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Frederick Schumacher Jr

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_schumacherf@csl.edu

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THE PHILISTINES

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Old Testament Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Frederick Schumacher, Jr.

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Approved by:

Walter R. Rorhs
George V. Schick

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(Outline)

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A. Original location: theories

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2. Environs of Crete

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I. Introduction

The Philistines were a people of great importance in Old Testament history. It may be said that "there is no more curious perversion of fact than that which has made the 'Philistine' a synonym for obscurantism and bad taste."¹ They are mentioned in nineteen books of the Bible, and their influence on Israel during the period of the Judges and in the reigns of Saul and David is incalculable. They conquered almost all of Palestine, and consequently the name of this country is a corruption of the very word "Philistine".

Their history bridges the gap between the ancient civilization of the Bronze Age and the later civilization of the Iron Age. The two hundred years of overlap between the Bronze and the Iron Age was a period of turmoil and confusion respecting the history of which very little is known...And it is not impossible that they had a share in the evolution of the alphabet, the cornerstone of modern civilization.²

It is rather unfortunate, however, that many problems

¹ J. Baikie, Land and Peoples of the Bible, p. 73 quoted in William C. Harrison, Philistine Evidences and the Old Testament, p. 4.

² R.A.S. Macalister, "Philistines", Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, Vol. IV., p. 843.

concerning the Philistines cannot be solved, and excavation in Palestine has done little to answer conclusively the problems of their origin and civilization. Of the excavating that has been done in the Philistine Plain, Dr. R.A.S. Macalister's work has proven to be most valuable. Since his work in the first decade of the twentieth century, however, no great archaeological searches have been undertaken.

The purpose of this study is to review the history of the Philistines, special emphasis being placed on their relation and influence on Israel.

Biblical evidence is assumed to be conclusive, and implications from archaeological discoveries or ancient records are accepted only in so far as they do not contradict the Biblical account.

II. Origin and Characteristics

The origin of the Philistines is a problem that cannot be easily solved. Scripture tells us that the Philistines came from Caphtor.¹ We can also deduce this from Deut. 2:23 which speaks of the Avim being driven out by the Caphtorim of Caphtor. The Avim are spoken of as dwelling "even unto Azzah". Since this undoubtedly refers to Gaza, the geographical indication shows that the Caphtorim must refer to the Philistines; it says that the Caphtorim dwelt there in the place of the Avim, and we know definitely that Gaza was a city of the Philistine Pentapolis.² From Scripture then it is quite clear that the Philistines originally came from Caphtor, but to locate Caphtor is a great problem.

Caphtor may refer to the island of Crete. In the Egyptian records a region known as Keftiu is often taken to be the same as Caphtor. Skinner³ says that Kaphtor has "usually been taken for the island of Crete, mainly because of repeated association of קִרְתִּי (Cretans?) with the Philistines and the philistine territory."⁴

¹ Amos 9:7 Jer. 47:4

² R.A.S. Macalister, The Philistines: Their History and Civilization, p.5.

³ John Skinner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis, Vol. I, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. pp. 200-214.

⁴ I. Sam. 30:14. 16 Ezek. 25:16 Zeph. 2:5.

There are rather convincing reasons for connecting Kaphtor with Keftiu (properly 'the country Behind'), an old Egyptian name for the 'lands of the Great Ring' (the eastern Mediterranean), or the 'isles of the Great Green', i.e. South West Asia Minor, Rhodes, Crete, and the Mycenaean lands, to the North West of Egypt. . . The precise phonetic equivalent has been found on a late mural decoration at Ombos. . . Keftiu is the old Egyptian name of Caphtor (Crete).⁵

The reasons why Kaphtor is identified with Keftiu are rather convincing. This name K-f-tiw appears on the monuments of the 18th dynasty of Egypt. Assuming the word to mean "behind", Mr. Hall compares ^{it} to the colloquialism "the Back of Beyond".⁶ This meaning would indicate nothing more than that the location was very indefinite.

Under Thutmose III, however, Keftiu appears as a name of a place or a people.⁷ In the Cairo Museum a record of this king's deeds is stated in a Hymn to Amon. It reads, "I came and caused thee to smite the west-land, and the land of Keftiu and Asi are terrified."⁸ The walls of the Temple of Karnak show this name also, connecting it with maritime enterprise. The inscription on these walls says

The harbours of the king were supplied with all good things which he received in Syria, namely ships of Keftiu, Byblos, and Sektu

⁵ Skinner, op. cit. pp. 213-4.

⁶ H.R.Hall, Journal of the British School at Athens. VIII, (1901-2) p. 157, quoted in ³ Macalister, The Philistines, p.7.

⁷ Thutmose III was pharaoh the first half of the 15th century B.C. Cf. James Henry Breasted, A History of Egypt. p. 599.

⁸ Macalister, The Philistines, p.7.

(the last-named place is not identified), cedar-ships laden with poles and masts, . . . A silver vessel of Keftiu work was part of the tribute paid to Thutmose by a certain chieftain.

Keftiu itself is not listed as having paid tribute, but a land named Asi, closely related to Keftiu, is spoken of as paying tribute; the product most prominently listed is copper. That copper is spoken of as coming from Asi proves nothing in itself, because copper may have been shipped to Asi from some other place. However, the Tell el-Armarna tablets speak of a country called Alasia as producing much copper. Since Cyprus was about the only source of copper in the Western Mediterranean, it is quite plausible to assume that Asi and Alasia both refer to the island of Cyprus. Consequently Keftiu would be a place somewhere in the vicinity of Cyprus.¹⁰

Wall paintings of the 18th dynasty in Egypt also show a procession of persons, evidently non-Semitic and European from their appearance. They wear a small loin cloth, they have their hair in a form of dress that can hardly be Semitic, and they carry vessels that are distinctive from any other type of vessels.¹¹ Cretan ornaments in the tomb of Sen-mut are clearly seen, in spite of the fact that the tomb is rather

9

Ibid.

10

Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 7-8.

11

Tombs of Sen-mut, architect to Queen Hatshepsut; of Rekhmara, vizier of Thutmose III; and of Menkheperusemef, son of Thutmose, high priest of Amon and royal treasurer. See Macalister, p. 8.

damaged. In the tomb of Rehmara, the vizier of Thutmose III, we find five rows of foreigners, bringing gifts to the Egyptians. An official is pictured receiving the gifts, while a scribe stands at the head of the line, recording the gifts that the strangers are bringing. An inscription on this tomb explains that these strangers are bringing tribute from the south country, from Punt, from Retunu, and from Keftiu. In the tomb of Menkheperuseneh there are similarly two lines of tribute-bearers; an inscription identifies the strangers as coming from Keftiu, Kheta, Tunip, and Kadesh. The inscription also explains that these chiefs are bringing to the ruler of the Two Lands various kinds of gifts. The gifts are mentioned as gold, silver, lapis lazuli, malachite, and all kinds of precious stones. Excavations in Crete have led many scholars to believe that the sources of these gifts must be the island of Crete. The pottery of this kind that is found so often in Crete, the hair dress, the costumes, and the facial lines all seem to indicate that these strangers must have come from Crete. Since the inscriptions accompanying these scenes define these strangers as messengers from Keftiu,¹² it seems very plausible to conclude that Keftiu is Crete.

The name Minos is found on some of the coins of the Philistine city Gaza. The city was called Minoa, and its¹³ god Marna has been identified with "Zeus the Crete-born".

¹²

Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 8-9.

¹³

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 15.

The Egyptian writings, therefore, indicate that Caphtor, the original home of the Philistines, is the island of Crete; but the proof is not very direct, and, as we shall see, there is much room for doubt.

Although it is impossible to cite absolute proof that Caphtor refers to only the island of Crete, one can feel reasonably certain that Caphtor does refer to some place near Crete or the environs of Crete in general. The passage in Jeremiah 47:4 has sometimes been quoted as proof that Caphtor was an island, since the word 'N is used in the original text. This word can refer to either a seacoast or an island.¹⁴ The fact that the Authorized Version translates this word "isle" apparently has confused many. If the word 'N may refer to a sea-coast or to an island, almost any territory in the vicinity of the Aegean Sea may be called an 'N, since almost all of the land is either sea-coast or island.

