

The Doctrine of Lebo-Hamath

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Preface: Lebo-Hamath is mentioned a dozen times in Scripture, so it may be worthwhile for us to examine it:

- Hebrew Words:** Lebo-Hamath is a combination of the lâmed preposition, the Qal infinitive construct of *to go in*, and the proper noun *Hamath*. This could be translated *to go into Hamath, a going into Hamath, [the] entrance to Hamath*. It would be transliterated *Lebo-Hamath*. Although I think a reasonable case could be made that this is a proper noun, it is only occasionally transliterated (as in the CEV, ESV, the Message) and almost always translated (for instance, GNB, God's Word™, HCSB, HNV, LTHB, MKJV, NKJV, WEB, Young). I personally think the reason for this is, the KJV did not transliterate this *prepositional phrase*, and, therefore, many others followed suit. In fact, I think that it is interesting that two of the translations which render this as *Lebo-Hamath* are generally loose renderings of the exact Hebrew. The Hebrew chart is as follows:

lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #935 BDB #97
The lâmed preposition + the Qal infinitive construct of bôw' are literally <i>to an entering of</i> ; they could be reasonably rendered <i>the entrance of</i> ; and are often transliterated as <i>Lebo</i> .			
Hâmâth (חַמַּת) [pronounced khuhm-AWTH]	<i>fortress; sacred enclosure; transliterated Hamath</i>	proper singular noun/location	Strong's #2574 BDB #332

Together, these are rendered *the entrance of ramath, the entering of Hamath*; and transliterated *Lebo-Hamath*.

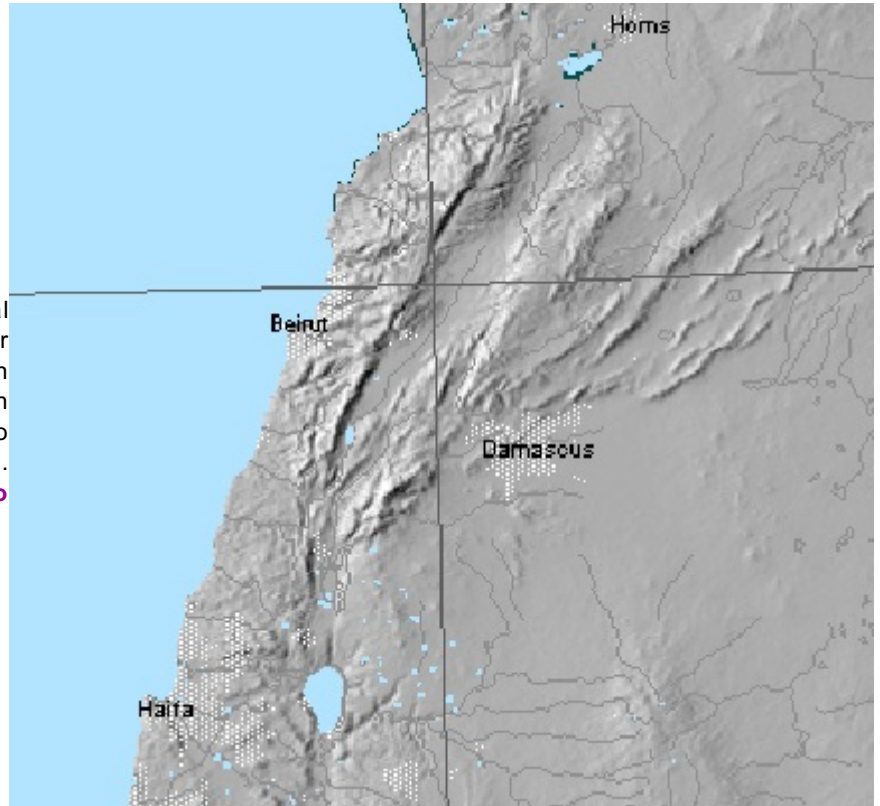
- From its usage in Scripture, Lebo-Hamath seems to refer to a specific geographical area, but not to a city or a territory.
- Location:** Although ZPEB says that we do not know exactly where Lebo-Hamath is, they tell us that it is found between the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges, probably at the lower valley of On, where there is a road to Hamath. ZPEB also mention the Orontes valley between Antioch and Seleucia, which is a part of the valley of Coele-Syria, and my guess is, that is a different place than the valley of On.¹ Barnes similarly writes: *The southern approach to Hamath from the plain of Coele-Syria, lay between those two ranges of Lebanon called Libanus and Antilibanus. A low screen of hills connects the northernmost points of these two ranges; and through this screen the Orontes bursts from the upper Coele-Syrian hollow into the open plain of Hamath.*²

¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 2.

² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Num. 13:21.

- 1) Hamath is the capital of one of the kingdoms of Upper Syria of the same name, on the Orontes, in the valley of Lebanon, at the northern boundary of Palestine (Num. 13:21 34:8), at the foot of Hermon (Joshua 13:5) towards Damascus (Zech. 9:2 Jer. 49:23).³ We will examine Hamath at a later date in greater detail.
4. **Maps:** I must admit to being surprised that I could find so few maps of this specific area.

This is a more modern map of this general area. The two mountain ranges which are far north of the Sea of Galilee and the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon mountains. In between these mountains would be the Entrance to Hamath. Now, how far up, I'm not sure.
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~floods/hydrography/E30N40s.jpg>



³ M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Hamath.



