

Tirzah

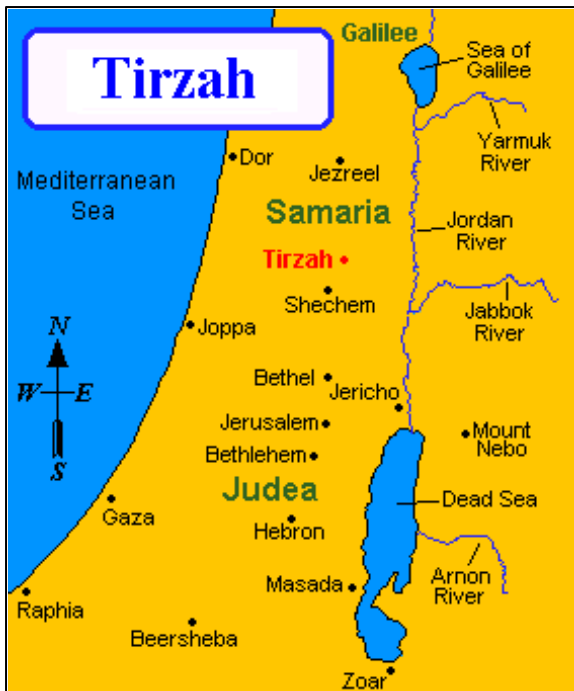
Also known as:

Tell el-Farath.

Etymology

Tirzah in Hebrew means “favourable”; “she is my delight”; “pleasantness”.

Location/Description



Tirzah is located 11 kms (7 miles) NE of Shechem; 60 kms (37 miles) from Jerusalem. It is situated near the source of the Wadi

Farah, which drains east to the Jordan. W.F. Albright an American archaeologist identified the site with the Biblical Tirzah.

Scriptural references

Old Testament

The word occurs 17 times in Scripture, four times referring to one of five daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher of the tribe of Manasseh. (Num. 26:33; 27:1; 36:11; Josh. 17:3).

The location of Tirzah occurs in (Josh. 12:24; 1 Kings 14:17; 15:21,33; 16:6,8,9,15,17,23; 2 Kings 15:14, 2 Kings 15:16; SS. 6:4.

Famous characters

Jeroboam; Baasha; Elah; Zimri; Omri; Menahem.



The valley of Tirzah (Wadi Farah)

Brief history

Tirzah was originally a Canaanite city whose king was overthrown by Joshua (Josh. 12:24). 500 years later it became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel from the time of Jeroboam to Omri who after six years moved the capital from Tirzah to Samaria.

During the time of king Jeroboam Tirzah is mentioned as the place where Abijah, the son and heir of Jeroboam, died as a result of illness – a merciful act by Yahweh as he was of a different ilk to his apostate father “who made Israel to sin”.

Similarly, Baasha the third king of the newly founded northern kingdom of Israel brought disaster to his people by rejecting God's ways, following in the steps of Jeroboam. He was the son of Ahijah, of the tribe of Issachar. Baasha came to power by murdering Nadab

the son of Jeroboam. Then he slew the whole house of Jeroboam. Baasha had previously been a captain in Nadab's army. Baasha and Asa king of Judah were at war all their days primarily because during this period there was a continual stream of Israelites migrating to the kingdom of Judah. Baasha reigned twenty four years and was buried in Tirzah. Yahweh summarily condemned Baasha by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani because he had ruthlessly slaughtered Nadab and the whole house of Jeroboam, as well as continuing the apostasy of Jeroboam.

His son Elah reigned for two years before being overthrown by his own military officer Zimri who only reigned seven days. Facing certain defeat, he committed suicide and was replaced by the prominent army general Omri who was to establish the powerful Omride dynasty after a brutal civil war.

Omri began to rebuild at Tirzah, but had bigger plans. Purchasing a very strategically located hill owned by a man named Shemer, he built a new capital city and named it Samaria after its former owner.

At the site of Tirzah there is evidence of a fire (possibly the fire Zimri started to destroy the palace and immolate himself), and a rebuilding project that was never completed (perhaps the initial efforts of Omri to rebuild the capital). The reign of Tirzah as capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel lasted forty years.

Tirzah is mentioned in 2 Kings 15:14 when Menahem the son of Gadi went from Tirzah to Samaria, assassinated king Shallum the son of Jabesh and became king of Israel. Not much is said of Menahem except that "he did evil in the sight of the LORD." He ripped up women who were with child like the Assyrians continuing the ruthless violence that had marked Tirzah in its time as capital.



An aerial view of the site of Tirzah

Sources:

Smiths Bible Dictionary

Ungers Bible Dictionary

Wikipedia

Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

(Compiler – Paul Myers)



Excavations at Tirzah