

Conquest and Settlement in Canaan

I. Introduction

The two primary sources for the Israelite conquest and settlement of Canaan are the books of Joshua and Judges. Joshua concentrates on the initial phase of the conquest, while Judges describes the struggle of the tribes as they fought to take the land. The Biblical record indicates that the conquest extended over a long period of time, and was not completed until the time of King David.

II. Historical Background

During the period of Iron Age I (1200-1000 B. C.) The Ancient Near East experienced a significant time of change. A political vacuum was created with the collapse of the Hittite Empire as well as the decline in Egypt. During this time there was no major power in Mesopotamia to take advantage of a weakened Egypt. The lack of any major power in the area created an opportunity for the smaller states to grow and take control over the Levant.



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Another important change during this time was the migration of the Sea Peoples who came in several waves from the lands adjacent to the Aegean Sea, the Balkans, and the southern coast of the Black Sea in search of new land. The most important group of migrating Sea Peoples was the Philistines.

III. The Conquest from Joshua 1-11

A. This is the primary source of information for the military campaign.

B. Chapters 2 through 11 record a campaign into the central and south hill country, and later to the north.

C. The book of Judges pictures the conquest as more of an extended, piecemeal aggression that could have lasted for over a century.

D. The book of Joshua telescopes the account (somewhat) if looked at closely it does reveal a quick beginning but it quickly moves into a period of slow development.

IV. Geographical Framework for the Conquest

- The base of operations at Gilgal
- The southern campaign.
- The northern campaign.
- Territory Unconquered.
- Allotment of the land.

A. Base of Operations at Gilgal

-Location: A site probably in the region of Khirbet el-Mefjir. Referred to in the Old Testament as the plains of Jericho. This site was the base of operations against Jericho, the Amorite league at Gibeon, and the Canaanite league at Hazor.

NOTE- Saul, the first king of Israel, was crowned at Gilgal (1 Sam. 11:15)

B. The Central Campaign

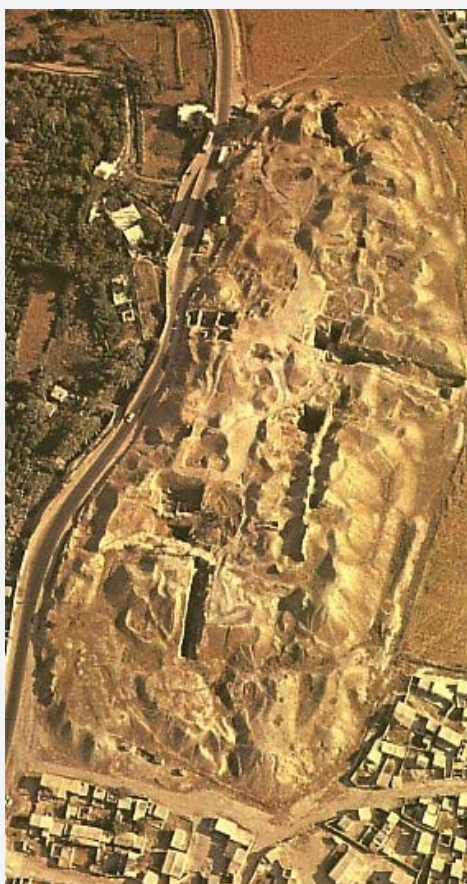


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Jericho:

A strategic point in Canaan. Jericho was a gateway to three passes leading up from the Jordan Valley to the lower portion of the Central Plateau. Jericho was 6

miles from the Jordan and connected the highway of oriental trade routes from Gilead and Moab.



Old Testament Jericho

Ai:

Ai was located about 14 miles away from Jericho and was probably a small town due to the number of men that the Israelites sent to defeat the city. The first attack was unsuccessful due to the sin of Achan.