If you will notice, Hamath is far, far north of Israel, even far north of Damascus, which makes me wonder if this map is accurate. However, this is one of the MacMillan maps, and they tend to be pretty good. What could be the case is, Hamath is way north, but Lebo-Hamath, the entrance to Hamath, is at the beginning of the two mountain ranges. *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*; 3rd Edition; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai; MacMillan; ©1993 by Carta; p. 131.

5. Scripture:

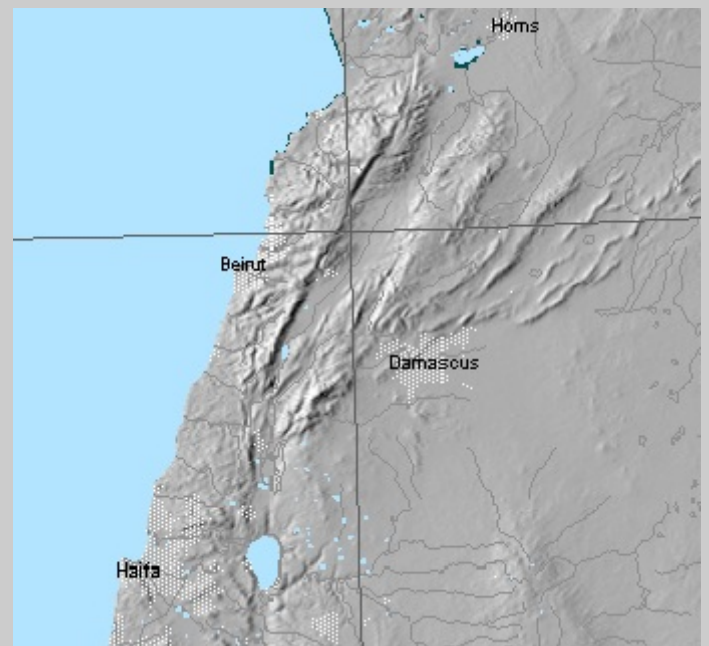
- 1) We first hear about Lebo-hamath when the spies go up and spy out the Land of Promise back in Num 13:21 (So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath). This means that, they did not just examine a small portion of the land; they went pretty much to the northernmost border of what would become Israel.
- 2) Before entering into the Land of Promise, God gave Moses the exact location of how far he was to go into the land and what he was to conquer (Joshua was the one who actually did the conquering). Lebo-hamath was given as a northern border in Num 34:8 (From Mount Hor you shall draw a line to Lebo-hamath, and the limit of the border shall be at Zedad).
- 3) As Joshua became an old man, no longer a warrior leading his people to take the land, God spoke to him, delineated what still remained to be taken (Joshua 13:1–6), and Lebo-hamath was named as one of the boundaries of some land still not taken (although God said that He would take this land—Joshua 13:5–6).
- 4) Not too long after that, we have the period of the judges, and the nations which still inhabited Israel are named, again giving Lebo-hamath as a northernmost border of their location. Judges 3:3: These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath.
- 5) We do not hear about Lebo-hamath until the time of David, where David assembles Jews from all over the land to observe the moving of the Ark; from Israel's southernmost border (the Shihor of Egypt) to its northernmost border (Lebo-hamath). 1Chron. 13:5
- 6) After Solomon builds the Temple of Jehovah, he brings the Ark and the articles of furniture from the Tabernacle to it, and all Israel, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt, celebrate (1Kings 8:65 2Chron. 7:8)
- 7) Jeroboam II, a century or so later, restores the boundaries of Israel, which had apparently been lost or eaten away at, which are given as follows: He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher (2Kings 14:25).

- 8) Because of these passages in Kings and Chronicles, most reasonably conclude that Israel only went as far north as Lebo-hamath during the times of David, Solomon and Jeroboam II.
- 9) God through Amos promises that Israel will be invaded by a nation which would oppress them all the way from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Arabah (Amos 6:14). Amos was a prophet to Israel prior to Israel's exile from the land.
- 10) God through Ezekiel delineates the boundaries for Israel in Ezek. 47:13–23. It appears to me that these will be future boundaries for the land of Israel, which will actually fulfill previous prophecy of Num. 34. Lebo-hamath is mentioned twice in the naming of these boundaries (Ezek. 47:15, 20).
- 11) God also divides out the land among the tribes in Ezek. 48, naming Lebo-hamath one time: "[These are the names of the tribes: Beginning at the northern extreme, beside the way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enan \(which is on the northern border of Damascus over against Hamath\), and extending from the east side to the west, Dan, one portion \(Ezek. 48:1\).](#) This will take place in the Millennium.

Since many will not go to this specific doctrine, let me briefly cover it in a few points:

A Summary of the Doctrine of Lebo-Hamath

There is a valley which runs between the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon mountains which are due north of Israel. At the southern portion of this valley, we have Lebo-Hamath, which literally means *to an entering of Hamath* or *the entrance of Hamath*. It is not a city, but a geographical area, marking the northernmost portion of Israel (at least, under David, Solomon and Jeroboam II), and the southernmost portion of Hamath, a country which surrounds the Orontes River and has the capital city Hamath, which was build on both sides of the Orontes. Interestingly enough, Lebo-Hamath is mentioned several times before Hamath is mentioned in the Bible (Lebo-hamath is first mentioned in Num. 13:21; Hamath is not mentioned until 2Kings 8:9).



The two mountain ranges in the north are the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges. The southern portion of the valley between these two ranges is known as Lebo-Hamath. The picture is taken from: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~floods/hydrography/E30N40s.jpg>

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