

Bible Workshop

Developing Bible study skills

9. Absalom and Geshur

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THIS STUDY is designed to highlight a number of different aspects of Bible study, as follows:

- that Bible study is not difficult or the preserve of the intellectual
- the need to give careful attention to the text
- the value of comparing Scripture with Scripture
- the value of building up a picture from various scriptures
- the value of knowing Biblical geography
- the value of recording and preserving information found.

 You will need:

Bible with marginal references
Map of Israel in Old Testament times
Concordance or computerised Bible


After Absalom had killed his half-brother Amnon he “fled, and went to Talmi, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur” (2 Sam. 13:37). In this study we will:

- establish how far Absalom travelled
- explain why Absalom fled to Geshur.

So where was Absalom when he killed his brother Amnon? He was in “Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim” (v. 23). Locating this place is crucial because there were a number of Hazors in Israel. As this was “beside Ephraim” we conclude that it was in the hill country of Ephraim, which, as can be seen from a map of Old Testament Israel, was between Jerusalem and Samaria.

 Look for Ephraim on a map of Old Testament Israel


Regarding Geshur, the index in the *Oxford Bible Atlas* shows two places called Geshur, one in Transjordan and the other in the Negev. To which of these two places did Absalom flee?

 Look for ‘Geshur’ in a concordance or computerised Bible

A search for ‘Geshur’ in a concordance provides us with eight occurrences. One is very helpful. When Absalom returned to Jerusalem and began to plan his uprising, he said to his father, “thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria” (15:8). So the Geshur to which Absalom fled is the one east of the Sea of Galilee.


The map shows that the journey from Baal-hazor to Geshur is around sixty miles. Why did Absalom flee to Geshur? Was there nowhere nearer that he could flee to? Did he go to Geshur in Syria because David had no power to control that area? Or is there another explanation?

The answer to this question can be found by looking at other areas of Scripture. Can we find a link between Absalom and Geshur?

 Review all occurrences of ‘Geshur’ using a concordance or computerised Bible

On doing this we can see a useful passage. A list of the sons of David reads, “Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmi king of Geshur” (3:3). Absalom’s grandfather was king of Geshur. Our original verse said, “Absalom fled, and went to Talmi, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur”. So we see that when Absalom fled to Geshur he went to the family home of his mother.

This study has shown the benefits that flow from looking at Bible maps. Also, by asking why Absalom fled to Geshur, we have learnt a very plausible reason for this by comparing seemingly unrelated areas of Scripture.

 Record your findings as suggested below

We could record our findings by writing references in the margin of our Bible, writing against 2 Samuel 13:37, ‘2 Samuel 3:3’, underlining ‘Talmi’ in both places. Highlighting ‘Baal-hazor’ in 2 Samuel 13:23 will remind us of the place from which Absalom fled. We might note in the margin of each of these references the distance from Baal-hazor to Geshur. These notes will prompt us to remember the details outlined above the next time we read any of these passages.