Possible Ai Ruins

The Hivite League

After the destruction of the city of Ai the Israelites appear to have gone into a period of rest or at least tarried for a while. The Hivites would have been next in line for destruction. As such, they made an alliance with Joshua. The alliance included the following cities: (from the central plateau) Gibeon, Beeroth, Kiriath-Jearim, and Chephrah.



Gibeon



Kiriath-Jearim

C. The Southern Campaign

King of Eglon, Lachish, Hebron, Jarmuth, and Jerusalem confederated against Israel. Other cities that they fought against were: Libnah, Gezer, Dibir.



Jerusalem

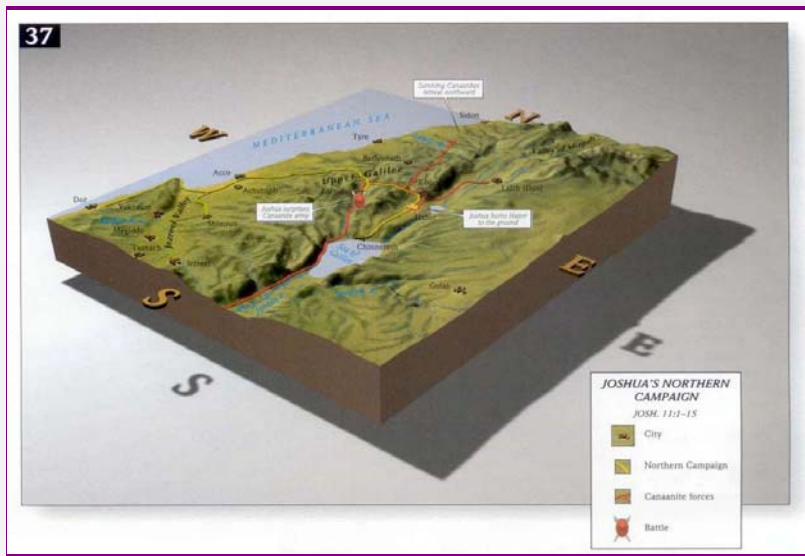


Lachish

Battle of Gibeon:

The Israelites came to the aid of the Gibeonite cities, which had been attacked by the Canaanite league. Following this action Judah took the city of Jerusalem. They did not settle the city but moved southward to the Judean hills and the Shephelah; this would explain why David had to recapture the city when he became king. The final phase of the southern tribes taking the land was the destruction of the city of Lachish and the surrounding region.

D. The Northern Campaign



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The opposition from the northern coalition was in many ways more formidable than the southern league. The opposition consisted of a coalition led by Jabin the king of Hazor. The Israelites defeated the Canaanite coalition at the waters of Merom and destroyed the city of Hazor. This is the first time that the Israelites encountered the horse and chariot in battle.

Hazor:

The chief town in the league held guard to the northern approach to the land of Canaan. Located about 4 miles southwest of the end of the waters of Merom. It was the converging point for two major branches of the International Coastal Highway: the maritime passage, which followed the seashore from the north from Sidon and Tyre; and the inland highland, from Damascus to Dan and into Hazor.



