

# PHILISTINES\*

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The Philistines are well known to readers of the Bible as adversaries of Israel during the days of the judges and the early monarchy. Archaeology has provided additional insights, through literary (especially Egyptian) texts, as well as material remains. The picture that has emerged, particularly in recent scholarship, is one of a mixed group, which was composed of peoples with different origins, and whose material culture incorporated many different influences.

## **1. Name**

The term "Philistine" (as well as "Palestine") comes from the Hebrew p\*liʕtî(m), which occurs 288 times in the OT; the term "Philistia" (p\*leʕet) occurs eight times. p\*liʕtî(m) usually is rendered as allophuloi ("strangers, foreigners") in the Greek versions, and less frequently as phulistiim; it is found in Egyptian sources as prst ("Peleset") and in Assyrian sources as pilisti and palastu. Its original derivation or meaning is unknown. In modern English, "philistine" has come to mean "boorish" or "uncultured," in an exaggerated extrapolation from the biblical presentation of the Philistines.

## **2. Origins**

A. Biblical Evidence. The Philistines first appear on the world stage in texts from the Bible, which place them in Canaan sometime around the end of the third millennium B.C. or the beginning of the second millennium B.C. The book of Genesis tells of several encounters they had with the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham and Isaac at Gerar (see below).

The Philistines appear to have come to Canaan from the islands and coastlands of the Aegean Sea, including the island of Crete, according to the Bible. In Ezek. 25:15-16 and Zeph. 2:4-5, the term "Cherethites" (i.e., Cretans)<sup>1</sup> occurs in poetic parallel with "Philistines." The Philistines are specifically associated with "Caphtor" in Jer. 47:4 and Amos 9:7, a term that occurs in cuneiform documents in several languages as Kaptara, and in Egyptian texts as Keftiu, and which can be identified with Crete or its environs.<sup>2</sup> That Caphtorites are to be identified closely with Cherethites is also indicated by Deut. 2:23, which mentions the former settling in the areas south of Gaza, the same region that the latter occupied in David's day (1 Sam. 30:14).

Amos 9:7 speaks of YHWH's bringing up the Philistines out of Caphtor in the same way that he brought the Israelites out of Egypt. This raises the possibility that Caphtor may not have been the Philistines' ultimate place of origin, since Egypt was not the place of the Israelites' ultimate origin either. This fits with the datum in Gen. 10:13-14, which has the Philistines originating from the Egyptians, through the "Casluhites." The little-known Casluhites may have been the Philistines' progenitors before the Philistines went to Caphtor, and the reference to their origin from Egypt may reflect the fact that their

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<sup>1</sup>. On the Cherethite=Cretan equation, see K. A. Kitchen, "The Philistines," in D. J. Wiseman, ed., Peoples of Old Testament Times (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 56 and n. 15.

<sup>2</sup>. On the Caphtor=Crete identification, see Kitchen, "Philistines," 54, 56; F. W. Bush, "Caphtor," ISBE, 1, 610-11; R. S. Hess, "Caphtor," in D. N. Freedman, ed., Anchor Bible Dictionary (Garden City: Doubleday, 1992), I, 869-70; G. A. Rendsburg, "Gen 10:13-14: An Authentic Hebrew Tradition Concerning the Origin of the Philistines," JNWSL 13 (1987), 90, n. 3. That the term "Caphtor" may be broader than just one island is suggested by, among other evidence, the Greek of Jer. 47:4 (Gk: Jer 29:4), which reads "the islands" for MT "the island of Caphtor."

progeny were later settled in Canaan by the Egyptians under Ramses III, or else that they went to Caphtor from Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

However, we should note that Genesis 10 links the Philistines with various Hamitic peoples, including Canaanites (10:6-20), and not the Indo-European sons of Japheth from the coastlands or islands (10:2-5). This suggests that the "Philistines" actually were an amalgamation of several different peoples, and that the Philistines descended from the Casluhites were different from those who came from Caphtor.<sup>4</sup>

B. Extra-biblical Evidence (Egyptian). Outside of the Bible, the Philistines are first mentioned by the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses III (1184-1153 B.C.),<sup>5</sup> in connection with great land and sea battles between the Egyptians and people they called "the peoples of the sea" in his eighth year (1176 B.C.). Among these "Sea Peoples" was a group known as the "Peleset," whom most scholars identify with the biblical Philistines.

The Sea Peoples as a group first appear a few years earlier, in the fifth year of the pharaoh Merneptah (1208 B.C.), as allies of a powerful group of Libyans who opposed

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<sup>3</sup>. On the latter, see Rendsburg, "Gen 10:13-14," 89-96.

<sup>4</sup>. J. F. Brug, A Literary and Archaeological Study of the Philistines, BAR International Series 265 (Oxford: B.A.R., 1985), 10-15, 46-50, and passim. See also R. K. Harrison, "Philistine Origins: A Reappraisal," in L. Eslinger and G. Taylor, eds., Ascribe to the Lord (P. C. Craigie volume), JSOTSup 67 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 11-19, for a similar suggestion.

[0]<sup>5</sup>. The Egyptian dates used here are the "low" dates laid out by K. A. Kitchen in "The Basics of Egyptian Chronology in Relation to the Bronze Age," in P. Åström, ed., High, Middle or Low? Part I (Gothenburg: Paul Åströms, 1987), 37-55; Part III (1989), 152-59. There is near unanimity now among Egyptologists concerning a low dating scheme, particularly after the accession of Ramses II (1279 B.C.); cf. the other papers in these symposium volumes.

the Egyptian king.<sup>6</sup> Five groups of Sea Peoples are mentioned: the Sherden and the Lukka, both previously known, and the Ekwesh, the Teresh, and the Shekelesh, all previously unknown. They were foreign to northern Africa, and they appear to have been called "Sea Peoples" because many of them came to the eastern Mediterranean by sea and because they seem to have come from island or coastal areas in the Aegean or Anatolia (i.e., Asia Minor).<sup>7</sup> These (and other) peoples also are called "northerners coming from all lands" and foreigners from the "islands" in Egyptian texts.<sup>8</sup>

The Philistines themselves do not appear until the events of Ramses' eighth year (1176 B.C.). At the beginning of the twelfth century B.C., the entire eastern Mediterranean basin was being shaken to its foundations: large-scale migrations were taking place here and to the west as a result of disturbances throughout the Aegean and the Mediterranean shortly after 1200 B.C. It is not clear exactly what the initial cause of the unrest and dislocation was; indeed, there probably was no single cause at all. However, evidence from Italy, Greece, the Aegean islands, Asia Minor, northern Syria, Canaan proper, Cyprus, and Egypt all indicates that empires were threatened from within and without, economies were collapsing, societies were breaking apart, political stability

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<sup>6</sup> J. H. Breasted, Ancient Records of Egypt (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962 reprint of 1906 original), III, §§ 569-617; J. A. Wilson, in ANET3, 376-78.