Some scholars believe that Caphtor is the name for a part of the coast of Southwestern Asia Minor, that the Caphtorim migrated to the eastern part of the island of Crete, and then continued southeastward with the great migration of the Sea Peoples. When the Phaestus Disk¹⁵ was first published

¹⁴
Gesenius gives the definition "terra maritima", land adjacent to the sea, sea-coast, whether on the shore of the mainland or an island. Cf. William Gesenius, Hebrew and English lexicon of the Old Testament. p. 40.

¹⁵
This is the famous disk of terra cotta found in the excavation of the Cretan palace of Phaestus, and dated to the period known as Middle Minoan III (about 1600 B.C.). It is roughly a circular tablet of terra cotta 15.8 - 16.5 cm. in diameter. Cf. Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 83-7.

it was pointed out that the most frequently recurring symbol of a man with a feathered head-dress was very similar to the head-dress of one shown by Ramses III on the walls of Medinet Habu.¹⁶ It is concluded then that this tablet was written by the Philistines or their near kindred. There is a general agreement among scholars on this point. If this disk was written in Crete, we might conclude that Caphtor was Crete; but if the disk was written in Asia Minor and then carried to Crete, as some imagine, it would follow that Caphtor refers to Asia Minor. The only valid conclusion that could be drawn from this is that the Philistines came from one of the two places - Crete or Asia Minor.¹⁷

If the Phaestus Disk does show the same head-dress as that of the Philistines, one might contend that the Philistines could not possibly be Keftians. The Minoan Keftians had long flowing hair, and the image on the Phaestus Disk is that of a shaven head.¹⁸ Garstang compares the feathered helmet with the classical allusion to the Carian crested helmet.¹⁹ The armor seems to indicate too that the Philistines were from Asia Minor. The Philistines wore body armor, while the Minoan is never pictured with any. This is not very convincing, however, especially when we see that the hieroglyphic tablets

¹⁶ George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, p. 116.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Philistines", Cambridge Ancient History, J.B.Bury, S.A.Cook, and F.E.Adcock, editors. Vol. II, p.294.

¹⁹ John Garstang, The Foundations of Bible History; Joshua and Judges, pp. 313-314.

of Cnossus show cuirasses. The Philistines carried a small round shield, like that of the Shardina, while the typical shield of the Minoan and Mycenaean was a double-bossed shield like the figure "8".²⁰ Neither did the Philistines have the rapier-like thrusting Minoan blade, but a great, cutting broadsword, also like that of the Shardina. The conclusion to be drawn from these views is that the Philistines were of Lycian-Carian origin, that they temporarily occupied eastern Crete, and then went along the Asia Minor coast as a part of²¹ the great tribal migration caused by the Phrygian invasion. Kenyon points out that one can accept this conclusion and still maintain the assumption that Keftiu is the same as Caphtor in the Bible, and that the name for Gretans on the Egyptian monuments is Keftiu.²²

It is impossible to determine definitely just what the original locality of the Philistines was. Whether it was only the island of Crete or whether it was the coast of Asia Minor cannot be made definite with the little evidence that is available. We can feel reasonably sure, however, that one of the two places is the original home.

A few other ideas concerning the origin have been offered, but none of them is accepted as having merit. Some hold the

20

The Shardina are not Keftian or Minoan, but are to be identified with the Sardinians, i.e. Sardinians on the way to Sardinia and Italy; Sardinians from Sardes in Asia Minor. Cf. Bury, op.cit. pp. 8. 282. 286.

21

Bury, op.cit. pp. 294-5.

22

Sir Frederick Kenyon, The Bible and Archaeology, p. 103.

the view that Caphtor referred to the Delta of Egypt. The Philistines probably came to their new home in Palestine from Egypt, but they were not originally from Egypt. They were just being thrown back by the power of Ramses III. No proof is given for this assumption, and for that reason it does not merit serious consideration.²³ The LXX has sometimes understood Caphtor to mean Cappadocia, but there is no ground for such an idea, unless it is the age of the LXX. It is not very plausible, however, that Caphtor could have referred to Cappadocia as far back as the 12th century B.C.²⁴ In late Ptolemaic times, Keftiu seems to refer to Phoenicia, but this meaning was taken over after the original meaning of Keftiu had been forgotten.²⁵ So, today, the probable location of Caphtor is believed to be Crete or some place in the vicinity of Crete. Further archaeological discovery will probably be the only way in which the problem will be definitely solved.

Whether the Philistines were Semitic or Indo-European is another question that has no definite answer. Breasted simply remarks that since we know nothing of their language or institutions and because we have only a series of Egyptian reliefs which depict the men, their costumes, weapons, ships, and utensils, it is useless for us to speculate as to their

²³ Macalister, "Philistines", Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, p.842.

²⁴ "Philistines" Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XVII p. 735.

²⁵ Skinner, op. cit. p. 214

26
 racial affinities. Others, however, have expressed
 opinions. It is most commonly accepted that the Philistines
 were non-Semitic. Perhaps the most often cited proof is the
 fact that the Philistines did not practice circumcision.²⁷ It
 is also thought by some that the Philistines were marked by
 distinguishing Greek features, such as facial lines, physique,
 and attire. That the Philistines are the hereditary enemies
 of the People of God is used as a further proof. The bitter
 antagonism between the Philistines and Israel is believed to
 be rooted in the fact that they were of different races, in
 spite of the fact that political and religious reasons are
 often cited as the causes.²⁸ The lords of the Philistines
 convinced the King of Gath not to let David go to battle
 with them,²⁹ and in the time of the Assyrians the people of
 Ekron deposed their lord because he was too submissive to
 Assyria. It has been stated that these incidents show an
 un-Semitic instinct for liberty. Since Samson could see
 and fall in love with his Timnathite wife, and since men
 and women mingled together at the temple of Gaza when Samson
 was killed, it is concluded that women were not so jealously
 secluded as was the custom among Hebrews.³⁰ . . .

26

Breasted, op. cit. p. 477.

27

Judges 14:3 I Sam. 14:6

28

H. McKee Adams, Ancient Records and the Bible, pp. 284-7.

29

I Sam. 29:4

30

Macalister, "Philistines", Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 843.

If it were certain that the Philistines originated from Crete, this question might be more easily solved. Crete was definitely not a part of the Semitic world. The inhabitants were among "the great mass of Aegean peoples whose antecedents are distinctly related to Hellas or Greece."³¹

Contrary to this opinion, Smith takes the Philistines to be a Semitic people. He says that they are a Semitic people with some non-Semitic institutions, habits, and words. He states that the Philistines may have abandoned the custom of circumcision when they moved westward. He also says that the names of their towns were probably due to their predecessors, the Canaanites. As proof, the claim is made that a number of their names were Semitic, and that their religion possesses³² a thoroughly Semitic form of worshipping a pair of deities. Again, the definite answer must remain obscure, unless more information is available.

Today, comparatively few distinguishing characteristics of the Philistines remain. Undoubtedly a people of their eminence had many unique features about them, but, as in the case of their origin and their racial background, the records of those distinguishing features have been lost. With the disappearance of the people we have also lost most of the knowledge of the people.

³¹

Adams, op. cit. p. 287.

³²

George Adam Smith, Historical Geogrophy of the Holy Land, p. 172.

No Philistine language is known. It is noteworthy that in the Biblical account of Samson's connections with the Philistines, no mention is made of any difficulty in understanding each other's language.³³ This is again an argument from silence, and for that reason it is not too reliable. It may have been that all men of standing in that day understood several languages. Even if an interpreter were necessary it would not be of any importance in relating the incidents.³⁴ Probably the Philistines did have their own language. When they arrived from the Aegean Islands they evidently spoke a language different from that of the Canaanites, but the language was lost. In the Old Testament, such words as Ziklag, Phicol, Sisera, Achish, Maach, Ittai, and Seren are ascribed to them.³⁵ Macalister, however, accepts only the word Seren as a word which we know to be definitely Philistine. It is the regular word in the Hebrew text for the "lords" by whom the Philistines were governed. It can reasonably be compared with the Greek *κυραυνος*, but Dr. Macalister claims that no satisfactory Indo-European etymology can be found for *κυραυνος*. But even if an Indo-European etymology could compare, one cannot determine any language relationship from one word.

33 Judges 14-16.

34 Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 45-6.

35 Adams, op. cit. p. 291.

Macalister also accepts only one Old Testament place-name as possibly coming from the Philistine language, viz. Ziklag. All others, he claims, are either Semitic or occur before the time of the Philistine settlement.³⁶ Mr. Macalister does not allow the assumption that there were Philistines in Palestine before the great settlement.