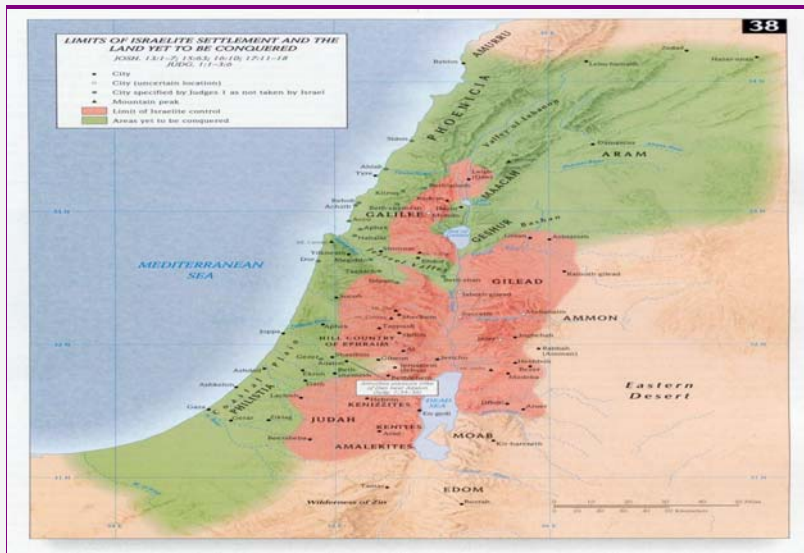
Hazor

E. Territory Unconquered

Joshua 13:1-6; Judges 3:1-3 - Israel occupied the highlands, parts of the western

highlands and the Transjordan. The Central coastal plain, Jezreel Valley, and northern Jordan Valley remained outside of Israelite control. Canaanite chariots seems to have prevented Israel's expansion into the plains (Josh. 17:6. Judges 1:19)

The book of Joshua does not claim that it took all of the land of the Philistines, Phoenicians, or people within the environs of the Lebanon proper. It does state that the land remaining to be subjugated included all of the maritime plain, from Shihor (the river of Egypt) on the southern border of Canaan to Gebal in the extreme north, and all the area from the entrance in at Hamath through the valley of the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon ranges to the shadows of Hermon (Josh 13:2-6).



[Click map to see a larger image](#)

F. Allotment and Settlement



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The allotment of the land came into five general divisions and periods:

1. The allotment of the Transjordan section for Reuben, Gad, and

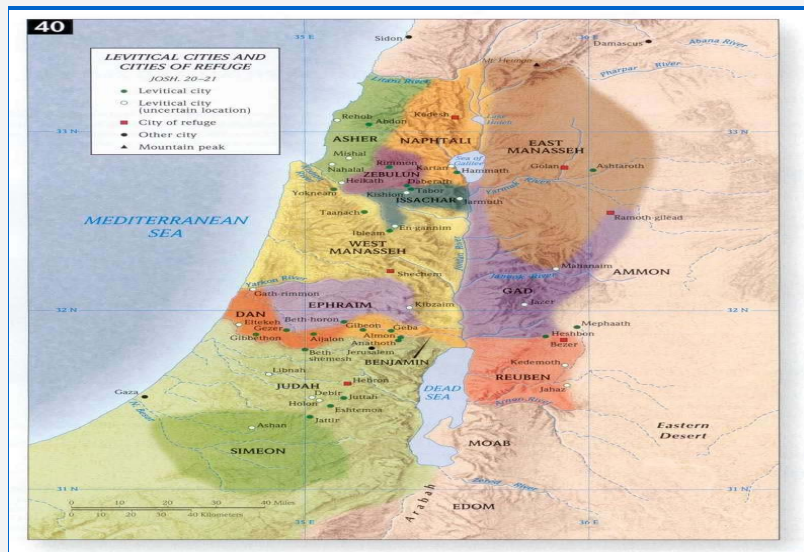
East Manasseh.

2. The provisions made for Judah, Ephraim, and West Manasseh.

3. The boundaries of the remaining seven tribes: Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Ashur, Naphtali, and Dan. The first allotment came after the campaign in the Transjordan and was allotted by Moses in the plains of Moab. The second allotment followed the victories in the southern campaign in Canaan and was allotted by Joshua at Gilgal. The third allotment was conducted after the defeat of the Canaanite coalition at the Waters of Merom and was allotted by Joshua at the sanctuary in Shiloh.

4. Levitical Cities - The tribe of Levite did not receive an allotment of land. Instead they received several cities and the surrounding land in other tribe's land.

5. Cities of Refuge - Six cities, three in Palestine proper and three in the Transjordan, as cities of refuge. Persons who committed accidental homicides could flee to these cities and receive refuge from those who wanted to avenge the death of the victim.



