

References in the Psalms

Abiram "The earth ... buried the clan of Abiram." 106:17 Abiram was one of the leaders of Korah's rebellion against Moses [Numbers 17]. The earth opened up and swallowed the rebels.

Amalek "the land of Ammon and Amalek" 83:8. Amalek was a nomadic tribe which attacked the Israelites ferociously during the Exodus [Ex 17:8-9; Deut 25:17-19] A constant enemy.

Ammon Ammon was the kingdom across the Jordan river from Jericho. The Ammonites were often in conflict with the Hebrews, who controlled them during the reign of David and Solomon. Ammon broke free after the death of Solomon.

Baal of Peor "they bowed before Baal of Peor" 106:28. Peor is a mountain in Moab. Baal was the local god, and the Israelites worshipped it when camped nearby during the Exodus. [Num 25]

Bashan "fierce bulls of Bashan close me in" 22:13 "the mountains of Bashan are mighty mountains" 68:16. Bashan was the northern part of the region across the Jordan, south of Mount Hermon, on the far side of the Sea of Galilee. It is a fertile high plain, and was famous for its cattle, its wheat, and its trees.

Benjamin "shine forth upon Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh." 80:3 The northern tribes.

Bitter Valley "As they go through the Bitter valley, they make it a place of springs." 84:7 Probably some dry valley leading to Jerusalem.

Dathan "the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan" 106:17 with Abiram, he was a leader of the revolt against Moses. Num 16.

Edom "on Edom I will plant my shoe" 60:10 Edom was the country south of the Dead Sea. Traditional enemy of Israel.

Endor "the men who were destroyed at Endor" 83:11. A city on the plain of Esdraelon, the area inland from Mount Carmel, between Samaria and Galilee. Saul [I Sam 28] consulted the witch of Endor before his last battle. It is not clear why in Psalm 83 it seems to be linked to the defeat of Sisera by Deborah and Barak at the river Kishon, at the western edge of the plain, near the Mediterranean. [Judges 4].

Ephrata (and Yearim) "at Ephrata we heard of the ark; we found it in the plains of Yearim" 132:6 The ark of the covenant had been kept at Kiriath Yearim after the Philistines (who captured it around 1050 B.C.) returned it (See I Sam 7). David brought it to Jerusalem (II Sam 6). Ephrata (Bethlehem) is the native place of David (see Ruth 1:2)

Gilead "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh" 60:9 A mountainous region across the Jordan. The northern part was occupied by the tribe of Manasseh.

Ham "He struck all the first-born of Egypt, the finest flour in the dwellings of Ham." 78:51. See Gen 10:6. Ham was the ancestor of Egypt.

Hermon "from the country of Jordan and Mount Hermon." 42:7 Mount Hermon is the highest mountain in the Holy land. It is in the north, above the Sea of Galilee, and is the source of the waters of the Jordan River.

Sons of Lot "Assyria too is their ally, and joins hands with the sons of Lot." 83:9 The Moabites and Ammonites are the sons of Lot. Traditional enemies of the Hebrews. Assyria (northern Iraq): the great empire which destroyed Israel in 722 B.C. and threatened Judah.

Massah "as on that day at Massah in the desert." 95:8 The people complained that God did not provide them with water. Ex 17

Meribah "at the waters of Meribah I tested you," 81:8 See: Massah

Meshech "alas, that I abide a stranger in Meshech" 120:5 A region near the Black Sea (in modern Turkey): a distant land.

Midian "treat them like Midian" 83:10 A nomadic people in northwest Arabia. They raided Palestine. Gideon defeated them. Judges 6-8.

Mizar "from the hill of Mizar" 42:7. Location unknown; probably in the north, near Mount Hermon.

Moab "Moab I will use for my washbowl." 60:8 Neighbouring country, across the Jordan river. Often an enemy.

Og "Og, the King of Bashan." 135:11. An enemy king who fought Moses and the Israelites on their way to the promised land. Num 21:33ff; Deut 3:1-6.

Ophir "On your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir." Location unknown. (Arabia? India?) An exotic distant land.

Oreb and Zeeb "Make their captains like Oreb and Zeeb". 83:12. See Judges 7:25. Two Midianite princes who attacked the Israelites, but were defeated and killed by Gideon.

Phinehas "then Phinehas stood up and intervened." 106:30 See Num 25:7. Grandson of Aaron, he killed an Israelite who was found with a pagan Midianite woman.

Rahab "it is you who trod Rahab underfoot like a corpse". See Job 26:12; Isaiah 51:9. A monster representing the waters of chaos.

Great River "he shall rule from sea to sea, and from the Great River to the earth's bounds." 72:8. The Euphrates.

Sheba and Seba "the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring him gifts." 72:10 Sheba was in Arabia, probably Yemen. Seba is unknown: perhaps in Arabia or Ethiopia.

Shechem "I will triumph and divide the land of Shechem" 60:8 Shechem is an ancient city in Samaria, north of Jerusalem.

Shiloh "he forsook his dwelling place in Shiloh, the tent where he lived among men." See I Sam 2:22. The ark of the covenant was kept at Shiloh, a town north of Jerusalem, until in 1050 B.C. the Philistines defeated the Israelites and captured the ark.

Sihon "Sihon, king of the Amorites" 135:11 See Num 21:21-24; Deut 2:30-33. Enemy king who fought Moses and the Israelites on their way to the promised land.

Sirion Another name for Mount Hermon.

Sisera "treat them like Midian, like Sisera" 83:10 The enemy leader Sisera was killed with a tent peg by Jael after fleeing from the battle against Deborah and Barak. (Judges 4-5).

Succoth "I will measure out the valley of Succoth" 60:8 Succoth was a town across the Jordan.

Tabor "Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at your name." 89:13 A hill on the plain of Esdraelon, much smaller than Mount Hermon.

Tarshish "The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts shall pay him homage." 72:10 Probably a Phoenician city in Spain.

Tyre "and the people of Tyre shall come with gifts." 45:13 A prosperous pagan city on the coast.

Mount Zalmon "jewels flashing like snow on mount Zalmon." 68:14 See Judges 9:48. It is not clear which mountain this is.

Zeba and Zalmunna "make all their princes like Zeba and Zalmunna" 83:12 Two Midianite kings who attacked Israel and were defeated by Gideon. See Judges 8:5.

Zoan "He did wonders in the sight of their fathers, in Egypt, in the plains of Zoan." 78:12. Zoan is Tanis, in the delta of the Nile. An Egyptian center of government.