<sup>7</sup> R. D. Barnett, "The Sea Peoples," CAH II.2, 360-69; N. K. Sandars, The Sea Peoples (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 105-15, 198-201.

<sup>8</sup> Breasted, Ancient Records, III, § 574; IV, §§ 64, 75.

was non-existent, and even natural disasters were contributing to the general collapse of civilizations.<sup>9</sup>

The resultant chaos sent many peoples migrating in search of new homelands. Some retreated from urban centers into hills and desert fringe areas, and some set out on longer migrations.<sup>10</sup> The Sea Peoples were part of the great upheavals, but by no means were they the primary cause of the unrest. For example, we see in the picture reliefs of Ramses III from Medinet Habu that slow-moving ox-carts, women, and children, traveled alongside the warriors and chariots.<sup>11</sup> Since women, children, and ox-carts did not normally go along into battle in the ancient Near East, it may have been that the warriors

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<sup>9</sup>. See V. R. D. Desborough, The Last Mycenaeans and Their Successors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964); [no editor] The Mycenaeans in the Eastern Mediterranean (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 1972); Barnett, "Sea Peoples," 359-71; F. H. Stubbings, "The Recession of Mycenaean Civilization," CAH II.2, 338-58; W. H. Stiebing, "The End of the Mycenaean Age," BA 43 (1980), 7-21; G. E. Mendenhall, "The 'Sea Peoples' in Palestine," in The Tenth Generation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1973), 142-73; Sandars, Sea Peoples, *passim*; V. Karageorghis, "Exploring Philistine Origins on the Island of Cyprus," BAR 10.2 (1984), 16-28; R. L. Gorny, "Environment, Archaeology, and History in Hittite Anatolia," BA 52 (1989), 78-96; T. Dothan, "The Arrival of the Sea Peoples," in S. Gitin and W. G. Dever, eds., Recent Excavations in Israel, AASOR 49 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 1-14.

<sup>10</sup>. On the Sea Peoples' migrations, see L. E. Stager, "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," BAR 17.2 (1991), 24-43, esp. 35 and n. 9. Stager argues forcefully for seeing Aegean, specifically Mycenaean, origins for the Sea Peoples, including the Philistines.

<sup>11</sup>. The plates of Ramses III's reliefs were published in H. H. Nelson, Medinet Habu, vols. I-II (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1930-32); for convenient sketches and discussion of the land and sea battles, see Y. Yadin, The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), II, 248-51, 336-43; T. Dothan, The Philistines and Their Material Culture (New Haven: Yale University, 1982), 5-13.

were migrating in search of new lands in which to settle, taking their families along with them, and that they were surprised by the Egyptians in their camps or on the march.<sup>12</sup>

Alternatively, some Sea Peoples may have already been resident in Palestine long enough to have established house-holds of their own there. Or, it may have been that there was a warrior class and confederation that merely happened to travel among migrating peoples, but with no real relationship to them.<sup>13</sup>

In Ramses' eighth year, the great land and sea battles took place between the Sea Peoples and the Egyptians in southwestern Canaan and the Nile Delta. The Sea Peoples coalition was composed of the "Peleset, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denyen and Weshesh," according to Ramses, and it also included the Sherden.<sup>14</sup> The Shekelesh and Sherden had been among the earlier adversaries of Egypt (the mercenary Sherden had appeared as allies, as well!), but the other four are new names. Very little is known of the Tjeker and the Weshesh, more of the Denyen and the Peleset.<sup>15</sup> As noted above, most scholars identify the Peleset with the biblical Philistines, mainly because of the linguistic similarities in their names and because the Peleset of the Egyptian texts settled in the areas in which the biblical Philistines were later found. We should note, however, that

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<sup>12</sup>. So Sandars, Sea Peoples, 120-21.

<sup>13</sup>. G. E. Mendenhall, "Cultural History and the Philistine Problem," in L. T. Geraty and L. G. Herr, eds., The Archaeology of Jordan and Other Studies (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1986), 542, 544. See also the evidence below that some of the Sea Peoples, at least, were mercenaries.

<sup>14</sup>. Breasted, Ancient Records, IV, §§ 59-82, esp. §§ 64 and 403; W. F. Edgerton and J. A. Wilson, Historical Records of Ramses III (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1936), 53; Wilson, ANET3, 262-63.

<sup>15</sup> For brief discussions, see Sandars, Sea Peoples, 158, 170 on the Tjeker; 158, 163, 201 on the Weshesh; 161-64 on the Denyen; and 164-70 on the Peleset.

the Peleset are never specifically associated with the "islands" or the "sea," as some other Sea Peoples are; in the Bible, the Philistines are not a sea-faring people, either. Indeed, there is evidence that some of the Sea Peoples may not have come from far-distant lands at all.<sup>16</sup>

The land battle apparently came first. The Sea Peoples had come by land and by sea from the north into southwestern Canaan, where their presence threatened Egyptian interests. The accounts of Egyptian preparations for this battle describe the Sea Peoples as having overwhelmed successive cities in Asia Minor and then Cyprus, heading east and then south, toward Egypt.<sup>17</sup> Ramses met them at the Egyptian frontier. The battle was fierce, but Ramses claimed total victory.<sup>18</sup> The dramatic relief of the battle shows a frenzied tangle of warriors and chariots, dead and dying Sea Peoples, and women and children in ox-carts.

The sea battle apparently came after the land battle, against the same groups. It appears to have taken place in the Nile Delta itself and here, too, Ramses claimed a great victory.<sup>19</sup> The relief showing this battle is as chaotic as that showing the land battle: it depicts four Egyptian ships overwhelming five enemy ships, one of which has capsized, also in a furious jumble of ships, warriors, weapons, and prisoners.