It may be that the Philistines preserved their linguistic individuality down to the time of Solomon. In the Egyptian Delta a statue of a certain Pet-aset has been found, in which he is described as an interpreter for Canaan and Philistia.³⁷

The Phaestus Disk is the one document of great importance in respect to Philistine language, but as yet it is impossible to read it. This disk has a spiral band of four coils on each side. An inscription in some form of picture-writing has been impressed on this band. One side has 119 signs, and the other has 123. Apparently they are divided into word-groups; there are 30 on one side and 31 on the opposite. These word-groups contain from two to seven characters, and on the whole disk 45 characters appear to be used. Since there are at least 45 different characters, it seems that the Philistines had a syllabary rather than an alphabet. The most frequently used character is the one of a man's head with a plumed head-dress. This has been the one character that appears identical

36

Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 79-82.

37

Ibid.

with the Philistine head-dress shown on the Medinet Habu. It appears only at the beginning of words, and so it seems to have been a determinative denoting a personal name. The disk still remains untranslated, and therefore the question whether the language of the Philistines was Indo-European or not remains unanswered.

There is a distinctive Philistine pottery. In Palestine the line between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age is marked by a distinct deterioration in pottery. At this time, there was one exception, and this pottery has come to be known as Philistine pottery. Both the time from which it comes and the territory in which it was found lead one to accept it as truly Philistine. "Its marked affinity with late Mycenaean pottery is what might be expected in the wares of the Philistines, with their northern cultural connections, nor does the fact that these types have been shown to be imitative and eclectic rather than imported controvert this view." The deep bowl with the upturned horizontal loop-handles is a prominent form of this pottery. A swan with its head turned backward over its body and with its wings plumed is also a distinctive design. Spirals and checkerboard patterns are common. Another distinctive type is the jug with a large "rhone-pipe" strainer

³⁸ Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 83-87.

³⁹ Millar Burrows, What Mean These Stones? p. 116.

spout. Cross-ridges on this clumsy spout were found. It appeared that these ridges were to catch any sand or other particles in the water. The ridges were to serve as a sort of strainer as the drinker poured the water into his mouth. Jugs of this type were found at Gezer, Gerar, Bethpelet, and other sites.⁴⁰

Knowledge about Philistine architecture is rather speculative. A certain type of architecture of that day was known, and from the narrative of Samson's death, it is concluded that Philistine architecture was of that type.⁴¹ It has puzzled some people how Samson could collapse a whole building by pulling just two pillars. Today it would appear rather odd to have a whole building rest chiefly on just two supports, but it was evidently a common fact of the 14th and 15th centuries B.C. Probably the lords were inside the building, and, as one can well imagine, the common people gathered on the roof and on adjoining roofs to watch the celebration of the lords. Roofs were flat, being made by logs placed across from wall to wall, and then covered by twigs and smoothed clay. The clay was leveled and polished by smooth stones, but it had to remain thick enough to keep out the rain. In buildings where the walls were too far apart for a log to span them, pillars had to be placed in the middle of the structure as a support. Across these pillars a beam was laid, and the roof logs were

40

J. Garrow Duncan, Digging Up Biblical History, p. 85

41

Judges 41:23-30.

then laid from the walls to this beam. Evidently the pillars supporting the beam rested on stones, so as to keep them from sinking into the ground. It is easy to imagine what might happen to such a structure if a strong man pulled the center pillars from off the stones. The whole building would collapse, and in the case of Samson's death all the people on the roof intensified the disaster. The narrative of Samson's death does fit in with archaeological discoveries then. This knowledge may be called speculative, however, because only foundations of houses can be found from such an early date as this. Rows of stone slabs on the floor of large rooms, charred wooden beams, rubbing stones, and other such indications have been found. With such an account as this one then, the architecture has been figured out to be of a nature as that just described.

The so-called House of Dagon, recently discovered in Bethshan, is built of sun-dried bricks; only fragments of walls remain. The Philistines held Bethshan at the time of the Battle of Gilboa, i.e., ca. 1100 B.C.⁴² Maybe at Gaza, the freestone of that neighborhood was used in the temple of Dagon, but the roofs were still of the kind described above.

Traces of barrel-arch roofs in houses are claimed to have been found at Bethshan dating prior to 1200, so that the arch is of greater antiquity in Palestine than we had supposed. As Bethshan was occupied by Philistines at that time, this may be attributed to their connection with Crete.⁴³

42

I Sam. 31:1.

43

J. Garrow Duncan, The Accuracy of the Old Testament, pp. 96-9

The occupations of the Philistines were different from those of their neighbors. This difference was perhaps due to the fact that both their original home and locality in which they settled were unlike the neighboring lands. Before coming to Canaan, the Philistines were a sea-going people. It is probably through their contacts with peoples of other nations that they acquired the knowledge of iron. The people of Philistia were smiths, and they controlled a monopoly over the iron industry of that day.⁴⁴

The Philistines were also farmers, sheep-raisers, and cattle-owners. The Shephelah was certainly ideal country for growing grain. In the excavation of Gerar a great number of flint and iron sickles for reaping have been found, and granaries for storing the grain have also been discovered. Gerar was one of the few great grain-growing centers of that time, and the Philistines were known to have exported grain to their home country, whichever it was. Because of their fine agricultural land, the Philistines did not welcome nomad shepherds or farmers. The Philistines possessed the best land for crops, and they did not want to risk the loss of it to any other people. For that reason we hear of men like Isaac getting into quarrels with the Philistines over pasture lands.⁴⁵ Probably the Philistines caused the trouble

44

1 Sam. 13-14.

45

Gen. 26.

just to get rid of any foreigners from their land.

Abimelech told Isaac to leave. Philistia was the ideal spot in Palestine for farmers, and the Philistines wanted to keep it as their own.⁴⁶

A few other observations may be made regarding the life of the Philistines. From the free mingling of men and women at the temple of Gaza when Samson was killed, it may be concluded that relationship between the sexes was quite different from the relationships among the Semitic peoples. It also might be noted in passing that the Philistines dealt in slave trade, because Amos curses Gaza for such trafficking.⁴⁷ But these are merely extraneous observations that cannot be further developed with the little pertinent information of today.

The Philistines probably acquired their religion from the Canaanites after they settled in Palestine. They worshipped gods called Baalzebub, Dagon, Ashtaroah. Baalzebub was the oracle at Ekron.⁴⁸ He is mentioned only once in the Old Testament and in no other place in Jewish writings. In the New Testament he is referred to as the "Prince of Devils".⁴⁹ Because he is mentioned at this late time, some think that

46

Duncan, The Accuracy of the Old Testament, pp. 48-9.

47

Amos 1:6.

48

II Kings 1:2.

49

Matt. 12:25

he was still worshipped as a god in the first century A.D. Isaiah 2:6 shows that the Philistines were soothsayers, so it is not impossible that the shrine of Baalzebub was the site of their chief oracle. The Israelite king Ahaziah consulted the oracle of Baalzebub,⁵¹ and if it is a true assumption that Baalzebub was just the chief oracle, there were perhaps more Israelites who consulted these oracles. When the Philistines took over the town of Ekron, they undoubtedly took over this shrine of Baalzebub. It has been said that at this time he was already known as the "god of the flies". It is not known whether this title was one of contempt or not. It has been stated that the title was not contemptuous, but that it was one of due respect by the Philistines. As proof for this, it has been argued that the house-flies, sand-flies, gnats, and mosquitos kept any inhabitant of that plain from becoming contemptuous toward a god of these pests. Accordingly it has been believed that Baalzebub was not known as the fly-avertter until a later date of his existence. The original concept probably was that he existed in the form of vermin.⁵² It is also possible that he gave oracles by his flies.

On the other hand, it has also been suggested that the name Baalzebub did not have the original meaning "god of flies", but that the derivation of the latter half of the

50

Harrison, op. cit. p. 103.

51

II Kings 1:2.

52

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 92.

53

word is Zabul, meaning prince. This assumption would lead to a plausible explanation. Baalzebub may have thus been named as the chief deity, but making a pun of the name, the Hebrews changed this to a name of ridicule - "god of flies".

