

~ABEL-MEHOLAH (176)

(A'bel-me-ho'lah) [Watercourse of Dancing]

- The home of Elisha, where Elijah found him plowing and anointed him prophet successor.
- And Jehu the grandson of Nimshi you should anoint as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat from **Abel-meholah** you should anoint as prophet in place of you. (1 Kings 19:16)
- And it must occur that the one escaping from Hazael's sword, Jehu will put to death, and the one escaping from Jehu's sword, Elisha will put to death. (1 Kings 19:17)
- And I have let seven thousand remain in Israel, all the knees that have not bent down to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. (1 Kings 19:18)
- Accordingly he went from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat while he was plowing with twelve spans before him, and he with the twelfth. So Elijah crossed over to him and threw his official garment upon him. (1 Kings 19:19)
- At an earlier date **Abel-meholah** figures in the account of the defeat of the Midianites by Gideon's small band of warriors. The disorganized flight of the Midianites is reported to have carried them as far as the outskirts of **Abel-meholah** by Tabbath.
- And the three hundred continued to blow the horns, and Yehowah proceeded to set the sword of each one against the other in all the camp. And the camp kept up their flight as far as Beth-shittah, on to Zererah, as far as the outskirts of **Abel-meholah** by Tabbath. (Judges 7:22)
- Because Tabbath lies East of the Jordan River, effort has been made since 1951 C.E, to identify **Abel-meholah** with Tell el-Maqlub on the Wadi el-Yabis. Additional argument adduced for this identification has been that Elijah, after leaving Horeb, stopped at **Abel-meholah** to anoint Elisha and had the further commission to travel to the wilderness of Damascus to anoint Hazael as king over Syria.
- Yehowah now said to him; Go, return on your way to the

wilderness of Damascus, and you must come in and anoint Hazael as king over Syria. (1 Kings 19:15)

- The major ancient highway leading from Horeb to Damascus was East of the Jordan, although at times this route was controlled by nomads.
- However, the account of Gideon's pursuit of the Midianites in reality indicates that they were West, rather than East, of the Jordan at the point of;
- And the three hundred continued to blow the horns, and Yehowah proceeded to set the sword of each one against the other in all the camp. And the camp kept up their flight as far as Beth-shittah, on to Zererah, as far as the outskirts of **Abel-meholah** by Tabbath. (Judges 7:22)
- And Gideon sent messengers into all the mountainous region of Ephraim, saying; Go down to meet Midian and capture ahead of them the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan. So all the men of Ephraim were called together, and they got to capture the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan. (Judges 7:24)
- And, as regards Elijah's trip to the Wilderness of Damascus, the record shows that this was not effected immediately but, rather, was made sometime later by his successor, Elisha.
- Yehowah now said to him; Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and you must come in and anoint Hazael as king over Syria. (1 Kings 19:15)
- And Jehu the grandson of Nimshi you should anoint as king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat from **Abel-meholah** you should anoint as prophet in place of you. (1 Kings 19:16)
- And it must occur that the one escaping from Hazael's sword, Jehu will put to death, and the one escaping from Jehu's sword, Elisha will put to death. (1 Kings 19:17)
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Shaphat while he was plowing with twelve spans before him, and he with the twelfth. So Elijah crossed over to him and threw his official garment upon him. (**1 Kings 19:19**)

- And Elisha proceeded to come to Damascus, and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick. Accordingly the report was made to him, saying; The man of the true God has come as far as here. (**2 Kings 8:7**)
- At that the king said to Hazael; Take a gift in your hand and go and meet the man of the true God, and you must inquire of Yehowah through him, saying; Shall I revive from this sickness? (**2 Kings 8:8**)
- So Hazael went to meet him and took a gift in his hand, even every sort of good thing of Damascus, the load of forty camels, and came and stood before him and said; Your son, Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, has sent me to you, saying; Shall I revive from this sickness? (**2 Kings 8:9**)
- Then Elisha said to him; Go, say to him; You will positively revive, and Yehowah has shown me that he will positively die. (**2 Kings 8:10**)
- And he kept a fixed look and kept it set to the point of embarrassment. Then the man of the true God gave way to weeping. (**2 Kings 8:11**)
- At this Hazael said; Why is my lord weeping? To this he said; Because I well know what injury you will do to the sons of Israel. Their fortified places you will consign to the fire, and their choice men you will kill with the sword, and their children you will dash to pieces, and their pregnant women you will rip up. (**2 Kings 8:12**)
- Upon that Hazael said; What is your servant, who is a mere dog, that he could do this great thing? But Elisha said; Yehowah has shown me you as king over Syria. (**2 Kings 8:13**)
- In view of this, some geographic texts continue to recommend a site West of the Jordan rather than East of it. [**The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament, by J. Simon's, Leiden, 1959**][**The Geography of the Bible, by D. Baly, 1957**][**and the Atlas of the Bible, by L. H. Grollenberg, 1956**]

- Both Jerome and Eusebius of the early centuries of the Common Era identified **Abel-meholah** with a site 10 Roman miles, 15 kilometers,[9 miles] South of Beth-shean West of the Jordan.
- **The Land of the Bible, by Y. Aharoni, states; Abel-meholah has now been identified with much confidence with Tell Abu Sus on the West bank of the Jordan, 15 kilometers, South of Beth-shean. [Translated and edited by A. Rainey, 1979, p. 313].** The nearby plain of Beth-shean is well suited for large-scale farming.
- Accordingly he went from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat while he was plowing with twelve spans before him, and he with the twelfth. So Elijah crossed over to him and threw his official garment upon him. (**1 Kings 19:19**)
- Further indication in favor of such a site West of the Jordan is the fact that **Abel-meholah** later formed part of Solomon's fifth administrative district and is listed with other places West of the Jordan.
- Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo and all Beth-shean, which is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to **Abel-meholah** to the region of Jokmeam. (**1 Kings 4:12**)
- It was evidently the home of Adriel the Meholathite, a son-in-law of Saul.
- However, it came about that at the time for giving Merab, Saul's daughter, to David, she herself had already been given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife. (**1 Samuel 18:19**)
- Consequently the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth, and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite. (**2 Samuel 21:8**)
- Festal dancing in harvest celebrations perhaps accounts for this name **Abel-meholah**.