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<sup>16</sup>. Brug, Philistines, 18-20.

<sup>17</sup>. Breasted, Ancient Records, IV, §§ 64-66; Edgerton and Wilson, Historical Records of Ramses III, 53-56; Wilson, ANET3, 262-63.

<sup>18</sup>. Breasted, Ancient Records, IV, §§ 66-68; Edgerton and Wilson, Historical Records of Ramses III, 38-39, 55-58.

<sup>19</sup>. Edgerton and Wilson, Historical Records of Ramses III, 41-43.

Ramses boasted of these and other conquests in several texts, and mentioned the Peleset among the other Sea Peoples that he overwhelmed, although he undoubtedly exaggerated here and elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> Eventually he allowed the Peleset, along with other groups, to settle in southwestern Canaan, which was precisely the area in which the biblical Philistines were to be found in the following years.<sup>21</sup>

C. Extra-biblical Evidence (Other). Cuneiform and other Semitic documents provide some limited, general information concerning various Sea Peoples.<sup>22</sup> Worthy of note here is a reference to Shikels (i.e., Shekelesh, or, possibly, Tjekker) in an Ugaritic text, which indicates that they were mercenaries "who live in ships" and who were allied with Ugarit, as well as references in the Amarna letters to Sherden and others who also appear as mercenaries in Canaan.<sup>23</sup> All of these are earlier than Ramses III's time.

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<sup>20</sup>. Breasted, Ancient Records, IV, §§ 44, 403; Edgerton and Wilson, Historical Records of Ramses III, 30-31, 47, 48. On Ramses' historical accuracy, see Barnett, "Sea Peoples," 378; Brug, Philistines, 27-28 and n. 84; B. Cifola, "Ramses and the Sea Peoples," Orientalia 57 (1988), 275-306.

<sup>21</sup>. Breasted, Ancient Records, IV, §410. In other Egyptian texts, Sherden, Tjekker, and Peleset are found in southwestern Canaan after Ramses III, as well (Kitchen, "Philistines," 57 and n. 28); cf. also n. below. B. G. Wood argues that the Philistines settled in southwestern Canaan as conquerors, not as vassals ("The Philistines Enter Canaan: Were They Egyptian Lackeys or Invading Conquerors?" BAR 17.6 [1991], 44-52, 89-90, 92).

<sup>22</sup>. See Brug, Philistines, 29-37. On Greek sources and the Philistine=Pelasgian problem, see pp. 40-43, and Kitchen, "Philistines," 56 and nn. 18-19.

<sup>23</sup>. See Brug, Philistines, 30-33; I. Singer, "The Origin of the Sea Peoples and their Settlement on the Coast of Canaan," in M. Heltzer and E. Lipinski, eds., Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1500-1000 B.C.) (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1988), 239-50.

D. Biblical and Extra-biblical Evidence Compared. The evidence for Philistine origins is complex. Ultimately, it points to different peoples from different times, all of whom came to be called "Philistines."

Biblical and extra-biblical data concur in assigning some of the Philistines' origins to coastal areas or islands in and around the Aegean Sea, although neither set of data is very specific. The extra-biblical data also point to the eastern Mediterranean.

The two sets of data diverge somewhat concerning the dates that Philistines entered Canaan. According to the Bible, some Philistines already were resident in Canaan at the beginning of the second millennium B.C., while the most of the Egyptian evidence places their entry near the end of that millennium. Accordingly, many scholars dismiss the Genesis evidence as anachronistic or erroneous in some way.<sup>24</sup> However, other alternatives do present themselves (see below). As we have seen, some Egyptian, as well as Semitic, evidence does place some Sea Peoples (if not Philistines per se) in Canaan prior to the twelfth century B.C.

The data also present divergent glimpses of Philistine life and culture. For example, the early biblical Philistines were centered in and around Gerar, under a "king," and were not organized into a pentapolis, as later (see below). And, they were relatively peaceful, in contrast to the Philistines of the Egyptian or later biblical texts. Their names in Genesis are a combination of Semitic names (Abi-melek and Ahuzzath) and non-Semitic ones (Phicol) (see esp. Gen. 26:26); this may reflect the mixed nature of the group.

Were these earlier and later groups of Philistines related to each other?  
Theoretically, the early ones could have been the direct progenitors of all of the later

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<sup>24</sup>. E.g., R. A. S. Macalister, The Philistines: Their History and Civilization (London: Oxford University, 1913), 39; J. A. van Seters, Abraham in History and Tradition (New Haven: Yale University, 1975), 52-54. Cf. Dothan, Philistines, 15, n. 52.

ones. This seems unlikely, however, given what we know about the entry of later ones into Canaan. However, earlier and later Philistines may very well have traced at least some of their roots back to Aegean or Anatolian groups. Aegean and Anatolian contacts with the eastern Mediterranean are known from at least the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000-1550 B.C.), and contacts such as the Hebrew patriarchs had are not at all unreasonable to imagine.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, it is very possible that the biblical term "Philistine" encompassed more groups from overseas than just the Peleset of the Egyptian texts, and it may very well have included Canaanite groups, as well.<sup>26</sup> The fact that in the Bible they were called "Philistines" (i.e., Peleset) simply may reflect the political dominance of the Peleset among those who did settle in Canaan. Indeed, excavations in southwestern Canaan are revealing hints of the presence of other peoples besides the Peleset/Philistines, such as the Tjekker at Dor and the Sherden at Akko.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the Philistines in Genesis and those in the later biblical texts may not have been related at all genetically.<sup>28</sup> Their common features may merely have been common origins in remote island or coastal areas to the north and west, and the fact that they both

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<sup>25</sup>. Kitchen, "Philistines," 56-57.

<sup>26</sup>. Kitchen, "Philistines," 57; Dothan, Philistines, 25; Brug, Philistines, 46-50 and passim; Harrison, "Philistine Origins."

[0]<sup>27</sup>. A. Raban, "The Harbor of the Sea Peoples at Dor," BA 50 (1987), 118-26; M. Dothan, "Archaeological Evidence for Movements of the Early 'Sea Peoples' in Canaan," in Gitin and Dever, eds., Recent Excavations in Israel, 59-70.

