

What is the Valley of Succoth in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Valley-of-Succoth.html>

Succoth (or Sukkoth) is first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 33:17. Jacob had left Padan-aram where he had lived for twenty-one years, marrying both Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29:16-30). He was headed home, fearful that his brother Esau was still angry for being duped by Jacob many years earlier (Genesis 27:41). However, when they saw each other again, Esau forgave Jacob and invited him to make his home nearby (Genesis 33:12). Jacob chose instead to go in another direction: “But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth” (Genesis 33:17, ESV). The word succoth means “booths” or “tents.” Jacob most likely named the place Succoth because of his short stay there. The shelters he made there for his cattle were temporary. He eventually left Succoth and journeyed to Shechem where he built a more permanent home.

We learn from Judges 8:4-5 that the area known as Succoth was a valley east of the Jordan River and north of the Jabbok, between Penuel and Shechem. Some scholars place Succoth west of the Jordan, but they may be referring to an area in Egypt also called Succoth. The Succoth most often referred to in Scripture is likely east of the Jordan. Succoth was sometimes used as a boundary word to indicate the outer reaches of the Promised Land (Psalm 60:6; 108:7; Joshua 13:27). Succoth became part of the territory given to the descendants of Gad (Joshua 13:28).

The Valley of Succoth is mentioned in a couple of other places in Scripture. In Gideon’s day, the men of Succoth refused to show hospitality to Gideon and his men as they were pursuing attackers (Judges 8:4-7). Turning away allied soldiers in a time of war was unthinkable in that day, so Gideon pronounced a harsh curse upon the people of Succoth

for their inhospitable reception, and he followed it up with action: "He took the elders of the city, and using the thorns and briars of the wilderness, he disciplined the men of Succoth" (verse 16).

Succoth was also notable for its heavy clay soil. When Solomon's temple was being built, the soil near Succoth was used to make molds for the bronze items needed (1 Kings 7:46). These bronze items included two pillars and their capitals, four hundred pomegranates, ten basins and stands, the laver and the twelve bulls supporting it, and various pots, shovels, and bowls (verses 41-45).