Dagon was another Philistine god, presumably the head of the pantheon. In Gaza, Ashdod, and possibly at Bethshan⁵⁴ there were temples dedicated to his honor. Just what the meaning of Dagon was is uncertain. Some think it was a name derived from the Hebrew word $\int\lambda\overline{\int}$, meaning grain. Since the Philistine Plain was a fertile territory, suitable for grain-growing, it does seem plausible that the Philistine⁵⁵ god would be named for their word for grain. The other possible derivation of Dagon's name is the Hebrew word $\lambda\overline{\int}$, meaning fish. Connected with this was the belief that he was half man and half fish. It is said that his body was shaped like that of a fish from his waist down, since his name was similar to $\lambda\overline{\int}$, but that his body was like that of a man from his waist up because he is said to have broken his hands.⁵⁶ To prove further that Dagon was a fish-god, Marna is claimed as his consort. Marna was a fish-goddess.

53

Jack Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, p. 147.

54

Judges 16 I Sam. 5:2. I Sam. 31.

55

Burrows, What Mean These Stones? p. 228.

56

I Sam. 5:4

It was common practice of that day to worship gods in
 pairs. ⁵⁷ There is clear evidence of Dagon's presence in
 Palestine before the 12th century B.C., and the name Dagon
 appears in Mesopotamia until the ninth century. Undoubtedly
 the two are identical, but whether the Philistines brought
 another god with a similar name, or whether they just began
 to worship this god that was already in Canaan is debatable. ⁵⁸

A goddess Ashtaroth is also mentioned as one of the
 Philistine deities. ⁵⁹ This was a Semitic goddess from the
 Mesopotamian region. She is also known as Istar, the "light
 maker". At Ashkelon she is worshipped under the name Atar-
 Gatis, a goddess who was half fish; fish were sacred to her. ⁶⁰

The Bible tells us several isolated facts about Philistine
 religion. Samson was killed in the temple of Dagon. Since
 sacrifices were offered in this temple at festivals, it is
 possible that Samson was to be offered there as a sacrifice.
 It was probably an annual festival at which Samson died; we
 know that he had been kept in prison long enough for his hair
 to grow. If the occasion had been only to make sport of
 him, the Philistines would not have allowed so much time to
 pass. These sacrifices at the temple of Dagon in Gaza were
 conducted by the "lords". ⁶¹

⁵⁷ Adams, Ancient Records and the Bible, p. 290

⁵⁸ I Sam. 31:10.

⁵⁹ Adams, Ancient Records and the Bible, p. 290 f.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Judges 16:23.

There were priests at the temple in Ashdod, yet the temple must have been open to everyone, since it speaks of others beside the priests entering.⁶² Small images were worn by the Philistines in battle, and this continued until the time of the Maccabees.⁶³ News was published in the house of their idols,⁶⁴ so these houses may have been public resorts. The Philistines believed in the existence and also the "extra-territorial jurisdiction" of the Hebrew deity. This was evidenced in their treatment of the Ark.⁶⁵ Most of these assertions about the Philistine religion are nothing more than deductions. Dr. Macalister himself refers to them as "hints".⁶⁶

The only temples in existence in Palestine before the temple at Jerusalem were the Philistine temples, a temple of Baal-Barith at Shechem, and Eli's temple at Shiloh.⁶⁷

Although the Philistines had kept their identity in most spheres of life, it seems that they adopted their religion entirely from the inhabitants of Canaan.

⁶²
I Sam. 5:5.

⁶³
II Sam. 5:21, II Macc. 12:40

⁶⁴
I Sam. 31:9.

⁶⁵
I Sam. 5. 6.

⁶⁶
Macalister, The Philistines, p. 90 ff.

⁶⁷
R.A.S. Macalister, A Century of Excavation in Palestine, p. 271.

III. Migration and Settlement

It was in the beginning of the Late Minoan III period¹ that the inhabitants of the Aegean countries began to migrate eastward. From the islands and coasts of the Aegean Sea little nationalities began to scatter throughout the Eastern Mediterranean countries. Chief among these were the Thekel and the Peleset, known to us as the Philistines. These two peoples together with contingents of Danaoi, Sherden, Weshesh, and Shekelesh, made up the common group called "peoples of the Sea". The separate peoples could not be definitely assigned to any particular place, but they were westerners and could not have come from any place farther east than the Aegean Sea.²

This was the beginning of the Philistine migration. The Knossus excavations in Crete seem to indicate a forced migration from Knossus at approximately the same time the Philistines are believed to have emigrated.³ If the Philistines did come from Crete⁴ there is a possibility that the Bryges or Phrygians from Thrace, who may have crossed the Hellespont at this time,

¹ Minoan civilization was divided into three periods, called Early Minoan I,II,III, Middle Minoan I,II,III, and Late Minoan I,II,III. The early period extended from 3400 to 2100 B.C.; the Middle Period continued until about 1580 B.C., and the Late Period extended from 1580 to 1100 B.C. Cf. E.Forsdyke, "Crete" Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol.VI, 14th ed. p.679.

² Bury, Cook and Adcock, "Philistines", Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II. p. 283.

³ Adams, Ancient Records and the Bible, p. 284.

⁴ Even if one assumes that the Philistines were originally from Asia Minor, it is probably that they migrate to eastern Crete before this invasion.

forced them to emigrate.

Driven from their home, the Sea Peoples moved toward the eastern coasts of the Mediterranean.

This appears to have been a veritable folk-wandering, coming both by land and sea from the Aegean Isles and southern coasts of Asia Minor round by Cyprus and the Gulf of Issus to Phoenicia and Syria, thence down the coast, possibly to the very borders of Egypt. . . .⁶

They overran the land of the Hittites, Carchemish,⁷ Arvad, Cyprus, Syria, and other places of that region. In Syria they went as far as the upper part of the Orontes River and to the kingdom of Amor.⁸ On two-wheeled ox-carts the women and children were transported over the rough Syrian roads while the greater part of the supplies were carried by ship. It was not a military expedition, but a group of wanderers⁹ searching for homes in which to house their displaced families.

The migration of the Sea Peoples moved steadily down the Syrian coast. Little opposition was offered, so that the more venturesome of the Philistine ships occasionally swept down as far as the Egyptian Delta, "stealing into the mouth of the river on plundering expeditions." These plundering expeditions gave the Philistines common cause with the Libyans, since the Libyans had been attempting to defeat the Egyptians for several years already. An alliance was formed between

⁵ Bury, Cook and Adcock, op. cit. p. 235.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Macalister, The Philistines, p. 22.

⁸ Breasted, A History of Egypt, p. 477.

⁹ Macalister, op. cit. p. 22f.

the Libyans and the Sea Peoples, composed chiefly of the Philistines and the Zakkala seamen, and attack was made on the western shores of the rich fertile delta. A land and sea battle resulted in which the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses III emerged as the decided victor.¹⁰

Their ships were destroyed or captured, and their army beaten back with enormous losses. Over twelve thousand five hundred were slain upon the field and at least a thousand captives were taken. Of the killed a large proportion were from the ranks of the sea-rovers.¹¹

This was just an advanced initial skirmish of the battle that was to follow.

The power of the Sea Peoples was becoming more and more threatening to the Egyptians as these tribes came steadily down the coast of Syria. The war galleys that had aided the Libyans in the attack on the western Delta were just some advanced forces. Near the coasts of Syria, the Sea Peoples had a very large fleet that had not reached the southern Mediterranean as yet. On land the vast groups could not be stopped by the Syrian city-states. The curious, heavy, two-wheeled carts were kept rolling down the coasts, while the fleet along the shores swept off and diminished any power of the sea. Cyprus bowed to the might of the invincible fleet. It was obvious that the Egyptians were the only people powerful enough to give battle to these advancing tribes. After Ramses had defeated the alliance of Libyans and Sea Peoples at the western

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Ramses III reigned 1198-1167 B.C. Cf. Breasted, op.cit. p. 600.

¹¹

Breasted, op. cit. p. 478 ff.

shores of his delta, he began to arm for full war. A great conflict was threatening, and the Egyptians were not going to be caught off guard.

The Sea Peoples were on the threshold of the Egyptian Kingdom. Ramses fortified his Syrian frontiers, he hurriedly gathered a fleet, and from his palace balcony he personally supervised the arming of his infantry. Ready for war, Ramses himself led his army northward to meet the aggressors. A major war was imminent.