<sup>28</sup>. Although genetic connections between some should not be ruled out completely.

were to be found in southwestern Canaan, in a region that received its name from a dominant later group, or perhaps even from an early substratum of the population.<sup>29</sup>

### **3. History.**

The most complete written records about the Philistines come from the Bible, where they usually appear as adversaries of Israel. No clearly Philistine writings survive, and other extra-biblical references to them are random and incidental.

A. Early Philistines. Abraham and his son Isaac had several encounters with Philistines (Gen. 20:1-18; 21:22-34; 26:1-33). On different occasions in Philistine territory at Gerar, each one tried to pass off his wife as his sister, for fear that the Philistine king would take her for himself.<sup>30</sup> Instead, in each case the Philistine king acted honorably, the Hebrew patriarch appeared somewhat foolish, and the outcome of each incident was amicable. Conflicts later arose between both patriarchs and the Philistines concerning water rights, but these too were resolved.

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<sup>29</sup>. That is, the term "Philistine" may have come from the Egyptian prst ("Peleset") and may have been applied inclusively (if somewhat anachronistically) to earlier groups, or else the term "Philistine" existed in Canaan early, and the later Peleset and Philistines somehow became associated with it. See Brug, Philistines, 15, 46-50; Harrison, "Philistine Origins."

<sup>30</sup>. Critical scholars usually see the episodes in Genesis 20 and 26 as variants of one event: see, e.g., E. A. Speiser, Genesis (AB 1; Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 150-52, 203-4; C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36 (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 423-24. The assumption here is that they are each separate events, written about in such a way as to maximize the similarities between the stories; see also J. H. Sailhamer, Genesis (EBC 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 185-89. In either case, however, the information garnered about Philistines is essentially the same.

B. Philistines and the Israelite Judges. During the period ca. 1150-1000 B.C.,<sup>31</sup> the Philistines were Israel's major adversaries. The "five lords of the Philistines" were among those nations that YHWH left to "test" Israel (Judg. 2:6-3:5). Shamgar was a judge who killed 600 of them with an oxgoad (Judg. 3:31). The Philistines were among the pagan nations to whose gods the Israelites turned, to whom YHWH sold them, and from whom he delivered them (10:6, 7, 11).

Their major conflict with Israel came against Samson, around the beginning of the 11th century B.C. Despite Samson's less-than-exemplary character, YHWH used him for his own purposes against the Philistines, who were "ruling over" Israel at that time (Judg. 13:5; 14:4). Samson's exploits fall into two segments (14:1-15:20 and 16:1-31), each built around a cycle of offense and retaliation and climaxing with a mass destruction of Philistines.

Despite their setbacks at the hands of Samson, the Philistines soon were engaged in oppressing Israel again. By the middle of the 11th century, we see them holding a decided military superiority over Israel that lasted for decades. Among other things, they maintained control of metalworking and weapons (1 Sam. 13:19-21).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>. The date of 1150 B.C. here reflects the lowering of the dates for Ramses III (see n. ) and Mazar's judgments concerning the dates for the appearance of actual Philistine material remains (A. Mazar, "The Emergence of the Philistine Material Culture," IEJ 35 [1985], 95-107; "Some Aspects of the 'Sea Peoples' Settlement," in Heltzer and Lipinski, eds., Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean, 251-60).

<sup>32</sup>. This does not mean that the Philistines introduced iron to the Near East, nor that iron was exclusive to Philistia ca. 1150-1000 B.C., but rather that they -- and not the Israelites -- controlled metalworking technology and finished metal products during this period. See J. D. Muhly, "How Iron Technology Changed the Ancient World," BAR 8.6 (1982), 40-54; Dothan, Philistines, 20, 91-93; Brug, Philistines, 165-68.

The first of the recorded struggles with Israel after Samson took place between Aphek and Ebenezer, in the northeastern portion of Philistine territory, and it was a fateful encounter, since the Israelites were defeated and the ark captured (1 Samuel 4). The ark's presence among the Philistines had a deadly effect upon them, so, in response, they returned the ark to the Israelites on the advice of their priests and diviners (1 Samuel 5-6). The Philistines appear to have been aware of the reputation of Israel's God, since they referred to his victory in the Exodus over the Egyptians (6:6), and to the "gods" who had struck the Egyptians with the plagues (4:8).

The last Israelite judge, Samuel, led the nation in repelling another Philistine incursion near Mizpah (1 Sam. 7:7-11). After a stunning victory, the land was pacified and Israel recovered the cities and territory that the Philistines had taken.

C. Philistines and the Israelite Kings. The next recorded Philistine-Israelite conflict came after Israel had asked for and received a king (1 Samuel 13-14). Saul's son Jonathan initially defeated a Philistine garrison at Geba, near his hometown of Gibeah (13:2-4). The Philistines then amassed a large, well-equipped, and well-organized army to oppose Israel, but they were routed in the ensuing battle at the pass at Michmash (14:13-23).

After this, Saul had continuing conflicts with Philistines all the days of his tenure as king (1 Sam. 14:52). Israel was not to be free from them until David arose as its deliverer.

David's first encounter with Philistines was with Goliath, the Philistine champion who challenged Israel to a one-on-one duel in the Elah valley west of Bethlehem (1

Samuel 17). He killed Goliath,<sup>33</sup> and the Philistines were routed, retreating toward their cities of Gath and Ekron.

David's fortunes rose in Israel as a result, and he had continuing success against the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:20-30; 19:8). They continued for many years as a threat, however. David saved Keilah from a Philistine attack (23:1-5), and Saul later fought them when they made a raid on Israelite territory (23:27-28). David twice fled to Philistine territory to escape Saul (21:10-15; chaps. 27, 29). Saul died at the hands of the Philistines (1 Samuel 31), and they desecrated his body: his head was cut off, his body exposed upon the wall of Beth-Shan, and his armor hung in the temple of the goddess Ashtoreth (31:8-10).