[Click map to see a larger image](#)

V. Models Explaining the Emergence of Israel in Palestine

It is good to realize that not all people hold to the idea of a conquest as the means by which the Israelites entered Palestine. The following are the three most common theories.

1. Conquest Model - Albright-Wright
2. Infiltration Model - Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth
3. Social Uprising Model - George Mendenhall, Norman Gottwald

VI. Summaries of the Three Prominent Theories of the Origin of Israel

One of the beginning points for the study of the date of the Exodus is the origin

of the nation of Israel. One's particular view of the origin of Israel has direct influence on one's understanding of the Exodus as a historical event and its subsequent date. Reconstructing the events of Israelite settlement has been the most debated topic in Israelite history. "But after decades of research, no agreement has been reached. Quite the contrary, difference of opinion have become even sharper, and the "traditional" archaeological evidence has only engendered further confusion." Three prominent theories concerning the origin of settlement have emerged from the debate: the conquest theory, the peaceful infiltration theory, and the peasant or internal revolt theory.

A. The Conquest Theory

The Conquest model has been referred to as the traditional biblical approach. This approach holds closely to the biblical account from the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua. Moses led the Israelite people out of Egypt as twelve unified tribes. After a period of wandering in the desert the Israelite people came to Canaan and proceeded to take the land that was promised to them by God. The first five chapters of the book of Joshua records that the Canaanite city-states throughout Palestine were quickly subjugated in a series of battles, with many of the cities being destroyed. Once the Israelites had conquered the territory they proceeded to settle down on the newly acquired land. Three types of evidence were advanced in support of the Conquest theory:

the literal description in the Bible;

the destruction levels at the close of the Late Bronze period encountered at sites such as Lachish, Tell Beit Mirsim, Bethel and Hazor, which were attributed to the invading Israelites; and

historical parallels to nomadic tribes with low levels of material culture which, nonetheless, caused the collapse of strong and highly developed urban societies.

This argument was formulated by William F. Albright and his students beginning in the 1930's. The followers of this approach recognize that the biblical traditions are not completely accurate in every detail. However, "the biblical narrative, at least in all major points is rooted in history."

B. The Peaceful Infiltration Theory

The originator of the peaceful infiltration theory was Albrecht Alt. Alt evaluated the event of Israelite settlement against the political, territorial, and demographic situation in Palestine during the Late Bronze Age as represented in the Bible and in New Kingdom Egyptian sources. Alt concluded that the settlement was a peaceful infiltration of pastoral groups into the scarcely inhabited areas of Canaan, "part of a routine pattern of transhumance between the desert fringe and the central hill country." Alt and his student Martin Noth (the principal critic of the unified military campaign theory) believed that the solution to the settlement problem would be found in the hill country of the land of Israel. Regarding the Exodus Noth states that: There can be no doubt, however, that this was a real event; we can discern to some extent the conditions and circumstances which led to it and can fit it into a historical situation of which we have quite reasonable knowledge. The incident itself, which the Israelites experienced as an unexpected and mighty act of deliverance of their God, remains veiled from our sight.

While Noth recognized the historicity of the Exodus he argued that it was not as grandiose as represented in the Pentateuchal writings. The people of the Exodus were a part of the semi-nomadic tribes that lived in the areas around Palestine. The league of twelve tribes known as Israel in the Bible was created in Palestine during the time of the "judges." The warfare between Israel and the Canaanite city-states in the plains and the valleys occurred in the final stages of the settlement and the early monarchy, when Israel began to expand its territory. These battles became the basis for the development of the later Deuteronomist tradition in Joshua 1-11 in which a general conquest of the land supposedly took place at the beginning of the settlement. Alt and Noth believed that many of the Conquest stories developed as explanations for the existence of institutions, customs, and physical features observed in later times. Alt and Noth were criticized by the proponents of the Conquest model who claimed that the peaceful infiltration model failed to utilize the results of archaeology to reconstruct the Israelite settlement. Yet, recent studies by Yohanan Aharoni, Aharon Kempinski, and Volkmar Fritz have advocated the archaeological support of the peaceful infiltrations hypothesis. They claim that area surveys and excavations have revealed many small unwallled Iron I "Israelite" villages in the central hills and in Galilee, supporting the Alt-Noth model.