It is difficult to say now just where the Egyptian army and navy met the oncoming tribes. It may have been near the Egyptian border, in the Serbonian Marshes,¹² but Breasted believes that Ramses met them farther north. The battle could not have taken place any farther north than Amor, because the Philistines were known to have advanced at least this far. Not much information about the battle remains. Pharaoh's Sherden mercenaries broke through the enemy lines and plundered the ox-carts that carried the women and children. Since there were Sherden among the invading Sea Peoples also, these Egyptian mercenaries were fighting their own countrymen. Ramses managed to get to the scene of his naval battle also. The naval battle is said by Breasted to have taken place in one of the Phoenician harbors. The Egyptians massacred hundreds of the invading tribesmen. Pharaoh's fleet had been manned

12

Lake Serbonis is just east of the place where the Suez Canal now is. Cf. Bury, Cook, and Adcock, "Philistines", Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II, p. 285.

by the dreaded Egyptian archers, and large groups of archers had also been placed on the shores. Before the Sea Peoples could get their ships close enough for hand-to-hand combat aboard ships, the Egyptian archers had almost completely diminished the ranks of the invading Sea Peoples. Even Ramses himself took part in the actual combat, drawing his bow against the enemy. As the Egyptians advanced closely enough to board, the enemy ships were thrown into confusion.

Capsized and perishing in their places, their hearts are taken, their souls fly away, and their weapons are cast out upon the sea. His arrows pierce whomsoever he will among them, and he who is hit falls into the water. . . They were dragged, overturned and laid low upon the beach; slain and made heaps from stern to bow of their galleys, while all their things were cast upon the waters, for a remembrance of Egypt.

The men who escaped the fleet and swam ashore were captured by the Egyptian archers who lined the banks. ¹³ Evidently, the invaders suffered unlimited losses. "'Those who reached my boundary' says the king, "their seed is not; their heart and their soul are finished forever and ever.'" ¹⁴

In some scenes the invaders that were taken captive are pictured being paraded before the king - counted by the hands chopped off the bodies. On all the Sea Peoples Ramses then levied taxes in clothing and grain. Until this time when the Egyptians massacred the Sea Peoples, they had marched over the

¹³

Breasted, A History of Egypt, p. 477-81.

¹⁴

James Henry Breasted, Ancient Records of Egypt, Vol. IV. p.201 quoted in Macalister, The Philistines, p. 23.

northern lands without opposition. Now that the northern tribes had been left crippled by the invading Sea Peoples, Ramses continued northward after his victory and enlarged his borders to include northern Syria and the Hittite country. After the death of Ramses III in 1167, the power of Egypt waned quite rapidly. The succeeding Pharaohs were merely puppets in the hands of the Egyptian priests, and, as a result, the frontier was completely neglected. Less than a hundred years later, Egypt bowed to all the northern countries which Ramses III had conquered.

Stopped by Ramses III, the Philistines settled on the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Breasted says the Thekel and Peleset-Philistines stopped in Syria, where he supposed

15

In 1891 the Golenischeff papyrus was found at El-Khibeh in Upper Egypt. This document relates the journey of an Egyptian ambassador sent from Thebes to Northern Syria to buy timber for a sacred barge. Starting his journey with an image of Amon, letters of introduction, and the necessary money, Wen-Amon forgot the introductory letters at Tanis and was robbed on board ship to Dor. At this time Dor was occupied by the Zakkala, the tribe closely associated with the Philistines on the great migration of the Sea Peoples. King Badyra of the Zakkala was unsympathetic to Wen-Amon's plea, so the Egyptian stole money in turn at Dor and continued his journey to Byblos. Without recommendation and sufficient money, Wen-Amon was not welcomed by Zakar-Baal, prince of Byblos. After some time, however, Wen-Amon received more money from Egypt, purchased his timer at Byblos and started home. Wen-Amon's plea for respect and gifts to the Egyptian god Amon merited no more than Zakar-Baal's contempt and scorn. Before Wen-Amon got away from Byblos, Zakkala ships had sailed into the harbor and demanded retribution for the money he had stolen. Wen-Amon did finally escape, however, and he made his way to Cyprus and finally back to Egypt. It was less than 90 years before that Ramses III had subdued these tribes at Dor and Byblos, but at this time Egypt did not even receive respectable recognition. Cf. Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 29-37. For a translation of Wen-Amon's report, Cf. Barton, op. cit. part II, 352 ff.

Ramses had fought them. The immigration of these tribes is supposed to have continued even after the first great contingent was defeated. The Thekel settled and became established as a little kingdom at Dor, while the Peleset gradually forced their way against the Amorites and the Hittites into southern Palestine. Within a little more than a century these Thekel¹⁶ became assimilated into the larger mass of Philistines.

The other historians who believe that the great battle of Ramses III took place near the border of Egypt, assume that the Philistines dropped back to the southern part of the Shephelah. "Ramses was unable, or did not care, to prevent this colonization."¹⁷ Smith says that it is certain that the¹⁸ Philistines moved up the coast from Egypt. At any rate, whether they came from Syria or from the Serbonian marshes, it is known that the Philistines settled in the southern part of the Shephelah.

Deut. 2:23 speaks of the Avim being destroyed and their land taken over by the Caphtorim. Nothing more is known of these Avim, whom the Philistines destroyed.

The Philistines also forced the Danites from the¹⁹ territory originally assigned to them. Driven from the

16

Breasted, A History of Egypt, p. 512

17 Macalister, A Century of Excavation in Palestine, p. 170

18 Smith, op. cit. p. 170

19

Josh. 19:47 Judges 18.

plains, the Danites moved to the foot of Mount Hermon and settled there, where they took a Canaanite city called²⁰ Laish and renamed it Dan.

From Joshua 11:22 it is learned that a Rephaite or "Anakim" remnant was left in some of the Philistine cities. Whoever it was who had inhabited the country before the arrival of the Philistines, they offered no resistance to the invaders. The Philistines could not have picked a better part of Palestine in which to settle.

That this mass migration through Syria, the battle with Ramses, and the subsequent settlement in Palestine was the first occasion of Philistines in Palestine is improbable. The date of this mass migration and settlement is undoubtedly within the decade of 1194, but 1194 is not early enough to fit all the requirements for the first Philistine settlement in Palestine. Already in the time of Abraham, approximately 2000 B.C., a Philistine king Abimelech and his general, Phicol, are spoken²¹ of. Although Abimelech is not considered a Philistine name, Phicol certainly is.²² Abimelech is mentioned as king of the²³ Philistines again at the time of Isaac. In a song by Moses,

²⁰

Judges 18:27-29. Cf. George E. Wright and Floyd V. Filson, The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible, p. 46.

²¹

Gen. 21:32-34.

²²

Harrison, op. cit. p. 62 ff.

²³

Gen. 26:1.

the inhabitants of Palestine are spoken of; the inhabitants of Palestine were the Philistines. In the time of Israel's Exodus from Egypt, it is said that "God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines."²⁴ In Ex. 23:31 the "Sea of the Philistines" is mentioned. The land of the Philistines is mentioned as the land not conquered in the time of Joshua,²⁵ and in the book of Judges²⁶ five lords of the Philistines are said to have been left by Jehovah to prove Israel. Shamgar is also mentioned as slaying 600 Philistines with the ox-goad. It is known that this occurred about 1250 B.C.²⁷ From the Bible, then, it is evident that Philistines had arrived in Palestine long before the mass migration of 1194 B.C.

It might be mentioned in passing that some have attempted to demonstrate the occupation of Southern Palestine before Ramses by the Philistines, principally on the ground that the time between Ramses III and Samson or Saul is too short for the "semitizing". Macalister answers this argument by saying that the "semitization" was by no means complete: the rite of circumcision was still not practiced by the Philistines, and their language evidently had not been abandoned in favor of a Semitic language.²⁸ This argument can hardly be advanced on either side, since there is almost no evidence directly pertinent.

24

Ex. 13:17.

25

Josh. 13:2.

26

Judges 3:31.

27

Harrison, op. cit. p. 62-6.

28

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 39.

Excavation of certain tombs in the vicinity of Tell Fara in southern Palestine has revealed "distinctive pottery associated with Egyptian objects of the period of Ramses II." With this Philistine pottery, Canaanite pottery characteristic of the last period of the late Bronze Age was also found. The combination of these two different types of pottery are "consistent within themselves," and they "indicate a date estimated by the excavator, Sir William Flinders Petrie, at about 1240 B.C.²⁹

A photograph of the sculptures concerning the Medinet Habu of Thebes shows Ramses III's Egyptian army containing Philistine soldiers, as well as the Sherdens. Either these Philistine soldiers were captives, or they had joined the army as mercenaries before the great conflict of 1194.³⁰

Concerning the time of their first arrival, the conclusions must be that some Philistines had entered Palestine long before the mass migration of 1194.

