 16:34 2 Kgs 2:19–22 Mt 20:29–34 Lk 19:1–10 Heb 11:30	After spending forty years in the wilderness of Zin, God brought the Israelites to the eastern edge of the Promised Land. The entry routes into the land were guarded by the Canaanite city of Jericho. The ten-acre ruin of OT Jericho seen in this video covers thousands of years of occupation. The tell (mound) is about nine miles north of the Dead Sea and located at the base of the Judean mountains which are visible a short distance west of the tell. Archaeologists believe Jericho to be the oldest fortified city in the world with evidence of settlement going back some 10,000 years. When the Israelites, under Joshua, approached the city, it was protected by significant fortifications. In the last few seconds of the video, in the freshly excavated area at the bottom of the tell just above the green bushes, viewers can see the remains of about 50 feet of the lower wall that protected the city in Joshua's day. People settled at the oasis of Jericho because of a copious spring, later called Elisha's Spring (2 Kgs 2:19–22). This spring is on the east side of the mound in the vicinity of the red-roofed building next to the road. Jericho's strategic significance cannot be understated. Its defeat was essential for Joshua to continue up into the heart of the Hill Country. Joshua sent to Jericho two spies who met Rahab. The region around Jericho continued to be an important trade center into NT times. Also, at 875 feet below sea level, the region was a pleasant retreat in the winter for those who could afford to travel there in NT times. NT Jericho was located in this area, about one mile south of this tell. Jesus' miracles were performed at NT Jericho (Mt 20:29–34) and the tax collector Zaccheus lived there (Lk 19:1–10).
(25) Quruntul (Greek Orthodox)	Mt 4:1–11	Deir Quruntul is a Greek Orthodox monastery located on the rocky escarpment overlooking Jericho. The present building was built in 1875-1905. The root of the name is a corruption from the Latin "quarant" meaning "forty" to remind us of the forty days of Jesus' wilderness experience and temptation. The first monks arrived there in AD 340 under the direction of the monastic leader Charitun.
(26) Quruntul (Byzantine)		The original church complex built around the fifth century was destroyed in 614 during a Parthian invasion. Crusaders rebuilt the structures in the twelfth century under the auspices of the Templar Knights.
(27) Nebi Musa		One of several sites where Islamic tradition remembers the burial of Moses. Built during the Mamluk period in around AD 1265 to function as a fortress for Islamic pilgrims on their journey to Jerusalem.
(28) Hyrcania Fortress	Josephus: <i>War</i> I, 364, 664; <i>Ant.</i> XV, 365-367; <i>Ant.</i> XVI, 13	The fortress is built on an elongated hill situated about 800 feet above sea level approximately seven miles west of the Dead Sea. Herod the Great captured the fortress in 31 BC and used it to imprison his political adversaries.
(29) Mar Saba Monastery		Located in the Judean desert seven and a half miles east of Bethlehem. The present day Greek Orthodox monastery was built in 1840 over the Great Laura of Saint Sabas (AD 439-532) known as one of the great leaders of Palestinian desert monasticism.

DEAD SEA REGION

(30) Qumran (Cave 1 area)		The initial finds of the Dead Sea scrolls occurred in 1947 when Bedouin shepherds in the region entered one of the numerous natural caves honeycombed in the cliffs above the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea.
(31) Qumran	Pliny: (<i>Natural</i>	The archaeological excavations of Qumran are located about a half

(Excavations, Caves 4, 5)	<i>History</i> , v, xv: 73)	mile southeast of the caves that produced the original scrolls. Remains of the Qumran settlement are thought to be associated with the Essene community of the first century mentioned by the Roman historian, Pliny. Excavations reveal a tower (dating back to the eighth through sixth century BC), aqueducts, cisterns, storerooms, dining room, and various workrooms. In 1952 Bedouins discovered caves 4 and 5 located on the marl terrace just across the ravine from the southern end of the excavation. These caves delivered up thousands of fragments belonging to approximately one hundred manuscripts.
(32) Ein Feshka		Springs situated along the northwestern shoreline of the Dead Sea some two miles south of the Qumran excavation are known as Ein (spring) Feshka. Excavations in the area reveal Jewish settlement dating from 100 BC to AD 96.
(33) Dead Sea Coastline	Gn 14:3 Jl 3:18 Is 40:3 Mal 3:1 Mt 3:3	This clip captures the bleak and forbidding terrain along the western side of the Dead Sea. This perspective makes clear that the cliffs of the Judean desert come almost to the edge of the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth at more than 1,200 feet below sea level with 25–30 percent salinity making it the saltiest natural body of water in the world. While looking at this arid desert region, one can imagine John the Baptist calling out, "Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!"
(34) Ein Gedi Region	I Sm 24 2 Chr 20:16	Ein Gedi (spring of the wild goat) is situated on the west shore of the Dead Sea about 20 miles south of Qumran. It is best known in the Bible as the region where David hid from Saul. There was an ancient road system called the ascent of Ziz that connected Ein Gedi to Bethlehem.
(35) Masada (Overview)	Mt 2:2–16 Masada is not mentioned in the New Testament	This remarkable fortress built by Herod the Great continues to capture his concerns for security. It is constructed on a diamond shaped mesa at the eastern edge of the Judean desert and on the western shore of the Dead Sea, clearly visible in the background as the video begins. The mountain soars over 1,300 feet above the Dead Sea. Herod enclosed the summit with a double wall with four gates, 70 rooms, and 30 towers in spite of the fact that the sheer cliffs of the mountain adequately protected the summit from attack. A naturally barren and dry region, Herod built aqueducts and cisterns to supply fresh water for the bathhouses and pools of his four palace complexes on the top of the mountain. The most famous palace is the northern one created in three tiers near the edge of the cliff. This three-level palace is visible toward the end of the clip. King Herod's megalomania and insecurity are exemplified in the design and need for this massive structure. But the birth of the real King of the Jews, Jesus Christ, to a humble family in Bethlehem, presented Herod with a threat against which no fortress could defend. Then, during the first Jewish revolt against Rome (AD 66), the site was occupied by Zealots who held out for many months against the Xth Roman Legion. The Roman army finally constructed a siege ramp on the western side, the remains of which can still be seen. On the night prior to the final assault, the Jewish defenders committed suicide rather than submit to Roman defeat.
(36) Masada (S-N; Roman Camp)		A Roman encampment is visible just south of the ravine as we look north towards the diamond-shaped fortress of Masada.
(37) Dead Sea (Southern Bay, View toward Moab)	Ru 1 2 Kgs 3 Jer 48	Flying north along the western shoreline of the shallow southern bay of the Dead Sea one looks across the ten-mile expanse of water towards the mountains of Moab.

* The list of Scripture references is not exhaustive.