David then continued the struggle against the Philistines. After he consolidated his power and took Jerusalem from the Jebusites, the Philistines came against him, perceiving him to be a threat. He defeated them in two separate encounters in the Rephaim valley, just west of Jerusalem and Bethlehem (2 Sam. 5:17-25). In what likely were later encounters, he succeeded in almost completely subjugating them, taking much of their territory (2 Sam. 8:1, 12). Later, he and his mighty men defeated them again -- along with four of their giants -- in several encounters (2 Sam. 21:15, 18-22).

David used mercenaries from among the Cherethites (i.e., Philistines or a group closely allied with them [see above]) and the Pelethites, and from a Philistine city, Gath (2 Sam. 15:18). Even one of his loyal commanders was from Gath (15:19-22). The list of David's heroes attests to the continuing struggles with the Philistines over his entire lifetime (2 Sam. 23:9-16).

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<sup>33</sup>. 2 Sam. 21:19 states that "Elhanan" killed Goliath. See C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975 reprint), 465-66 for a solution to this problem.

Despite their survival in later centuries, David effectively eliminated the Philistine threat. The five-city coalition was broken: later appearances of Philistine cities show them isolated and on their own. We see them as adversaries of Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18:8), Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 17:11), Jehoram (2 Chr. 21:16-17), Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:6-7), and Ahaz (2 Chr. 28:18). They appear occasionally in the records of Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings who invaded Canaan,<sup>34</sup> but they never figured again as a significant political or military force.

#### **4. Society and Culture**

When the Philistines of the Late Bronze Age entered southwestern Canaan some time after 1200 B.C., they brought with them several distinctives, some of which their neighbors adopted. They quickly borrowed from and adapted to their surroundings, as well. We never see Philistine society and culture as purely foreign (i.e., Aegean), but always as a mixture of various foreign and local Canaanite influences.

A. The Philistines as Warriors. The Bible provides some glimpses of Philistine military capacities. For example, we have a detailed description of Goliath's battle gear (1 Sam. 17:5-7):

<5> He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; <6> on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. <7> His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went before him. (NIV)

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<sup>34</sup>. See H. Tadmor, "Philistia Under Assyrian Rule," BA 29 (1966), 86-102; N. Na'aman and R. Zadok, "Sargon II's Deportations to Israel and Philistia," JCS 40 (1988), 36-46; H. J. Katzenstein, "Philistines (History)," in D. N. Freedman, ed., Anchor Bible Dictionary (Garden City: Doubleday, 1992), V, 326-28.

Goliath's spear, helmet, coat of mail, and particularly his leg greaves were typical of those of Aegean warriors.<sup>35</sup> His spear was "like a weaver's rod"; this probably refers not to its size, but rather the fact that a leash of cord would have been wrapped around the spear shaft, with a loop into which the warrior inserted one or more fingers.<sup>36</sup> When the spear was thrown, this would have imparted a spin to it that made it fly farther and truer. Goliath's spear tip was made of iron; as noted above, the Philistines controlled metalworking and weapons for a time. However, by the early 10th century B.C., the military and technological tide had shifted: Samuel, Saul, and David had subdued the Philistines, and blacksmiths from northern Palestine were producing carburized iron (steel); Philistine sites show no corresponding technological advances.<sup>37</sup>

Goliath is called a "champion" (NIV), literally "a man of the between" (1 Sam. 17:4). This term refers to a designated warrior from each side who would step out between the armies and do battle; the winner's side would be declared the victor, without

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<sup>35</sup>. See E. M. Yamauchi, Greece and Babylon (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 43-46; Yadin, Art of Warfare, II, 354-55; cf. A. M. Snodgrass, Arms and Armour of the Greeks (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967), 14-34.

<sup>36</sup>. A weaver's rod was the block of wood attached to a cord that would separate the threads of the warp so that the threads of the woof could pass through. See Y. Yadin, "Goliath's Javelin and the \*μ\*\*\*μ\*\*\*," PEQ 86 (1955), 58-69; Art of Warfare, II: 354-55.

<sup>37</sup>. T. Stech-Wheeler et al., "Iron at Taanach and Early Iron Metallurgy in the Eastern Mediterranean," American Journal of Archaeology 85 (1981), 245. See also Dothan, Philistines, 91-93.

an all-out conflict. The practice is not widely attested in the ancient Near East, but clear examples do occur.<sup>38</sup>

We know little else of Philistine military organization from the Bible, except that their forces included chariotry, cavalry, infantry, and archers (1 Sam. 13:5; 31:3). Their officers are called \*\*rîm, meaning "princes" or (better) "commanders" (1 Sam. 18:30; 29:3).

The Egyptian reliefs of Ramses III also show the Philistine personal armor and weapons of his time to have been impressive. Their headgear appears to have consisted of a distinctive headband of sorts that held the hair in a stiff, upright arrangement, which some have called a "feathered" headdress.<sup>39</sup> This was by no means unique to the Philistines, however: similar headgear or hair styles appear from various parts of the Mediterranean, including Jerusalem and other parts of Canaan. Many of the Sea Peoples -- Philistines presumably among them -- had ribbed body armor that covered their torsos. They also wore tasselled kilts that did not quite reach the knees.

The Sea Peoples fought with infantry, ships, and chariots. Each infantryman carried two spears, a round shield, and a long, straight sword, and they fought in groups of four. The chariots were pulled by two horses, and each had two six-spoked wheels. They were manned by crews of three, who were armed with two long spears, like the infantry. They could only have engaged in short-range combat, a disadvantage against the

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<sup>38</sup>. See R. de Vaux, "Single Combat in the Old Testament," in The Bible and the Ancient Near East (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), 122-35; also R. P. Gordon, I & II Samuel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 154 and n. 12; P. K. McCarter, I Samuel (AB 8; Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 290-91.

<sup>39</sup>. An inscription over a picture of prisoners wearing such headdresses reads: "Words spoken by the fallen ones of Peleset." On this headgear, see Sandars, Sea Peoples, 132-37, and Brug, Philistines, 146-47, 150-52.

