

1. God's covenant with Abraham

In Genesis 15:18-21 we read that God made a covenant with Abraham. He said, ' "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites." ¹

Many people believe that the whole area of all these ten peoples belongs to Israel. It only says, however, that God gave the land to Abraham's descendants in general. These include the Ishmaelites, the Midianites and other peoples through Keturah and the Edomites through Esau. Did they not get anything or did God's covenant blessing extend to them as well?

2. Location of the ten peoples

According to Genesis 10:15-19, "Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha." ²

This shows that, of the peoples mentioned in Genesis 15, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites all dwelled in the territory that later belonged to Israel." Other Bible references also shed light on the location of the various people. This gives the following list in alphabetic order:

a. The Amorites

They lived in the north, their kingdom stretching east- and west of the Jordan river (Numbers 13:29; 32:33,39).

b. The Canaanites

This name eventually referred to part of the descendants of Canaan, son of Ham. They lived mainly in the coastal region along the Mediterranean Sea (Numbers 13:29).

c. The Girgashites

It is assumed that they are the ancestors of the Gadarenes, who, at the time of Jesus, dwelled east of the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:28).

d. The Hittites

They probably took their name from Heth, the son of Canaan, and dwelled near Hebron in the south (Genesis 23:10; Numbers 13:29). ³

e. The Jebusites

Their territory lay around the city which was later named Jerusalem (Judges 1:12; 2 Samuel 5:6).

f. The Kadmonites

The land of the Kadmonites or 'Easterners' probably is the same as that of the Hivites, who dwelled under Mount Hermon in the east of Canaan (Joshua 11:3).

g. The Kenites

Their habitat was near the Amalekites (Numbers 24:20-21; 1 Samuel 15:6). Jethro, Moses' father in law, was a Kenite living in Midian. So the land of the Kenites was situated near the Red Sea.

h. The Kenizzites

Perhaps the territory of the Kenizzites was named by the writer of Genesis after Kenaz, the grandson of Esau, after he went to live there (Genesis 36:11). That means it must have been situated south of the Dead Sea.⁴

i. The Perizzites

According to Joshua 17:15 they lived in a wooded area near the Rephaim. Their land was allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh. This points to land west of the river Jordan, in the hill country between Gilgal and Mount Gilboa (Joshua 11:3).

j. The Rephaim

These giants⁵ are seen by some as the original inhabitants of Canaan, before the abovementioned people took possession of it. At the time of Abraham they mainly lived east of the Jordan, up to the territory of the Kadmonites. There the Ammonites and Moabites fought them and took part of their land (Deuteronomy 2:9-11 and 19-22).

At the time of Moses there were some giants in the land, whom the spies called Enakites (Numbers 13:33). Joshua eventually killed them so that only a handful remained in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath and Ashdod (Joshua 11:22)⁶. Goliath descended from them.

Peoples mentioned in Genesis 15



Peoples mentioned in Deuteronomy 2



3. Location of later peoples

The illustrations show where the original people lived and which people came to live in their territories. Clearly Edom, Moab and Ammon moved into the land God had promised to Abraham. As recorded in Deuteronomy 2:9-12 and 19-22, God told Moses He had given land of the Rephaim to Moab and Ammon and land of the Horites to Edom.

This raises a question which demands a solid Biblical answer: How could God promise the land of the Rephaim to Abraham and then give part of it to the descendants of his nephew Lot?

The answer can be found in Ezekiel 25:1-10, where God pronounces a judgment over Moab and Ammon. By word of the prophet, He informs them that, because of their sins, He will give their land as an inheritance to the people of the East. From Jeremiah 49:28 and other Bible references it can be deduced that these were Ishmaelites, who descended from Abraham.⁷ Thus the land of the Rephaim eventually did become the possession of Abraham's descendants, just as God had promised!

4. The overall pattern

The Bible contains several descriptions of the land that God promised the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. These are given in the following table.

	Abraham	Israel								Moab + Ammon	Edom	Ishmael
	Genesis 15:18-21	Exodus 3:8	Exodus 13:5	Deuteronomy 7:1	Deuteronomy 20:17 ⁸	Joshua 3:10 ⁹	Judges 3:5	2Chronicles 8:7	Nehemiah 9:8	Deut. 2:9-11,19-21	Deut. 2:12,22	Ezekiel 25:4,10
Hittites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Perizzites	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			
Amorites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Canaanites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			
Girgashites	X			X		X			X			
Jebusites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Kadmonites	X											
Kenizzites	X											
Kenites	X											
Hivites		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Horites											X	
Rephaïm	X									X	→	X

A clear pattern emerges, with seven peoples who God handed over to the Israelites and whose land He gave to them as an inheritance.¹⁰ The apostle Paul also mentioned seven people whom God had destroyed in Canaan (Acts 13:19), exactly as recorded in Deuteronomy 7:1.

It may be noted that the Hivites are not mentioned in Genesis 15. They were descendants of Canaan (Genesis 10:15,17) and dwelled in the land of Canaan. By the time of Abraham they were probably nicknamed Kadmonites, meaning 'Easterners', because they lived in the East of Canaan.