C. Internal-Revolt Hypothesis

The last model (often called the sociological approach) was first introduced by George E. Mendenhall in 1962 and further developed by Norman K. Gottwald. Other supporters of the Internal-Revolt model include scholars such as John M. Halligan, and Marvin L. Chaney. According to Mendenhall and Gottwald the emergence of Israel was due to the revolt of oppressed and exploited groups at the bottom of the social strata, against the royal Canaanite city-states. The persecution by the upper crust of society forced the lowest social stratum to drop out of urban society. The peasants deserted the large cities of the coastal plain and valleys in favor of the hill country. The discontent of the people was brought into a revolt through the influence of a group of slave-labor captives who had escaped from Egypt. The people fleeing Egypt established a community based on the deity Yahweh for their protection. The underprivileged of the Canaanite city-states joined and identified themselves with the oppressed group from Egypt and adopted their historical traditions of deliverance from the bondage of Egypt.

D. Conclusion

Each of the three models concerning the emergence of Israel allow room for a historical Exodus. However, each model presents a distinct understanding of the departure from Egypt. The "Conquest" model Exodus consists of a large departure of people with a confirmed identity. This model can adapt to either the early or late dates. The peaceful infiltration model suggests an Exodus which consisted of a small group of semi-nomadic pastoralists, whose identity as Israel was not confirmed until a later period. The "Peasant revolt" model argues for an Exodus consisting of a small group of Egyptian slaves with a confirmed identity. Both the "peaceful infiltration" and "peasant revolt" theories are generally associated with the late date of the Exodus.

VII. Judges

A. Introduction

Period of the Judges: there was no organized life of the tribes during this period. In general, the various tribes were making sporadic efforts to win the whole of

the territories originally allotted to them, or to entrench themselves securely in the positions that they had already won. Judges who were charismatic leaders were called out to lead the people in a time of crisis and once the problem was solved the judges seems to disappear into the background.

According to the book of Judges, God sent oppressors against Israel to punish the people's sin and correct their behavior. A pattern can be seen in the book of Judges: the Israelites sin against God; God judges His people; the people repent; and God raises up a judge to deliver the people. The people that God used to punish the Israelites came from three groups: the indigenous population, recently settled people (Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites), and semi-nomadic tribal groups who inhabited the desert fringe (Midianites and Amalekites).

1. Indigenous population: Canaanites.

Their culture was in decline but they were still a threat in the Coastal plains and valleys where chariots were used. However the main threat they posed was related to their religion.

a. Canaanite Religion: Baalism

1) Def: A highly evolved, multifaceted polytheism related to an essentially agrarian/pastoral economy. Although Baalism as a religion embraced many areas of life, fertility concepts are given prominence in some myths and rituals. These fertility aspects appealed directly to agrarian peoples such as Israel.

2) Sources of information:

Old Testament

Classical authors

Texts found at Ras Shamrah (ancient Ugarit).

Archaeological data - temples, high places, dols, figurines, cultic vessels.

b. The Canaanite Pantheon

El - highest of the gods; he was the father of the gods. He lived in a tent and other gods had to consult him.

Baal (Hadad) - most active god in Canaan. His name meant "lord" or "master." He was called the prince of the earth. He is often associated with the bull. Baal also represented powers of life.



Mot - god of the underworld, he fought against Baal for control of the earth. He reigned in the underworld.

Yamm - brother of Baal but was his enemy. He was the god of the sea and rivers.

Anath - Baals sister and consort



Asherah - over 40 references to her in the O. T. Fertility goddess and the mother goddess of all creation.