Egyptian charioteers equipped with bows and arrows. The Sea Peoples' ships were powered by oars, whereas the Egyptian ones had both oars and sails, lending them greater maneuverability, as well.<sup>40</sup>

**B. Philistine Cities.** The Bible mentions five cities that were part of a unified Philistine pentapolis in southwestern Canaan: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron (Josh. 13:2-3).<sup>41</sup> Each one was headed by a "lord" (seren).<sup>42</sup> Philistine rulers were also

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<sup>40</sup>. On their ships (and much more), see A. Raban, "The Constructive Maritime Role of the Sea Peoples in the Levant," in Heltzer and Lipinski, eds., Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean, 261-94; A. Raban and R. T. Stieglitz, "The Sea Peoples and Their Contributions to Civilization," BAR 17.6 (1991), 34-42, 92-93. Cf. also the evidence from Tell Akko in this period: M. Artzy, "On Boats and Sea Peoples," BASOR 266 (1987), 75-84.

<sup>41</sup>. For entrée into discussion of the excavations at these sites, see the following: for **ASHDOD**: M. Dothan, "Ashdod at the End of the Late Bronze Age and the Beginning of the Early Iron Age," in F. M. Cross, ed., Symposia (Cambridge: ASOR, 1979), 125-34; for **ASHKELON**: Stager, "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon"; for **EKRON** (Tel Mique): S. Gitin and T. Dothan, "The Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines," BA 50 (1987), 197-222; T. Dothan, "Ekron of the Philistines," BAR 16.1 (1990), 26-35.

Only very limited excavations were made at **GAZA** (Tell \*arube), in 1922 (see EAEHL, 408-17; H. J. Katzenstein, "Gaza," in D. N. Freedman, ed., Anchor Bible Dictionary [Garden City: Doubleday, 1992], II, 912-15), but T. Dothan has excavated the burial ground at Deir el-Bala\*, near Gaza, where she uncovered a large cache of anthropoid clay coffins (see below) (Dothan, Philistines, 252-60). The site of **GATH** is uncertain, but scholarly consensus now places it at Tell e\*-\*afi (A. F. Rainey, "The Identification of Philistine Gath," Eretz-Israel 12 [1975], 63\*-76\*); however, no excavations have been carried out there since 1899 (EAEHL, 1024-27; J. D. Seger, "Gath," in D. N. Freedman, ed., Anchor Bible Dictionary [Garden City: Doubleday, 1992], II, 908-9).

simply called "kings."<sup>43</sup> Under these lords or kings were the Philistine commanders (\*\*rîm) mentioned above.

Along with the cities of the pentapolis, many other Canaanite cities were "Philistinized" over time to one degree or another.<sup>44</sup> The cities were well-planned and laid out; some were walled (e.g., Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron),<sup>45</sup> while others were not. Several were very large: Ashkelon, for example, was a thriving seaport more than 150 acres in size. One distinctive building feature was the free-standing hearth (found at Tell Qasile and Tel Migne [Ekron]), which is otherwise unknown in Canaan but well-known in the Aegean and Anatolian worlds.<sup>46</sup> For the most part, however, these were

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[0]<sup>42</sup>. The word appears to have come from Neo-Hittite tarwanas (or sarawanas), a title borne by the Neo-Hittite kings, which seems to have formed the basis for Greek turannos "tyrant." (See A. Andrewes, The Greek Tyrants [New York: Harper and Row, 1963], 22; Kitchen, "Philistines," 67; Sandars, Sea Peoples, 166; Brug, Philistines, 197.)

<sup>43</sup>. The Philistine rulers in Genesis are called "kings," and Achish is "king" of Gath in David's time (1 Sam. 21:10, 12). Assyrian records later refer to Philistine "kings," as well (Kitchen, "Philistines," 77, n. 125; Katzenstein, "Philistines [History]").

<sup>44</sup>. For a convenient survey of all excavations in Philistine territory as of the early 1980s, see Dothan, Philistines, 25-93; more briefly, see A. Mazar, Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1990), 308-13.

<sup>45</sup>. See Judg. 16:2-3 on Gaza; cf. T. Dothan, "What We Know About the Philistines," BAR 8.4 (1982), 30-35, and Stager, "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," 29.

<sup>46</sup>. Mazar, Archaeology, 317-19. Kitchen also mentions the three-roomed house and the round houses from Ashdod as distinctive ("Philistines," 77, nn. 120-21); cf. Dothan, Philistines, 42.

typical Canaanite cities, with short life-cycles as Philistine cities: by 1000 B.C., they had been completely Canaanized. None rivalled the great cities of the Late Bronze Age, such as Ugarit.

C. Philistine Pottery. Philistine pottery usually is identified as the most distinctive part of their material culture. It flourished ca. 1150-1000 B.C.<sup>47</sup> and was influenced by a number of styles, including Mycenaean, Egyptian, Cypriote, and Canaanite.

The most prominent influence was of the delicate and beautifully crafted and painted Mycenaean pottery that found its way across most of the Mediterranean basin ca. 1400-1200 B.C. The clay was selected carefully, levigated, and fired to an exceptional hardness at higher-than-average temperatures. The pots were often covered with a fine slip before firing, to make them impermeable. Most were expertly wheel-made and very thin-walled. The fired vessels were normally buff-colored, upon which patterns were painted in glossy red, brown, or black paint. Decorations were mostly carried out on the potter's wheel: characteristic features include concentric circles laid out as horizontal bands, with any pictorial decoration occurring on the shoulder or handle-zone. Typical shapes included the globular pilgrim jar, the delicate, high-stemmed kylix, the large pyriform jar, the squat pyxis, and the popular stirrup jar.<sup>48</sup>

There was a sudden cutoff of Mycenaean imports in the eastern Mediterranean at the beginning of the twelfth century B.C., at the time of the great upheavals mentioned above. In its place is found locally made pottery (Mycenaean IIIc) that imitates the Mycenaean

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<sup>47</sup>. Although its influence can be traced in Philistia beyond this time (see Mazar, Archaeology, 533-36).

