

Gilead

For other uses, see Gilead (disambiguation).

Gilead or **Gilaad** (Hebrew: גִּלְעָד), (/ˈɡɪl.i.əd/^[1]), is the



The hills of Gilead (current day Jal'ād), Jordan

name of three persons and two geographic places In the Bible.

1 Places

Gilead was a mountainous region east of the Jordan River divided among the tribes of Gad and Manasseh, and situated in modern-day Jordan. It is also referred to by the Aramaic name **Yegar-Sahadutha**, which carries the same meaning as the Hebrew (Genesis 31:47). From its mountainous character, it is called *the mount of Gilead* (Genesis 31:25).

It is called also *the land of Gilead* (Numbers 32:1), and sometimes simply *Gilead* (Psalm 60:9; Genesis 37:25). As a whole, it included the tribal territories of Gad, Reuben, and the eastern half of Manasseh (Deut 3:13;

Num 32:40). In the Book of Chronicles, Segub controlled twenty-three towns in Gilead.1 Chronicles 2:21-22 It was bounded on the north by Bashan, and on the south by Moab and Ammon (Genesis 31:21; Deut 3:12-17).

“Half Gilead” was possessed by Sihon, and the other half, separated from it by the river Jabbok, by Og, king of Bashan. The deep ravine of the river Hieromax (the modern Sheriat el-Mandhur) separated Bashan from Gilead, which was about 60 miles in length and 20 miles in breadth, extending from near the south end of the Lake of Gennesaret to the north end of the Dead Sea. Abarim, Pisgah, Nebo, and Peor are its mountains mentioned in Scripture.

“Gilead” mentioned in the Book of Hosea may refer to Ramoth-Gilead, Jabesh-Gilead, or the whole region Gilead.

The name Gilead first appears in the biblical account of the last meeting of Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:21-22). After king Sihon was defeated, the Tribe of Reuben, Tribe of Gad, and half the Tribe of Manasseh were assigned to the area. Ammon and Moab sometimes expanded to include southern Gilead. King David fled to Mahanaim in Gilead during the rebellion of Absalom. Gilead is later mentioned as the homeplace of the prophet Elijah. King Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria says he established the province of Gal'azu (Gilead).

Gilead (Arabic: جلعاد Ġal'ād) is also used to refer to the mountainous land extending north and south of Jabbok. It is used more generally for the entire region east of the Jordan River. It corresponds today to the northwestern part of the Kingdom of Jordan.

2 People

Gilead may also refer to:

- A grandson of Manasseh, ancestor of the Iezerites and Helekites. (1 Chronicles 2:21-23)
- The son of Michael and father of Jaroah, in the Gadite genealogies. (1 Chronicles 5:11-14)
- The father of Jephthah.
- In Hebrew, Gilead can mean a memorial site, and is used to name boys, while “Gil” means joy in Hebrew and “ad” means forever, or eternity. Further, the word “Gil” in Hebrew can also be derived from

12:25).⁴

Jeroboam's preference to honor sites with Israelite religious traditions predating the temple in Jerusalem is reflected in his choices of Shechem (as his first political capital) and Bethel and Dan as religious pilgrimage centers. Both Mahanaim and Penuel also claimed such traditions. Jeroboam's choice to honor Penuel over Mahanaim, which had served as Ishbosheth's administrative center and had given shelter to David during the time of Absalom's rebellion, might indicate his rejection of a town which had previously been associated with both the house of Saul and the house of David.

Popular Identifications:

1. *Tall adh-Dhahab al-Garbiyya* (Tall adh-Dhahab "west") OR *Tall adh-Dhahab ash-Sharqiyya* (Tall adh-Dhahab "east"). Majority opinion⁵ supports the latter of the two and places Mahanaim at *Tall adh-Dhahab al-Garbiyya*, which is the more impressive of the two mounds. The problem with placing Penuel on the eastern tell, however, is twofold. First, such an arrangement would place Penuel east of Mahanaim, whereas Genesis 32: 22-30 suggests that it should be sought west of Mahanaim. Second, *Tall adh-Dhahab ash-Sharqiyya* is south of the Jabbok River, whereas Gen 32:22-23 suggests that Penuel was north of the river.

Iron Age remains have been reported at both sites, which face each other across a bend in the Jabbok River.⁶

2. *Tell Deir `Alla/Tall Dayr `Alla*

Excavations at *Tall Dayr `Alla* revealed a sanctuary with auxiliary buildings during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. A later sanctuary from the 8th century BC contained "proto-Aramaic" texts referring to Balaam son of Beor, a figure also known from the book of Numbers (chapters 22-24). Some pottery has been found which has parallels with forms found at Shiloh and Mount Ebal (*BASOR* 302:61-62).