Astarte - fertility goddess.

c. Conflicts within the Pantheon

1) Baal's battle with Yamm - Yamm represented the chaotic forces that threatened to overwhelm life or disrupt the order upon which life depended.

2) Baal's battle with Mot - Mot ruled the underground and sought to destroy Baal. During their battle, Mot captured and slew Baal. Baal's consort Anath fought Mot and secured Baal's return to life. The main point of this story was to illustrate the Agricultural/Weather cycle. When Mot overcame Baal, the land was dry and infertile. When Baal was restored to life, there was rain and the crops grew once again.

2. Recently Settled People

These were people groups who settled in Palestine at about the same time as the Israelites and included Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites.

a. The Philistines were the most persistent threat to Israel during the period of the Judges. As such, the following is a brief sketch of this people.



Philistines on the Egyptian Temple at Medinet Habu

1) Philistines - The name Philistine comes from the Hebrew *p li tî(m)* which occurs 288 times in the Old Testament. The term *peleth* (Philistia) also occurs, though with less frequency. The Egyptians called them *prst* (*peleset*) while the Assyrians list them as *pilisti* and *palastu*. Unfortunately, scholars don't know what Philistine originally meant.

2) Origin - Genesis 10:14 states that the Philistines descended from the Casluhites. Casluhim was the grandson of Ham, Noah's son. The Bible also states that the Philistines migrated to Palestine from Caphtor (Amos 9:7). Caphtor is generally associated with the island of Crete. Most scholars feel that the Philistines were part of a migration of people called the Sea Peoples. These peoples originated from the area of the Aegean Sea. First they moved to Crete and Cyprus and then into the area of Palestine. This movement of people was around 1200 B.C. and was probably the result of some kind of disaster in the Aegean area.

However, the Biblical text first places the Philistines in Palestine around 2000 B.C. Genesis 21 and 26 seem to indicate the presence of Philistines in Palestine during the time of the Patriarchs. Many scholars consider these verses to be anachronisms, that is stories out of chronological order. It could be, however, that the Philistines were an amalgamation of several different peoples and that the earlier reference

referred to one of these groups while the later reference refers to another of these groups. Because of common features they were all lumped together as Philistines.

Generally, when we talk about the Philistines, we are going to discuss those who came in the Sea Peoples' migration during the twelfth century B.C. (1200-1000 B.C.)

b. Sources - Basically we get information on the Philistines two sources: written texts and archaeology.

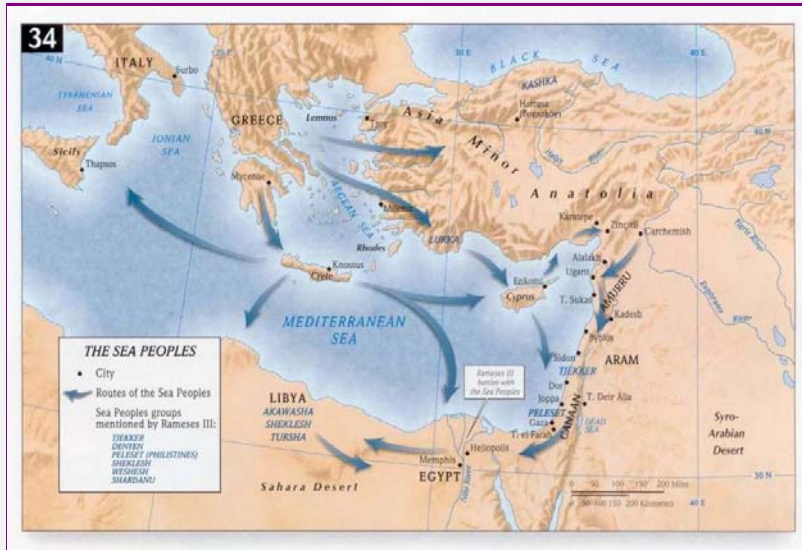
The written texts are further broken down into the Biblical sources and the Egyptian records. The Egyptians first mention the Philistines during the time of Pharaoh Rameses III (1184-1153). Inscriptions on the walls of Rameses III's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu near Thebes record much of what is known about "the peoples of the sea." The inscriptions name seven peoples including the following:

