

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 33

August 18, 2019



The Philistine Hanunu of Gaza, shown on his knees in front of Assyrian king Tiglathpileser III. Stone relief from the wall decoration of Tiglathpileser's palace at Kalhu.

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Thirty-Three

THE JUDGMENT OF PHILISTIA

August 18, 2019

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Isaiah 14:28–32

²⁸In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden. ²⁹Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken; for out of the serpent's root shall come forth an adder, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. ³⁰And the first-born of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety; and I will kill thy root with famine, and thy remnant shall be slain. ³¹Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou art melted away, O Philistia, all of thee; for there cometh a smoke out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks. ³²What then shall one answer the messengers of the nation? That Jehovah hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge (ASV, 1901).

This heavy prophecy was given to Isaiah in approximately 715 B.C. It described the destruction of Philistia which consisted of five city states located in the Gaza Strip on the Southwest coast of Israel. They were Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron. Each functioned as an individual entity with its own king and government. The Philistines had been constant enemies of Israel. They suffered grievously at the hands of Judah in the reign of Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:6), and had retaliated in the reign of Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:18). After this they were invaded by Tiglath-Pileser, who penetrated as far as Gaza, which he took ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 51) and made tributary, as he also did Ashkelon ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 399). Tiglath-Pileser died shortly before Ahaz, and the present "burden" was given in connection with his death. Isaiah warns Philistia that her rejoicing is premature; Tiglath-Pileser had successors as powerful and as cruel as himself, and these successors did carry out destruction and ravage over the whole land. God is saying here that He will destroy them and cause them to starve and kill their remnant.



THE ORIGIN OF PHILISTIA

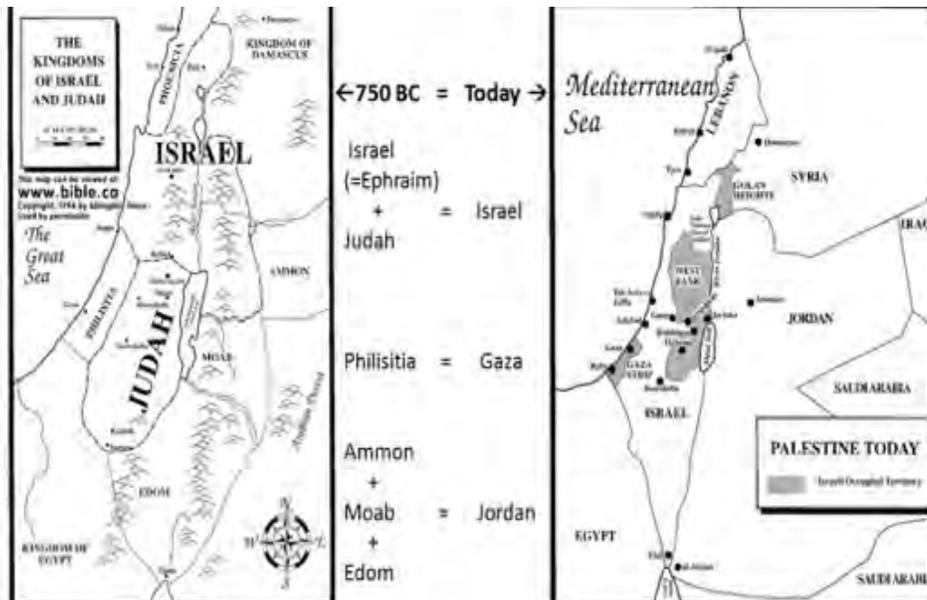
Genesis 10:10-14

¹⁰And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹Out of that land he went forth into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir, and Calah, ¹²and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (the same is the great city). ¹³And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, ¹⁴and Pathrusim, and Casluhim (whence went forth the Philistines), and Caphtorim (ASV 1901).

In about 1220 B.C. the Israelites conquered great parts of the land of Canaan and by the end of the same century most of the large and prosperous Canaanite cities already lay in ruins. The destruction of the coastal cities was completed by the Sea Peoples (Philistines), who invaded them at the beginning of the 12th century B.C. The Psalmist Asaph in an imprecatory Psalm asks God to revenge the Israelites for all the Arab and Persian peoples who oppressed Israel including the Philistines.

Psalm 83:1-8

¹O God, keep not thou silence: Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. ²For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult; And they that hate thee have lifted up the head. ³They take crafty counsel against thy people, And consult together against thy hidden ones. ⁴They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. ⁵For they have consulted together with one consent; Against thee do they make a covenant: ⁶The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagarenes; ⁷Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre: ⁸Assyria also is joined with them; They have helped the children of Lot. Selah (ASV, 1901).