⁴ It is possible, however, that Penuel was also conquered during Shishak's campaign. It might be [Pa]-nu-'lu, No. 53 on the Upper Register of his Topographical List in the temple of Karnak in Egypt.

⁵ Scholars who accept this identification include S. Merrill, W.F. Albright, and N. Glueck.

⁶ Since 2006 T. Pola, professor of theology at Technische Universitat Dortmund, has been directing excavations at *Tall adh-Dhahab al-Garbiyya*. It is reported that remains have been found of a city wall and tower with at least three building phases from the Iron Age.

At a higher elevation, Pola's team discovered a monumental building dated to the Hellenistic and Roman periods and a casemate wall also assigned to the Roman period. Similarities have been noted between the architecture of the Roman period building and that of the Alexandrium prompting the suggestion that *Tall adh-Dhahab al-Garbiyya* might also be the location of the fortress call Ammathus. Ammathus was a stronghold and treasury of the Ptolemies which fell to the Hasmonean ruler, Alexander Janneus. Flavius Josephus described it as the strongest fortress found east of the Jordan River (*Antiq* XIII.xiii.3, *Wars* I.iv.2). Herod the Great had a royal palace there. This Ammathus, however, has alternatively been identified with Tell `Amtah. Comments by the 4th century A.D. writer, Eusebius, might be relevant to the discussion. Eusebius (*Onomasticon* 22) recorded two towns in Transjordan by the name of Ammathus in his day, one "in a deep valley, which fell to the tribe of Reuben . . . a village in Lower Peraea, twenty-one milestones southwards of Pella" and another "near Gadara, where there are springs of hot water."

[2006], p. 186) notes that this name “appears above in proximity to places like No. 23, **Gabba`ona* = Gibeon, and No. 24, **Bet Hauron* = Beth-horon, so it is more likely to be related to Mahaneh-dan, the place between Zorah and Eshtaol (Judge 13:25). . .”

8. Song of Solomon 6:13 suggests that there was (an annual?) dance of eligible young women held at Mahanaim, probably similar to the dance held at Shiloh spoken of in Judges 21:19-21.

Suggested identifications:

1. Both *Tall adh-Dhahab al-Garbiyya* (Tall adh-Dhahab “west”), where Iron Age I and II remains have been found in surveys, and *Tall adh-Dhahab ash-Sharqiyya* because of what many consider to be the dual form of the name, *Mahanaim*,⁹ which might derive from the Hebrew dual, “camps.”¹⁰ (That the form of the name might instead represent a locative cannot be dismissed, however.)¹¹

Associating the city with both tells, which are located on opposite sides of the Jabbok; might explain why the city was said to be located both on the southern border of the half tribe of Manasseh and the northern border of the tribe of Gad, as the Jabbok is generally considered to have been the border between these two tribal entities. It would also warrant clarification as to which tribe the city actually belonged (Josh 21:38).

2. *Tall adh-Dhahab al-Garbiyya* **OR** *Tall adh-Dhahab ash-Sharqiyya* only (placing Penuel at the other tell/tall). The general preference seems to be to place Mahanaim at the former, which is the larger of the two sites and is located north of a bend in the Jabbok, since Mahanaim was the more important of the two cities. (However, since Mahanaim was within the tribe of Gad, it would seem logical that it should be sought south of the Jabbok.¹²)

3. *Khirbet Mahneh*, located ca. 23 km/14.5 mi north of W. Zarqa along the Roman road from Pella to Ajlun.¹³ The identification of Mahanaim with this site relies primarily on the name; archaeological surveys have reported only Byzantine and Arab remains at the site. It is also far to the north of the Jabbok River.

4. Tall *Hajjaj*, located 4 km to the south of the Jabbok and south of Tulul adh-Dhahab.¹⁴ The

⁹ Tulul adh-Dhahab is equated with Mahanaim by G. Dalman and B. Mazar.

¹⁰A. Rainey (*The Sacred Bridge* [2006], p. 115) notes, “There seems to be a hint at the morphologically dual suffix, *-aim*, in Jacob’s dividing his entourage into two camps (Gen 32:7).” Although it is uncertain whether Jacob was still at Mahanaim when he divided his entourage, Flavius Josephus (*Antiq* VII.i.3) also claims that the meaning of Mahanaim is “camps.”

¹¹See I. Finkelstein, I. Koch, and O Lipschits, *The Biblical Gilead*, *UF* 43 (2011) p. 147.

¹² It should be noted, however, that Gad is said to have settled other cities in the tribal areas of both Manasseh and Reuben.

¹³This identification was accepted by E. Robinson, M. ha-Parchi, F.M. Abel and L. Oliphant.

¹⁴ This identification was favored by M. Noth and R. de Vaux.