

Palestinian archeology. The Bible shows Abraham coming into Palestine and there moving back and forth with his flocks and herds over a restricted area, staying a few weeks or months in one place and then moving to another, coming back to the same areas from time to time as he moved north and south through the land. Abraham's movements were mostly restricted to the central north and south ridge, often designated as the hill country, and he rarely spent much time east or west of that general area. In modern Palestine it would be hard to think of someone as carrying on this type of life in the hill country, since that is where so many of the towns are, as was also the case in the period of Israelite occupation. Archeological evidence shows that at the time of Abraham the greater amount of settlement was down in the valley, and the extensive pasture land in the hill country was fairly open, so that it was possible for groups to move freely back and forth from north to south, as the patriarchs are pictured doing. These stories could not possibly have been invented in the time of the Israelite kingdom, as many critics hold, for no one would then have imagined a situation so different from the one that they saw before them.

This situation is vividly illustrated in the story of the separation of Abraham and Lot. Gen. 13 tells us that when Abraham came back from Egypt, having amassed a great amount of wealth there, he pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai (v.3). Lot also had great numbers of flocks and herds and the region did not have enough conveniently located pasture for both men to be able to utilize it properly. This naturally led to strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, as to which of them would have prior use of the nearer pasture land, and so produced a real danger, because of the presence of hostile people in the area (v.7). In this situation Abram suggested to Lot that the two should go separate ways, and offered to let Lot make his choice of areas. Then we read