- Shekelesh
- Weshesh
- Tjekel
- Denyen
- Sherden
- Teresh
- Peleset or Philistines



Apparently, the Sea Peoples, which included the Philistines, were migrating for reasons we mentioned previously. They came against Egypt in a land and naval

battle fought in the Delta area of the Nile. The Pharaoh defeated them and then allowed the Sea Peoples to settle in southern Palestine which is where we will find the Philistines in later years.



[Click map to see a larger image](#)

The Biblical records mention only one Sea People, the Philistines. We have already discussed a little of what the Bible says about them. Archaeology provides us with the rest of the information about the Philistines.

Archaeologists have excavated the five major cities of the Philistines which are Ashkelon, Gath, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza. These excavations have told us much about their culture and we will discuss these later. What we want to mention here is the pottery record. The pottery found at Philistine sites is almost identical to pottery found in the Aegean Sea area. This, of course suggests that the origin of the Philistines was the Aegean area and thus our earlier discussion concerning the origin of the Philistines.

c. History - The Philistines are associated with the early Iron I Age (1150-1000 B.C.). Of course, this is the early periods of Israel's existence. As such, they were the major enemy of the Israelites during this time. The following are examples of the conflict between the Philistines and Israel.

- Shamgar the judge killed six hundred Philistines in Judges 3:31
- Samson's story in Judges 13-16.
- Philistines capturing the ark in 1 Samuel 4-6.
- Samuel's victory over the Philistines in 1

Samuel 7:7-11

- Saul struggles against the Philistines (1 Samuel 13-15).

- David and Goliath 1 Samuel 17 - David's subduing of the Philistines. He eliminated the Philistine threat.

d. Culture

1) Territory - The territory of the Philistines was approximately 30 miles long and varied in width from 9 miles to 15 miles. The land was dominated by five large cities which we mentioned previously. Each of the five had a king and came together in a confederation which was led by one of the five kings.

2) Military - Philistine military power derived from organization, equipment, and experience gained during the battles with the Egyptians. They used chariots, cavalry, infantry and archers. 3) Language - We have no clear example of Philistine language or writing. By the time they were interacting with Israel, they spoke a dialect of Canaanite and that Israel understood them.

4) Cult - The Philistine cult followed closely the cult of the Canaanites. Dagon was the head of the Philistine pantheon. He was not unique to the Philistines, but had been known throughout the Ancient Near East for many centuries. The other two gods were Baal-zebub and Ashtoreth. Baal-zebub was unique to the Philistines though he could be related to Baal who was common throughout the region. Ashtoreth was the goddess of love and war and was present in many cultures in the Ancient Near East.