<sup>48</sup>. The definitive work on Mycenaean pottery is A. Furumark, The Mycenaean Pottery (Stockholm: n.p., 1941). See, more briefly, R. Amiran, Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1970), 179-81; W. Taylour, The Mycenaean (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 48-52.

style. In fact, even before the disruptions, imitation Mycenaean pottery was being made in Cyprus and Canaan, much of it fairly close in quality to the true product. But, after the disruptions, the quality deteriorated visibly: the vessels were much more thick-walled, with cruder decorations, and often unfinished.<sup>49</sup>

Because the Philistines settled into the areas in which this imitation pottery was especially concentrated, its derivatives have come to be called "Philistine pottery." However, several cautions must be sounded here.<sup>50</sup> First, features of this pottery were extant in the eastern Mediterranean before the wave of Sea Peoples that included Peleset arrived ca. 1176 B.C. Second, it was an eclectic mix of several styles, not just Mycenaean. Third (and not often noted in this regard), despite its distinctiveness, this pottery represents only a small fraction of the total pottery inventories found at any Philistine site, less than 30% even where it is the most abundant, at Ashdod and Tell Qasile. These data urge us not to focus on too limited a portion of the pottery styles and not to correlate the pottery too directly with the arrival of the Peleset and other Sea Peoples. Indeed, it is a difficult task to correlate directly any particular peoples with material remains (of whatever sort).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>. V. M. Hankey, "Mycenaean Pottery in the Middle East: Notes on Finds since 1951," Annual of the British School in Athens 62 (1967), 107-47; F. Asaro and I. Perlman, "Provenience Studies of Mycenaean Pottery Employing Neutron Activation Analysis," in Mycenaeans in the Eastern Mediterranean, 213-24; G. Cadogan, "Patterns in the Distribution of Mycenaean Pottery in the East Mediterranean," in Mycenaeans in the Eastern Mediterranean, 166-74; J. Gunneweg et al., "On the Origin of Pottery from Tel-Miqne-Ekron," BASOR 264 (1986), 3-16.

<sup>50</sup>. See especially Brug, Philistines, 53-144 here; cf. also Mazar, "Emergence," 95-107.

<sup>51</sup>. See C. Kramer, "Pots and Peoples," in L. D. Levine and T. C. Young, eds., Mountains and Lowlands (Malibu: Undena, 1978), 91-112; P. J. Parr, "Pot-tery, Peoples and Politics," in R. Moorey and P.

Nevertheless, an eclectic "Philistine" style can be identified.<sup>52</sup> Philistine distinctives include the use of two colors -- usually red and black, on a white slip -- as opposed to the single-colored earlier Mycenaean or later Canaanite pottery, and the division of decorations into discrete areas (metopes).<sup>53</sup> Philistine pottery continued Mycenaean traditions with such vessels as its bell-shaped bowls, large, elaborately decorated kraters (i.e., large, two-handled bowls), and stirrup jars.<sup>54</sup> Decoratively, Mycenaean motifs carried on in Philistine pottery included stylized birds, spiral loops, concentric half circles, and scale patterns.<sup>55</sup> Cypriot influence can best be seen in the bottle and the elongated, horn-shaped vessel.<sup>56</sup> Egyptian influence is most visible in the tall, long-necked jug; often this was decorated with a stylized lotus that is typical of

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Parr, eds., Archaeology in the Levant (Warminster: Aries and Phillips, 1978), 202-9; W. Y. Adams, "On the Argument from Ceramics to History," Current Anthropology 20 (1979), 727-44.

<sup>52</sup>. W. A. Heurtley, "The Relationship between 'Philistine' and Mycenaean Pottery," QDAP 5 (1936), 90-110; Furumark, Mycenaean Pottery, 118-22; Desborough, Last Mycenaean, 207-14; Amiran, Ancient Pottery, 266-68; Dothan, Philistines, 94-219; "What We Know," 36-38; Brug, Philistines, 53-144.

<sup>53</sup>. Stager proposes (against the prevailing consensus) that even the earlier phase of single-colored pottery should be called "Philistine" ("When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," 35-36).

<sup>54</sup>. Another type of clay object (although not "pottery" per se) that reflects strong Mycenaean roots is the cylindrical "loom weight," more than 150 of which have been found at Ashkelon and Tel Miqne (Ekron); these were common in the Mycenaean homeland (see Stager, "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," 36-37).

<sup>55</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 37; Philistines, 96-160.

<sup>56</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 37; Philistines, 160-72.

Egyptian art.<sup>57</sup> Canaanite influence came to be more and more prominent as the years went by, such that "Philistine" ware eventually disappeared, replaced by local styles. Local styles that are found in Philistine pottery include the pilgrim flask, the large jar, small jugs, and variations of other jugs.<sup>58</sup>

D. Philistine Language. Despite many isolated possibilities, no clear examples of Philistine language or writing have survived. In the OT, no language barrier appears to have existed between Philistines and Israelites. Thus, whatever their original language may have been, it seems that they spoke a dialect of Canaanite after they settled in Canaan. Only one word in the Bible -- seren "lord" -- is clearly Philistine and non-Semitic.<sup>59</sup>

E. Philistine Religion. The forms of Philistine religion that we know today conformed closely to common Canaanite religion, and their gods were common Semitic gods.

1. The Philistine Pantheon. We know of only three Philistine deities, all with good Semitic names: Dagon, Ashtoreth, and Baal-zebul.

Dagon was the principal Philistine god, whose temple figured in several episodes in the Bible (Judg. 16:23-25; 1 Sam. 5:1-5; 1 Chr. 10:10). This god was not unique to the

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<sup>57</sup> Dothan, "What We Know," 37-38; Philistines, 172-85.

<sup>58</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 38; Philistines, 185-91; Amiran, Ancient Pottery, 266-68.

<sup>59</sup>. See above, n. . See Brug, Philistines, 193-200, for a survey of attempts to link other words, names, and inscriptions with the Philistines, to which add J. Naveh, "Writing and Scripts in Seventh-Century Philistia," IEJ 35 (1985), 8-21; A. Kempinski, "Some Philistine Names from the Kingdom of Gaza," IEJ 37 (1987), 20-24. Cf. Stager's predictions that unambiguously Philistine texts that use Mycenaean Greek scripts eventually will be discovered ("When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," 36).