From Maps from www.bible.ca/maps

Philistia is that part of the maritime plain that is called the plain of Philistia, extending from the Wadi el-Arish (River of Egypt) in the south some 70 miles (112.6 kilometers) north to the Nahr el-Aujah, five miles (8 kilometers) north of Joppa. Near Gaza the plain reaches its greatest width, about 30 miles (48.3 kilometers). There are sand dunes near the shore, but most of the area is very fertile and produces an abundance of grain (Judges 15:1–5) and fruit.

The main highway between the East and Egypt lay along the coast. This was of commercial advantage for the Philistines, but it left them open to foreign invasion. God did not lead Israel from Egypt to Canaan by this shortest route through the land of the Philistines, because He did not want them to encounter fierce fighting from the Philistines (or perhaps from an Egyptian garrison stationed there) so soon (Exodus 13:17).

From this constricted area the Philistines soon felt a necessity to expand. The passes through the Shephelah provided natural access to the hill country of Israel. They established outposts in Israelite territory, and at the time of the battle in which Saul and his sons were killed, the Philistines exercised control over the city of Beth-shan (1 Samuel 31:10).

The Bible states that the Philistines came from Caphtor (Deuteronomy 2:23; Jeremiah 47:4; Amos 9:7), which is generally regarded as Crete. The name of the Cherethites has been equated with Cretans, for the names have the same consonantal base: *c*, *r*, and *t*. The Cherethites were a Philistine subgroup who lived in the Negev not far from the city of Ziklag, David's home among the Philistines (1 Samuel 30:14). The Cherethites and the Pelethites were among David's bodyguards, along with 600 Gittites (men from Gath) (2 Samuel 15:19; 20:7, 23; 1 Chronicles 18:17).

In Hebrew they are known as the *Pelishtim*, which has been translated into English as Philistines. In the Egyptian sources they are listed among the Sea Peoples and are called the *Peleset* or *Peleste*. They are best known for their part in the invasion of Egypt by the Sea Peoples, who were vanquished by Ramses III in a land and sea battle in the Delta. Detailed scenes of this fighting are shown in deep-sunk relief on the north exterior wall of the temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, opposite Luxor. These depictions give some idea of the attire and armament of the Philistines, who are easily identified by their headdress, which was made of feathers (or reeds?).

These people settled along the coast of Israel after their defeat by Ramses, but it is possible that some stayed in Canaan on their way to Egypt. Possibly an earlier migration to Israel occurred, perhaps before the time of the patriarchs.

The various forms of "Philistine" and "Philistia" appear almost 300 times in the OT, mostly in the books of Judges and Samuel. The earliest occurrence is in Genesis 10:14, where it is said that the Philistines came from the Casluhim, an unidentified people related to the Caphtorim (1 Chronicles 1:12).

Both Abraham and Isaac had contacts with the Philistines at Gerar, in parallel incidents involving their wives (Genesis 20; 26). Here, however, the Philistines were not just on the coast but at Gerar and as far east as Beersheba (Genesis 26:33). In both references the king of Gerar is called Abimelech.

After the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the Philistines began to exercise superiority over the Israelites. An aggressive and militant people, the Philistines had the advantage of superior weapons, for they used iron and enjoyed a monopoly of iron making in the area. Their control over Israel allowed them to prohibit blacksmithing in Israel, forcing the Israelites to go to the Philistines even for sharpening tools (1 Samuel 13:19–22). The Israelites were so poorly armed that only Saul and Jonathan had a sword or a spear (v 22). Facilities for smelting iron have been found at Ashdod, Tell Qasile, Tell Jemmeh, and Tel Mor.

The Medinet Habu reliefs show the Philistines armed with spears and long, straight swords, with large, round shields for protection. They had three-man chariots with six spoked wheels, and they transported people by means of solid two-wheel carts pulled by four oxen. Their ships were rigged with a square sail, like those of the Egyptians, and had a duck-shaped prow, which possibly was used for ramming enemy vessels.

Apostasy came early in Israel, and the Lord used the Philistines to chasten his people. Shamgar delivered Israel by killing 600 Philistines with an ox goad (Judges 3:31). The account of Samson provided insight into Philistine life (Judges 13:1–16:31). The Lord raised up Samson to break the Philistines. This is an important character in the Bible since he is given so much space. (Judges 13:2-16:31) This man became a deliverer of Israel. What is important to note here is that God raised up a man with very special characteristics who received his blessing directly from the Lord to judge Israel. Samson's life gives us some insight into the inner workings of God through the Nation of Israel at that time. This story also demonstrates that there was intermarriage between Israelites and Philistines, in violation of the Mosaic law.