29

Garstang, op. cit. p. 285.

30

Ibid.

IV. Rise to Supremacy

After the Philistines settled in Palestine, they rose rapidly to power. The territory which they possessed was most conducive to rapid development. It extended from the River of Egypt ¹ in the south to Nahr el-Aujah, five miles north of Joppa, in the north. ² The eastern and western boundaries were the foothills of the Judean mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. This section was the most fertile part of Palestine, with the possible exception of the Plain of Esdraelon. There are not many perennial streams in this plain, but water ³ can be found wherever one cares to dig for it. Corn and wine were produced in great amounts within the Philistine's territory. Even in times when the rest of Palestine suffered famine, ⁴ Philistia usually had its plentiful harvests. It is a known fact that the Philistines exported grain to their home country. Gerar had already been a grain-growing center from the early ⁵ date 2000 B.C.

The proximity to the Mediterranean Sea was quite an advantage, especially since the Philistines were a maritime people. Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod had harbors on the sea. Ashkelon

¹ The river of Egypt is the present Wady el-Arish. Cf. Macalister, The Philistines, p. 68.

² Adams, Biblical Backgrounds, p. 143.

³ Macalister, The Philistines, p. 78.

⁴ Macalister, The Philistines, p. 114-5.

⁵ Duncan, Digging up Biblical History, p. 142.

was on the shore, and the other two cities had small inlets on the nearby coastlines. These inlets served as adequate harbors for boats of that day.⁶

Iron was one advantage that gave the Philistines the lead over all the other peoples of Palestine. The Philistine Plain was not a mining district, but it seems that iron was imported by ship. At any rate, the Philistines had a monopoly on the iron industry.⁷ Iron was valued almost as highly as gold or silver. This was not because of its scarcity, but because of the fact that they were apparently the only people in Palestine at this time who knew the secret of the smelting process.⁸ They had learned this on their migration through the northern country. The Hittites had known the process and had closely guarded it until they became the prey of the invading Sea Peoples. When the Philistines learned the process they likewise kept it from the people of Palestine.⁹

At the time of their arrival in Palestine, cities were already founded in the southern plains. Driving out the inhabitants, they took over these cities and kept them as their own. Five cities, Gath, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron made up the Philistine Pentapolis.

6

Adams, Biblical Backgrounds, p. 143 ff.

7 I Sam. 13; 19-22.

8

Iron is spoken of already in Gen. 4:22.

9 Wright and Filson, op. cit. p.46.

Gath was apparently the principal city of the Pentapolis. It was the frontier city and consequently the first one besieged in any attack. Gaza, the most southern city was a

...site of abundant fertility on the edge of a great desert - a harbour for the wilderness and a market for the nomads. . . a natural outpost across the desert from Egypt. . . The city lies on and around a hill, which rises 100 feet above the plain at three miles' distance from the sea. Fifteen wells of fresh water burst from the sandy soil, and render possible the large population into the bazaars for their cloth, weapons, and pottery.¹⁰

11

It was also the center of slave trade.

Ashkelon was the only Philistine city actually on the coast. The command "publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon"¹² is thought by some to be an indication of bazaars. "There is a sound of trade, a clinking of shekels, about the city's very name." Ashkelon is derived from the Semitic word , to weigh, or to pay.¹³ From that the word shekel is derived also.

A small harbor was helpful to the city.

Ashdod, the city to which the ark was first taken, was a city of special importance to the Pentapolis. In Amos 3:9 it is said to have had its "palaces". It was the city that held the Philistine tradition longest. "The speech of Ashdod"

10

Smith, op. cit. p. 182.

11

Amos 1:6.

12

II Sam. 1:20.

13

Smith, op. cit. p. 192.

lasted down to the time of Nehemiah.¹⁴ Dagon's temple was also located there.¹⁵ Ashdod, a well-watered spot, was at the mouth of the broadest and most fertile wady in the Philistine Plain. It was the half way point between Gaza¹⁶ and Joppa.

Ekron was the northernmost city, the home of the Oracle Baalzebub.

The location of the Pentapolis, or the Philistine Plain, was one of the most strategic spots of the country. Through it ran the great trade route from Egypt to Damascus and to Babylon.¹⁷ Since this plain was the strategic position that led to Canaan, it was evident that the people who held this land would greatly influence their neighbors. The natural exposure to the north and south, however, created its weakness also. "It was an inviting field for conquest and so situated that no enemy could afford to leave it unsubjected. As a consequence, Philistia was continually despoiled and its people gradually reduced to various amalgams, colorless and impotent."¹⁸

The unity of the Philistines' government contributed much to their success in conquest. Each city of the Pentapolis

¹⁴ Neh. 13:24.

¹⁵ I Sam. 5.

¹⁶ Adams, Biblical Backgrounds, pp. 143-4.

¹⁷ Macalister, The Philistines, p. 78.

¹⁸ Adams, Biblical Backgrounds, p. 144.

had its lord, and the five lords acted together for the good of the entire nation. How these lords came to office is unknown. From Assyrian documents it has been learned that a series of rulers, father and son, ruled over Ashdod, but hereditary principle could hardly be proven for this. The Philistines did not have a king. It has been called periphrasis when the Bible refers to the Philistines' lords as "kings" or to one of them as a person who "holdeth the scepter".¹⁹ On the other hand, the ruler of Gath is believed to have been more powerful and influential than the other lords, merely because the Bible refers to him as מֶלֶךְ , "king" rather than the common title אֲדֹנָי , "lord".

We cannot necessarily infer that the peculiar government by a council of the lords of five cities implies that they were divided into five tribes. For though there seems to have been an actual division of the territory into districts, each of them under the hegemony of one of these cities, the limits are rather indefinite; and to judge from the scanty materials at our disposal, seem to have varied from time to time. The recurrence of the phrase, 'such a city and the borders thereof' seems to indicate a definite division of the country into provinces governed each by one of the cities; and this is confirmed by David's speech to Achish, 'Give me a place in one of the cities in the country ($\text{אֶת־אֶחַד־עָרֵי־הַבְּרָזָלִים}$) for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city ($\text{לָמָּה־אֶדְוֹלֵךְ בְּעִיר־הַמַּמְלָכָה}$) with thee?'²¹

19

I Sam. 27:2 Amos 1:8 Jer. 25:20 Zech. 9:5.

Cf. Macalister, The Philistines, p. 87 ff.

20

I Sam. 27:2. I Sam. 29:2. Cf. Macalister, The Philistines, p. 72.

21

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 88 ff.

The men of Ekron and Ashdod displayed a spirit of democracy, when they "peremptorily 'summoned' the council" to find out what the lords would advise them to do during the plague. It has already been pointed out that the people of Ekron had deposed a leader because he had been too submissive to the Assyrians; and the lords overruled the decision of Achish to take David to war as an ally.²² This democracy obviously aided the spirit of unity that existed among the Philistines. It is also quite noteworthy that the Pentapolis was fundamentally a "military confederation", as well as a cultural confederation. Through the effective use of this military confederation, the Philistines succeeded in gaining control of almost all of Palestine.²³

The Philistines' military organization was well systematized, and they also had up-to-date equipment for that day. Certain men called $\square' \eta \psi$, sarim, are mentioned as men of military authority. It was they who prevented David from joining the Philistines in the Battle of Gilboa. These officials were military captains.²⁴

The army was well organized. I Sam. 13:5 speaks of 30,000 chariots and 5,000 horsemen. Even if these numbers are only figurative of large numbers, the implications are

22

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 87 ff.

23

Adams, Ancient Records and the Bible, p. 292ff.

24

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 89.

certainly toward largeness. The "hundreds" and "thousands"²⁵ may indicate military organization into centuries.

It has been stated that the Philistines kept a monopoly on the iron industry. By doing so they controlled production of weapons. I Sam. 13:19-23 is an indication of this control. The Philistines themselves then had the advantage of "chariots of iron",²⁶ and an iron knife has actually been found in a Philistine's grave,²⁷ establishing the fact that iron was used for weapons. The same tomb revealed a bronze dagger with a bone handle. A dagger with an ivory handle was also found. The latter was found with a sheath and an attached chain to hold the sheath.²⁸ Such a dagger and sheath were worn on the upper arm. The Philistines wore "laminated body armour", like that found in the island of Crete, and they also carried small round shields.²⁹ Goliath's armor was "a bronze helmet, a bronze cuirass of scale armor (not a mail-coat as in the English translation), bronze greaves, and a bronze 'javelin', but a spear with a great shaft and a heavy head of iron." This armor is supposedly quite Homeric and very un-Semitic.³⁰

With a unified government, a well-organized military force,

²⁵
I Sam. 29:2.

