

# 60 Valley of Elah

## Names (also known as)

Also known as Nahal ha'Elah, Vale of Elah, Wadi Elah, Wadi es-Sant

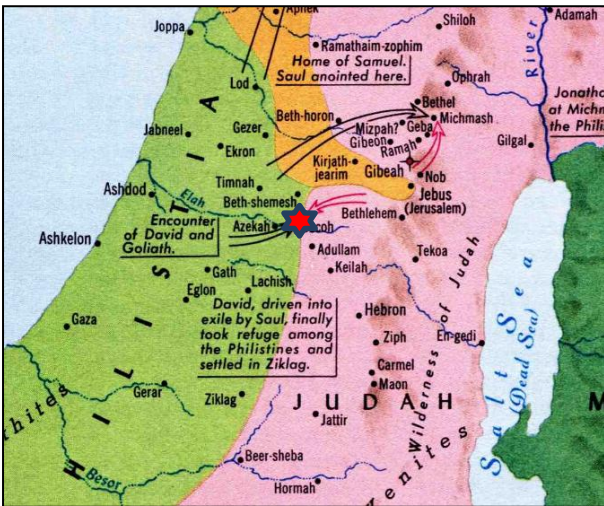
## Etymology

Elah - the Hebrew name of the Terebinth (*Pistacia palaestina*) tree. In the KJV Bible, the Hebrew "Elah" was translated as "oak" (2 Sam. 18 9).

Strong's H425 - אֵלָה - '*élâh ay-law*' - 17x. The same as H424; Elah, the name of an Edomite, or four Israelites, and also of a place in Israel.

## Location/Description

The valley of Elah was near Beth-shemesh about 30 kms SW of Jerusalem in the Shephelah.



## Getting to the Valley of Elah today

Turn off Highway No. 1 from Jerusalem or Tel Aviv on to Route 38 in the direction of Bet Shemesh. Drive for about twenty minutes, passing Bet Shemesh and Bet Jamal. After you pass Zacharia, keep your eye out for a gas station at the convergence of Routes 38 and 375, at Elah Junction. Just before reaching the gas station you will pass over a concrete bridge; beneath it is the brook of Elah. Continue to the gas station, make a U-turn, and drive back about 150 yards. Pull your car over to a safe place on the side of the road heading back towards Beit Shemesh, and walk about twenty-five metres through the field, keeping the road on your left, until you reach the riverbed.

## The Shephelah



The 5 valleys of the Shephelah are Aijalon Valley, Sorek Valley, Elah Valley, Guvrin Valley, Lachish Valley.

## The Valley of Elah



## Brief History

### Biblical period

The valley of Elah was used by the Philistines to attack Judah even after the failed battle involving Goliath. After David became King, they attacked through the same route to capture Bethlehem (implied in 1 Chron. 14:8-17).

Years later, during the times of King Ahaz (734 BC), they captured Shocho and the villages around it (2 Chron. 28:18-19): "The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD".

The Babylonian's campaign to defeat Judah (597-582 BC) passed the valley of Elah through Azekah (Jer. 34:1,7): "...when

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon... fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defenced cities remained of the cities of Judah".

### **Roman period - Road**

One of the major Roman roads from Jerusalem to the coast passed through the Elah valley, following the path of the Biblical way. The Roman road on this section is part of the ancient road from Ashkelon, a large Roman port city on the coast, to Bethlehem and Jerusalem.



Aerial view of the Valley of Elah

### **Notable Connections**

Ephes Dammim or Pas Dammim (1 Chron. 11:13) means boundary of blood.

Mentioned in the Bible, a place in the tribe of Judah where the Philistines camped when David fought with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1). Probably so called as the scene of frequent and bloody conflicts between Israel and the Philistines. It has been identified with the modern Beit Fased, i.e., "house of bleeding", SE of Shocho. Some identify it with the ruins of Damun about 4 miles NE of Shocho.

### **Scriptural References**

1 Sam.17:2;19; 21:9.

David's battle with Goliath is a great explanation of God's plan of salvation, working through a faithful man to deliver both him and his people.



Elah Terebinth or oak

“The terebinths from which the valley of Elah takes its name still cling to their ancient soil. On the west side of the valley, near Shocho, there is a very large and ancient tree of this kind known as the 'terebinth of Wady Sur,' 55 feet in height, its trunk 17 feet in circumference, and the breadth of its shade no less than 75 feet. It marks the upper end of the Elah valley, and forms a noted object, being one of the largest terebinths in Palestine.” (Geikie's - The Holy Land)



Brook Elah is famous for the five stones of David's sling

### **Sources**

Strong's, Smith's, Geikie's - The Holy Land, Bible walks.

(Compiler – Ron Leadbetter)