Warfare between Israel and the Philistines is reported in 1 Samuel 4:1, when the Israelites were camped at Ebenezer and the Philistines at Aphek. The Philistines won that round and captured the ark of the covenant (1 Samuel 4:17), which they returned after seven months because the Lord sent plagues (hemorrhoids) upon them (1 Samuel 5:1–6:21). Later, when Samuel had become leader, the Philistines attacked Israel at Mizpah, but God gave the victory to Israel. On this occasion Samuel set up a memorial stone and named it Ebenezer ("Stone of Help," 1 Samuel 7:12). The Philistines did not invade Israel again during the lifetime of Samuel, and Israel recovered cities that had been taken by the Philistines (v 14).

The greatest activity of the Philistines in Israelite territory came during the reign of Saul, Israel's first king. More than 80 references to the Philistines are related to that period. The Philistines established outposts or garrisons in various parts of Israel (1 Samuel 10:5; 13:3). Jonathan defeated the garrison at Geba (13:3); his exploit related in 1 Samuel 14:1–15 led to a rout of the Philistines.

A confrontation of the Philistine and Israelite armies took place in the valley of Elah, where the Philistines challenged Israel to provide an opponent to meet their champion, Goliath, in single combat (1 Samuel 17:1–11). The young David killed Goliath; David became a hero, but Saul's jealousy made David a hunted man. In the course of dodging Saul's army, David's men rescued the town of Keilah from the Philistines (1 Samuel 23:1–5). Eventually David sought political asylum with Achish, king of Gath, who gave him the town of Ziklag, from which David made

raids in the Negev (I Samuel chapter 27).

When the Philistines were preparing for war against Israel, Achish asked David to join the Philistine forces, and David agreed. The lords of the Philistines voted down this participation, for they feared that David would turn against them (1 Samuel 28:1–2; 29). Saul became fearful of the impending battle and with Samuel dead he went to the witch of Endor to enquire of her the outcome of the battle. Samuel was raised in a séance and prophesied Saul's death. In the ensuing battle Saul and his sons were killed on Mt Gilboa by the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:1–7). The Philistines cut off Saul's head, placed his armor in the temple of Ashtaroth in Beth-shan, and hung his body on the wall of that city (1 Samuel 8–11).

When the Philistines learned that David had become king, they tried to destroy him, but he defeated them “from Geba to Gezer” (2 Samuel 5:17–25). David broke the Philistine power, and although they again attempted war against Israel, they met with no success (1 Samuel 21:15–21).

Uzziah warred against the Philistines; he broke down the walls of Gath, Javneh, and Ashdod and built cities in Philistia (2 Chronicles 26:6–7). In the reign of Ahaz, the Philistines invaded the Shephelah and the Negev and captured a number of cities (2 Chronicles 28:18). Hezekiah fought against the Philistines as far as Gaza (2 Kings 18:8).

References to the Philistines in the Prophets are relatively few, although Jeremiah devotes a short chapter to the Philistines (Jeremiah 47). The Philistines were gradually assimilated into Canaanite culture and they disappeared from the pages of the Bible and from secular history.

The Philistines lost their independence to Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria by 732 B.C., and revolts in following years were all crushed. Nebuchadrezzar II of Babylon eventually conquered all of Syria and the Kingdom of Judah, and the former Philistine cities became part of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. There are few references to the Philistines after this time period. However, Ezekiel 25:16, Zechariah 9:6, and I Maccabees 3 make mention of the Philistines, indicating that they still existed as a people in some capacity after the Babylonian invasion. The Philistines disappeared as a distinct group by the late fifth century B.C.¹ The Philistines then assimilated into the surrounding cultures and ceased to exist as a separate nation. Subsequently the Hasmoneans converted the mixed people of the former Philistine cities to Judaism. They no longer exist. God as He promised in His covenant with Abraham would curse those who curse the Jews (Genesis 12:3).

The Roman Emperor Hadrian named Palestine after them in approximately A.D. 136. He made the name to celebrate the Philistines, Israel's enemy after his disgust with the Jews following the Bar-Kochba rebellion (A.D. 135). The Philistines were the leading enemy of Israel from the time of Sampson until the middle of the reign of David.

¹ Bridger, David. Ed. *The New Jewish Encyclopedia*. NY: Behrman House, Inc. 1976 376

Finally, destruction will come upon the Philistines as Obadiah describes, Israelites in the western foothills will move south to the land of the Philistines with its coastal plains in the Messianic Kingdom.

Obadiah 17–19

¹⁷But in mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. ¹⁸And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall burn among them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining to the house of Esau; for Jehovah hath spoken it. ¹⁹And they of the South shall possess the mount of Esau, and they of the lowland the Philistines; and they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and the field of Samaria; and Benjamin shall possess Gilead (ASV,1901).

NEXT MESSAGE: THE JUDGMENT OF MOAB

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