²⁶
Macalister, The Philistines, p. 89.

²⁷
Joshua 17:16.

²⁸
Ibid.

²⁹
Garstang, op. cit. pp. 313-14. I Sam. 17:4 ff.

³⁰
Macalister, The Philistines, p. 119.

and a fertile and strategically located homeland, the Philistines soon conquered all of Palestine. It has been related that the Philistines pressed back the Avim who had formerly inhabited this plain. This was after the entry of Joshua and the Israelites into Canaan. Joshua conquered much of southern Palestine, but the Israelites did not succeed in holding the conquered Philistine territory.

31

In Judges 1:18 it is said that "Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Ashkelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof." The next verse then says that Judah "could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." The Israelites undoubtedly made a campaign from the southern Philistine city to the northern city, but after the campaign lost these districts because they had not fortified them. Since these Philistine cities were seized for such a short time, it can be said that they never drove out the Philistines, and that the "five lords of the Philistines were left."³² I Sam. 4:9 authenticates the assertion that the Philistines did not bow to the Israelites; the cry of the Philistines in battle was "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you. . . ."

Until the time of Samson the Israelites had still not succeeded in conquering the Philistines. The men of Judah

31

Josh. 13:2.

32

Judges 3:3.

spoke of the Philistines as being rulers over them, so that it seems that the Philistines were dominant over the Israelites for the entire period of the Judges. Samson married a Philistine wife, but after she was given to another man, he married Delilah, a woman from the Valley of Sorek. If the Valley of Sorek refers to the modern Wady es-Surar, it was partly in Israelite territory. Because the Philistines offered Delilah such a large sum of money instead of just a threat, it is concluded that she was not a Philistine. The events of Samson's life do not tell us of any power gained by the Israelites against their bitter enemies. Samson killed a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, and at the time of his death he caused the destruction of three thousand more, but the sovereignty of the Philistines was not endangered.

The length of the Philistine dominance is not known, since the length of time between Samson and Samuel is not indicated. Again in the time of Samuel, a battle broke out between the Israelites and the Philistines. The Israelites pitched at Ebenezer, while the Philistines camped at Aphek. The localities of both places are unknown, but it is assumed that Aphek was just below the River Karnak, less than ten miles from the

³³ Judges 15:11.

³⁴ Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 44-5.

³⁵ Judges 15:16.

³⁶ Judges 16:27-30.

³⁷ I Sam. 4:1.

38

Mediterranean shore. Ebenezer may have been just to the south of Aphek. Later Samuel set a monument in Ebenezer.³⁹

As this battle progressed, the Philistines advanced closer toward the Israelites. As a last recourse, the Israelites got the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh. This frightened the Philistines for a while, but they then regained their aggressiveness and captured the Ark at the same time they killed 30,000⁴⁰ of the retreating Israelites. The Ark was taken back to Ashdod and put into the temple of Dagon. After the image of Dagon had fallen twice and had broken, and when the Philistines began to suffer from the plague, they moved the Ark to Gath for a while, and then to Ekron. The plagues caused so much discomfort, however, that the Philistines sent the Ark back to the Israelites⁴¹ after seven months.

Mizpeh was the next scene of battle between the Philistines and the Israelites. While Samuel prayed to God, God sent a storm and also granted the Israelites victory over the Philistines for the first time. The Israelites pursued them as far as Beth-car, an unknown city; and at the same time the Philistines⁴² surrendered the cities Gath and Ekron. It is also said that

38

Wright and Filson, op. cit. p. 42.

39

I Sam. 7:12.

40

I Sam. 4:1-11.

41

I Sam. 5. I Sam. 6:1.

42

I Sam. 7:14.

the Philistines "came no more into the coast of Israel."⁴³ This could mean that after this battle the Philistines did not show any aggression against the Israelites, since it is quite certain that at this time the Philistines did possess all of Palestine.

In all probability they actually occupied the northern coast, the plain of Esdraelon as far as the Jordan, and even penetrated up the fertile valleys that wind through the Judean mountains. This being so it may well be that the incident here recorded was actually the last case of aggression; but that in all the other cases in which the Philistines 'came up to war' the purpose was defensive, to meet Israelite encroachments on their territory.⁴⁴

45

Another possible meaning of this text is that the battle was a decisive conflict, causing the Philistines to retreat without further attempt to retaliate at this time; that is to say that the Philistines did not come to the coasts of Israel again to continue this particular battle.

It has been stated that the Israelites' desire for a king⁴⁶ was actually due to the yoke of Philistine oppression. In I Sam. 8:1-5 the reason is stated as being the poor government of Samuel's sons. Perhaps the Israelites thought the Philistines could be overcome if the government of Israel was changed to a centralized kingdom.

After Saul had taken the throne, Israel exhibited more

43

I Sam. 7:13.

44

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 49.

45

I Sam. 7:13.

46

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 49

aggressiveness. Jonathan killed the Philistine leader of
 Geba,⁴⁷ and this resulted in the Philistines' pitching in
 Michmash for war. They had 30,000 chariots and 6,000
 cavalymen, not to mention the vast groups of infantrymen.⁴⁸
 Meanwhile, the Israelites at Gilgal began to hide wherever
 they found a place, because they feared the threatening
 Philistines. Saul at this time offered a sacrifice, thereby
 abusing the office of the priesthood. The six hundred with
 Saul seemed doomed to utter annihilation at the hands of the
 powerful Philistines. It was only by an heroic deed of
 Jonathan that the Israelites were rescued. Jonathan took his
 armor-bearer and headed for the Philistine camp at Michmash.
 When the Philistines called to them, "Come up unto us", these
 two entered the enemy camp. In some way they then succeeded
 in throwing the whole camp into a panic. A storm terrified
 the Philistines even more so that flight from the Israelites
 was the result. The Israelites had finally succeeded in
 overcoming the Philistines, but the Philistines still
 remained dominant during the reign of Saul.⁴⁹

During Saul's reign David appeared on the scene. It
 was in Ephes-dammim, between Shochoh and Azekah, that the
 Philistines were encamped, waiting for the Israelites to come

 47

I Sam. 13:3.

48

I Sam. 13:5.

49

I Sam. 13:14.

out to war. Saul was at the head of the Israelites in the Valley of Elah, but they remained in their camp. This was because everyone was afraid of the giant Goliath. This was the scene which David entered. It is well known how David killed the heavily-armed giant with a rock shot from his sling-shot, and how the Israelites then pursued the Philistines to their city Ekron.

David then asked Saul to give him his daughter Michal as his wife. Saul's hatred for David prompted him to demand the death of one hundred Philistines. When David had killed two hundred of these enemies and had received Michal, his wife, he still had to flee the king in order to save his life. David escaped to Gath, and there he feigned insanity to escape the revenge of the Philistine ruler. Because the insanity was so repulsive to him, the king of Gath did not allow David to remain in his sight. David's scheme was a success. David then escaped to Adullam, twelve miles south-west of Jerusalem, where he was safe from the angered Saul.

After a short time David returned to Gath. He gained the confidence of the king there, and his request to live in Ziklag was granted by the king. After seeing David conquer the native tribes of that locality, Achish trusted David explicitly, believing that he was entirely cut off from the

50

I Sam. 17.

51

I Sam. 18:17-27.

52

I Sam. 21:1-15. I Sam. 22:1.

Israelites. His trust in David was so great that at that time Achish would have taken David along with the Philistine army on a campaign against the Israelites, if it had not been for the other Philistines who objected to having a Hebrew in their ranks during a war with Hebrews. While living in Philistia, David undoubtedly learned much about the Philistine government, their methods and equipment for warfare, and their vulnerable spots. This knowledge helped David greatly in his conquest over the Philistines later on.