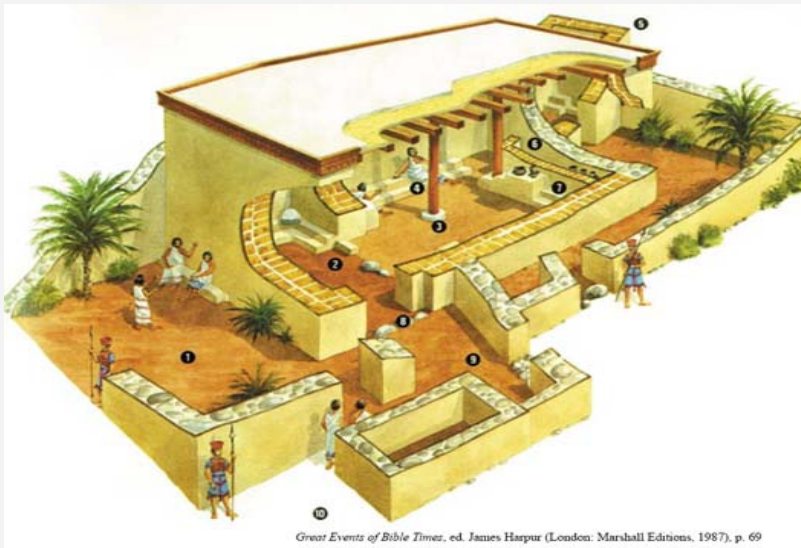


Dagon - the fish god

5) Temples - The three temples at Tell Qasile are the only cultic centers to be found to date. They are remarkably similar to Canaanite temples, except that Philistine temples had a bent axis entrance and tended to have a minor shrine near the major shrine. Both of these features were unknown in Canaanite religious architecture but had parallels in the Aegean and Cyprus.



Temple at Tell Qasile



Great Events of Bible Times, ed. James Harpur (London: Marshall Editions, 1987), p. 69

Reconstruction of the Temple

6) Cult Objects - Two types of religious objects were found in Philistine areas which show a decidedly Mycenaean tradition.

a) Ashdoda - goddess blended into the form of a high-backed chair. It is an example of a deity worshiped by the Philistines and its unique form reflects the adaptation of Aegean traditions in a Near Eastern style.



b) Mourning woman - mourning women with hands on her head. Part of the Mycenaean religious heritage

7) Burial Customs - There seems to be no set burial custom for the Philistines. Instead, a variety of burial customs have

been discovered.

- single graves in the ground
- rectangular cist graves
- coffins made from storage jars
- cave/tomb burials

8) Economic Practices - Philistines were basically farmers and traders. They grew grains, grapes, and olives, kept livestock, and then traded them to obtain items not available locally. We do find, however, other crafts. Weaving and pottery-making were widely practiced. Metal-working including bronze, silver, and copper was also practiced.

3. Semi-nomadic Groups

These people lived on the fringes of the desert and constantly made raids into Israelite territory to oppress the Israelites and to take their resources. These groups included the Midianites and the Amalekites.

B. The Judges

1. Major Judges

There were six major judges and six minor judges. Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson were the six major judges.

- a. Othniel - Delivered the Israelites from an Aramean oppression. See Judges 3:8-11.
- b. Ehud - Ehud stopped an 18 year oppression of Israel by the Moabites by assassinating Eglon, king of the Moabites and leading the Benjamites to drive the Moabites out of Israelite land. (Judges 3:12-30)
- c. Deborah - Deborah judged Israel from beneath a palm tree near Bethel. She summoned Barak and charged him with leading men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun against the king of Hazor. A great battle ensued and the Canaanite army was destroyed. (Judges 4:1-5:31)
- d. Gideon - Gideon delivered Israel from semi-nomadic people groups who were pillaging the land. Gideon selected 300 men and carried out a surprise attack at night. The Midianites and Amalekites were beaten and the oppression was lifted. (Judges 6:1-8:27)

e. Jephthah - Delivered the Israelites from oppression by the Ammonites. (Judges 10:6-12:7)

f. Samson - Samson delivered the Israelites from the Philistines. See the Samson story in Judges 13-16.

2. Minor Judges

The six minor judges were Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.

C. From Judges to Saul

The period of the Judges is marked by disunity among the tribes of Israel. In light of the troubles that she faced as a nation, the book of Judges does not record any time in which all 12 tribes united to fight an enemy. The concluding chapters of Judges describes the period as a time when "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." (Judges 21:25)

Samuel is the transition figure which moves from the period of the judges to the time of the kingdom. Samuel functioned as a Judge, Prophet, and Priest. Samuel serve the people well. However, his sons perverted the legal system and accepted bribes in their capacity as judges at Beer-sheba (1 Sam. 8). In light of the Philistine threat and the fact that Samuel's sons were not honest men, the people of Israel asked for a king to lead them.