Of the three remaining peoples mentioned in the table, the Kenizzites, Kenites and Rephaim, it has already been pointed out that the Rephaim were first conquered by Moab and Ammon and that centuries later their land came into the hands of the Ishmaelites.

The Kenizzites are not mentioned in Deuteronomy, while the Horites aren't mentioned in Genesis. If the territory of the Kenizzites was named after Esau's grandson Kenez, then this is the same as the Horites.¹¹ These fell into the hands of the Edomites, who were descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Esau (Deuteronomy 2:12,22).

Finally, God promised the land of the Kenites to Abraham's descendants. In later times the Kenites dwelled in the land of Midian (Exodus 3:15, Judges 1:16), one of Abraham's sons (Genesis 25:2). This indicates that their land became the possession of the Midianites.

5. Further promises to Israel

Through His prophet Moses, God promised the Israelites the land of the seven peoples west of the river Jordan, from the brook of Egypt all the way to the great river the Euphrates (Deuteronomy 1:7; 7:1) and gave them a detailed description of their territory (Numbers 34:2-12). The land east of the Jordan and south of the Sea of Chinnereth (Sea of Galilee) was not for Israel, but came into the possession of Ammon, Moab and Edom.

Centuries later God promised the Israelites victory over the Philistines and over Ammon, Moab and Edom (Isaiah 11:14). Did God give them the land as well?

a. Ammon and Moab

Since it is clear from Ezekiel 25 that God gave the land of Ammon and Moab as an inheritance to the people of the East, we conclude that the Israelites weren't given the land of but authority over these two peoples. After Nebuchadnezzar took the Judeans into captivity, the dispersed Ammonites and Moabites entered the empty land of Israel. When the Israelites returned, they got into trouble with them (Nehemiah 2:10,19; 4:1-3; 13:23). Eventually Judah Maccabee was able to subdue the Ammonites and Moabites.¹²

Zachariah 10:8-10 confirms that the Israelites didn't take over the land of Ammon and Moab. God promised He would bring them home and to Gilead and Lebanon, the land of the Kadmonites and Amorites. He didn't mention the land of Moab or Ammon.

b. Edom

Obadiah prophesied that Israel would take over the land of the Philistines and Edomites (Obadiah 18-20). At that time the Jews were in captivity and the Edomites were moving into the southern part of Judea. At about 100 BC the Jewish high priest and ruler John Hyrcanus subdued the Edomites, who by then were called Idumeans, and forced them to convert to Judaism.¹³ Thus the prophecy in Isaiah 11:14 was fulfilled.

c. Philistia

The Philistines originally came from the island of Caphtor and took possession of the land of the Avvim near Gaza (Deuteronomy 2:23). Because of their hostility toward Israel (Amos 1:6-8), they were destroyed (Jeremiah 47:4) and their land was given to Israel (Obadiah 19).

6. Conclusion

We have seen that God indeed gave the land He had promised to Abraham to his descendants.

The Israelites received the territory of seven nations, stretching from the Negev desert to the Euphrates river. Eventually the land of the Philistines and Edomites became theirs as well. God gave the descendants of Ishmael land as well; Moab and Ammon became their inheritance. The Midianites, also descendants of Abraham, received the land south of the Israelites and Ishmaelites. The Ishmaelites were the first to be called Arabs¹⁴, later the Midianites were called Arabs as well.

So God gave land to the Israelites and to the Arabs.



¹ *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles

² Ibid

³ Between 1800 and 1100 B.C. there was a mighty Hittite kingdom in Turkey, stretching as far as Syria at its height around 1300 B.C. Whether the Hittites living in Canaan during the life of Abraham (1996-1821 B.C.) were related to them, is not certain.

⁴ See Bible Commentary Gill on Genesis 15:19, *E-sword*, version 10.1.0, © Copyright 200-2012 Rick Meyers

⁵ Strong's H7497: rapha or raphah means giant.

⁶ In Joshua 18:16 the Valley of Rephaim is mentioned. Many giants must have lived here, all of whom were defeated by Joshua.

⁷ At the time of the priest Ezra, after the Babylonian exile, the Jews took wives from the following people: Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites (Ezra 9:1). This indicates that part of the Ammonites and Moabites who had been driven from their land by Nebuchadnezzar, had settled in Israel and weren't living in their own land anymore. There the Ishmaelites were living, in particular the Nabataeans who descended from Nebajoth.

⁸ Also in Joshua 12:8

⁹ Also in Joshua 24:11,12,18

¹⁰ See for instance Deuteronomy 1:38, 4:20-21, 38, 12:9-10

¹¹ There are several examples in the Bible where the writer used a later name to describe a certain people, see for instance 1 Chronicles 8:29

¹² 1 Maccabees 5:3 en 6, cf. 4:61

¹³ Antiquities of Josephus Book 13, Chapter 9:1

¹⁴ See Study Origin of the Arabs