The campaign on which Achish had wanted David to go, was the one on which the Philistines killed the Israelites' king. The Philistines went north as far as Mt. Gilboa to fight. It was decisively a Philistine victory, the Israelites losing their king and his three sons in the battle. Saul had been hit by a Philistine arrow, but it was his own sword that caused his immediate death. Stripped⁵³ of his armor, his body was hung on the wall of Beth-shan. From the knowledge of this act some conclude that the Philistines possessed the entire land of Palestine. They believe that such a trophy of war would be displayed only in home territory, and since the trophy was actually displayed in this far-away spot, the conclusion drawn is that the Philistines' territory extended this far.⁵⁴ The armor of Saul was put into the temple of Ashtaroth.

⁵³
I Sam. 31.

⁵⁴
Macalister, The Philistines, p. 52.

After Saul's death, David was crowned king of Judah in the city of Hebron, while at the same time Abner made Saul's son Ishbosheth king over Israel.⁵⁵ Mahanaim, a city across the Jordan, was the capital city of the Northern Kingdom. After Abner and Ishbosheth were both assassinated, David became king of Israel also. By this time he had served as king of Judah seven and a half years,⁵⁶ during which time also the Philistines had been at the peak of their power. But during David's reign they were finally overthrown, and they never again seriously threatened the independence of Israel. Ultimately, they gradually fell into oblivion.

55

II Sam. 2.

56

II Sam. 5:1-4.

V. Decline and Disappearance

After David had been crowned king of Israel, he took the city Jerusalem and made it his capital city.¹ A little later then, in the early part of his reign, David fought the Philistines three times; he was victorious in all three battles. In the first battle, when the Philistines had come up to attack the Israelites, they were defeated at Baalperazim,² a city near Jerusalem.

After this defeat, the Philistines camped in the Valley of Rephaim and prepared for attack on the Israelites. David then routed the Philistines and pursued them from Geba to Gazer.³ The Philistines had been in the Valley of Rephaim, which is southwest of Jerusalem, and David attacked them from the rear. Being pursued from Geba westward, the Philistines must have fled northward, away from their homeland past Jerusalem to Geba and then westward through the Valley of Ajalon, which opens onto the coast-plain.⁴ With this defeat, the Philistines' second attempt had been thus thwarted.

The third battle in the early part of David's reign was the breaking point of the Philistine power. All that is

¹ II Sam. 5:6-10.

² II Sam. 5:17-21. I Chron. 14:8-12.

³ II Sam. 5:22-25. I Chron. 18:1.

⁴ Macalister, The Philistines, p. 58ff.

known about it is the fact that David attacked the Philistines on their native soil, taking their chief city, Gath. It is true that Judah and Israel were now united under the reign of David and therefore much stronger, but the rapidity with which the Philistines collapsed into oblivion is quite remarkable. One explanation has been that Philistia underwent an attack by the Egyptian Pharaoh Sheshonk. As proof it is suggested that no Philistine city is mentioned in the account of Sheshonk's⁵ raids because Philistia was already in the hands of the Egyptians. This could not be regarded much more highly than pure speculation, however. Whatever the cause is, the swiftness with which the Philistines pass from history is rather⁶ mysterious.

In the later years of David's reign, when Absalom and Sheba revolted,⁷ the Philistines surely would have taken advantage of David's weakness, had they not lost all their power by that time. But instead of their revolting, they⁸ made up a part of David's bodyguard. David probably organized this bodyguard when he had lived in the Philistine city Ziklag.

One reason for the weakening of the Philistine power is said to be the fact that the Philistines were accustomed

⑤ II Chron. 12.

⑥ Ibid.

⑦ II Sam. 15. II Sam. 20.

⑧ II Sam. 15:18, 20:7, 20:23. I Chron. 18:19.

to a cool maritime climate, and for that reason they could not remain as healthy in the hot plains of Canaan. "The climate of the country guards it for its Semitic heirs."⁹

The number of times the Philistines are mentioned in the books of the Bible show how the Philistines wane in importance. They are mentioned 125 times in I Samuel; 24 times in II Samuel, some of which are merely reminiscences; and 6¹⁰ times in I and II Kings.

After David's reign there are just a few isolated remarks by which the Philistines can be traced. The remarks do little more than mention them, however, so nothing definite is really known about them during this time. At the beginning¹¹ of Solomon's reign Achish was still King of Gath, and the plain along the coast was still outside the territory of the Israelites. Gezer was given to Solomon's wife at the time¹² of their marriage. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam I, king of Israel, besieged a Philistine city called Gibbethon,¹³ but in a short time Baasha conspired against him and killed him there. Less than sixty years later, Ahaziah, king of Israel, sent a messenger to the Oracle of Ekron to see whether he would¹⁴ recover from his sickness. The Philistines brought presents

⁹ Macalister, The Philistines, p. 61.

¹⁰ Macalister, The Philistines, p. 62.

¹¹ I Kings 2:29-40.

¹² I Kings 9:16.

¹³ Nadab reigned in Israel ca. 910 B.C.

¹⁴ II Kings 12:2.

of silver to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah at this same time.

In the middle of the 8th century B.C., Ussiah broke down the walls of Gath, Ashdod, and Jabneh.¹⁶ It has been suggested that these walls had already been weakened by Hazael of Syria.¹⁷ After this, Gath is not mentioned as belonging to the Philistines, because it was reckoned as a city of Judah. It was a border city and for that reason was the first city taken in any siege.¹⁸

In the time of Ahaz, the king of Judah, in the 8th century B.C., the Philistines attacked the Israelites right after the Israelites had been weakened by an Edomite raid. The Philistines captured such cities as Beth-shemesh, Ajalon, Gederoth, Shocho, Timnah, and Gimzo;¹⁹ but shortly after this Hezekiah reconquered the land of Philistia as far as Gaza.²⁰

The Assyrian records give some information about the decline of the Philistine power. Hadad-Nirari III²¹ states that he had taken Philistia with other Palestinian states about 803 B.C. In 734 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III²² made a

15

II Chron. 17:11.

16

II Chron. 26:6.

17

II Kings 12:17. Cf. Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 62-3.

18

Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 72-3.

19

II Chron. 28:18.

20

II Kings 18:8.

21

Hadad Nirari ruled 812-783 B.C.

22

Tiglath-Pileser III ruled 745-727 B.C.

planned attack on Gaza, because that city had allied with the Syrian league: Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Samaria. In 713, when Azuri, king of Ashdod, refused to pay tribute to Assyria, Sargon²³ came down and replaced Azuri with his brother.²⁴ Sennacherib displaced a conspirator from the Philistines' throne, crowning Sarludari in his place. He also took the cities Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Bene-Berak, and Azuri at this time. This was the time when the inhabitants of Ekron rebelled against their king Padi because of his submissive loyalty to the Assyrians. Although they had had assurance from North Arabia and Egypt, the Philistines were defeated by Sennacherib in El-Tekeh. Again in the reign of Ashurbanipal²⁵ Philistine kings are listed among those kings²⁶ who were subject to the Assyrians.

Down to the time of Nehemiah, the Philistines' city Ashdod retained enough of its linguistic difference to be recognized as a foreign element among the Israelites.²⁷ This was not earlier than the 5th century B.C. Some have supposed that "the speech of Ashdod" was the speech of Sennacherib's colonists, but Nehemiah would have known this language well

²³ Sargon ruled 722-705 B.C.

²⁴ Cf. Is. 20:1.

²⁵ Ashurbanipal ruled 668-626 B.C.

²⁶ Macalister, The Philistines, pp. 64-6.

²⁷ Neh. 13:24.

enough to have described it more definitely.²⁸

In the time of the Maccabees the temple of Ashdod was still spoken of. It was destroyed by Jonathan

²⁹
Maccabees.

The absorption of Philistia in the ocean of Semitic humanity is so complete that its people ceases to have an independent history. It were profitless to trace the story of Philistia further, through the campaign of Alexander, the wars of the Maccabees and the Seleucids, the Roman domination, and the complex later developments: the record is no longer the history of a people; it is that of a country.

Nevertheless, the tradition of the Philistines still lives, and will continue to live so long as the land which they dominated three thousand years ago continues to be called 'Palestine', and so long as its peasant parents continue to tell their children their tales of the Fenish. . . There can be no doubt that this people of tradition, supposed to have wrought strange and wonderful deeds in the land, to have hewn out its great artificial caves and built its castles and even landscapes - that this people is none other than the mighty nations of the Philistines.³⁰

28

Macalister, The Philistines, p. 66-7.

29

I Macc. 10:83-84; 11:4

30

Macalister, The Philistines, p.67.

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