Philistines: he was widely known in the ancient Near East, from Early Bronze Age Ebla to Middle Bronze Mari to Late Bronze Ugarit to Early Iron Philistia to Roman Gaza. In portions of the Baal mythology from Ugarit, Dagon is said to have been Baal's father. Little is known of Dagon's nature or character, however, since there are no mythological texts about him per se.<sup>60</sup>

Ashtoreth was a goddess for whom the Philistines also erected a temple (1 Sam. 31:10). She too was a common Semitic deity. She was known in Babylonia and Ebla as the goddess of love and war (Ishtar or Ashtar), and in Egypt as the goddess of war. She was also known at Ugarit as a consort of Baal (though his primary consort was Anat), and is seen many times in the Bible as a Canaanite goddess. The Greek form of her name was "Astarte."<sup>61</sup>

Baal-zebul was the god of Ekron (2 Kgs. 1:2, 3, 6, 16). His name means "lord of the flies," and it is unknown as such elsewhere in the ancient Near East. However, it is very possible that the name actually was "Baal-zebul," meaning "Lord Baal" or "lord of the (heavenly) dwelling," and that he was called "Baal-zebul" derisively by the biblical writer. The form zbl is attested in the Ugaritic texts, and the NT preserves the form "Baal-zebul" (as Beelzeboul).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>. T. C. Mitchell, "Dagon," ISBE, 1, 851; McCarter, I Samuel, 121-22; R. R. Stieglitz, "Ebla and the Gods of Canaan," in C. H. Gordon, ed., Eblaitica, 2 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 79-89; L. K. Handy, "Dagon," in D. N. Freedman, ed., Anchor Bible Dictionary (Garden City: Doubleday, 1992), II, 1-3.

<sup>61</sup>. J. Gray, "Ashtoreth," IDB, 1, 255-56; A. H. Sayce and K. G. Jung, "Ashtoreth," ISBE, 1, 319-20; Stieglitz, "Ebla and the Gods of Canaan"; J. Day, "Ashtoreth," in D. N. Freedman, ed., Anchor Bible Dictionary (Garden City: Doubleday, 1992), I, 491-94.

<sup>62</sup>. Mt. 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15, 18, 19. See M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, II Kings (AB 11; Garden City: Doubleday, 1988), 25; J. Gray, I & II Kings, 2nd ed. (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster,

2. Philistine Temples. Few Philistine temples are extant. At Tell Qasile, however, three superimposed Philistine temples have been uncovered, as have two cultic buildings at Tel Miqne (Ekron).<sup>63</sup> At each site, at least two support pillars have been found, reminiscent of those mentioned in the Samson story of Judg. 16:25-29. The most distinctive feature of the latest temple at Tell Qasile (Stratum X) is that its entrance was at a right angle to the axis of its two rooms; one had to turn to one's right after entering to approach the altar. The buildings at Tel Miqne each consisted of a large hall with several small rooms adjoining it; some of the rooms had cultic platforms (b\*môt) in them. Such plans clearly set these buildings apart from typical Canaanite temples, which were built with the entrance along the same axis as the rooms. Also, Canaanite b\*môt tended to be in free-standing buildings, not as parts of larger complexes. Recent discoveries from Mycenae, the Aegean, and Cyprus show parallels with these plans, supporting the Philistines' links with the Aegean and Cyprus.<sup>64</sup> Otherwise, however, extant Philistine temples show no differences from typical Canaanite temples.<sup>65</sup>

3. Philistine Religious Customs. Today, we do not know many specifics of Philistine cultic practices. It appears that they had soothsayers and diviners, like most people around them (Isa. 2:6; cf. 2 Kgs. 1:2). They celebrated in the temples of their

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1970), 463; D. McIntosh, "Baal-zebul," ISBE, 1, 381; T. J. Lewis, "Beelzebul," in D. N. Freedman, ed., Anchor Bible Dictionary (Garden City: Doubleday, 1992), I, 638-40; W. A. Maier III, "Baal-zebul," in Anchor Bible Dictionary, I, 554.

<sup>63</sup>. On Tell Qasile, see Dothan, Philistines, 63-67; A. Mazar, Excavations at Tell Qasile, Part I, Qedem 12 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1980). On Tel Miqne, see Gitin and Dothan, "The Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines," 200-5; Dothan, "Ekron of the Philistines," 28-33.

<sup>64</sup>. Dothan, Philistines, 66 and nn. 214-15; Mazar, Excavations, 61-73.

<sup>65</sup>. Brug, Philistines, 189-91.

gods, like those around them. They were uncircumcised, which clearly set them apart from their neighbors and made them an object of derision among some.<sup>66</sup>

Philistine cultic apparatus give us hints as to some of their religious practices.<sup>67</sup> The most distinctive type of object is the "Ashdoda," a cult figurine found complete at Ashdod and in fragments at other Philistine sites that incorporates Mycenaean, Cypriot, and Canaanite styles. It is a seated female figurine that is molded into a four-legged throne. The figurine's flat torso forms the back of the throne, and it is decorated with typical Philistine art forms.<sup>68</sup> A distinctive cult vessel is the kernos, a hollow pottery ring found in several Philistine sites (e.g., Beth-Shean and Beth-Shemesh), although it is most commonly found in Cyprus. It is about 10 inches in diameter, with small objects such as birds, fruits, and bowls set on its outer ring. It may have been used during the course of a religious ceremony, in which liquid was poured into the ring, and then poured out.<sup>69</sup> Another cultic vessel is the rhyton, a one-handled ritual or drinking cup with a lion's head decorating it found at several Philistine sites, as well as at Mycenae, Knossos (on Crete), and pictured on New Kingdom tomb walls in Egypt.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>. Judg. 14:3; 15:18; 1 Sam. 14:6; 17:26, 36; 31:4; 2 Sam. 1:20; 1 Chr. 10:4; cf. 1 Sam. 18:25. See also Brug, Philistines, 13-14 and n. 41.

<sup>67</sup>. See Mazar, Excavations, 78-121; Dothan, Philistines, 219-51; Brug, Philistines, 184-88.

<sup>68</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 39-40; Philistines, 234-37; Brug, Philistines, 185-86.

<sup>69</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 38-39; Philistines, 222-24; Brug, Philistines, 184-85.

<sup>70</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 38, 40; Philistines, 229-34.

Philistine mourning and burial customs are reflected in the archaeological remains, as well.<sup>71</sup> No cemeteries in the major Philistine cities have been found, but several elsewhere can be related to Philistine culture on the basis of tomb contents.

One characteristic mourning custom is reflected in several figurines which have a long open dress that reveals the naked body; most Canaanite figurines were completely naked. The raised arm positions are related to those of several Mycenaean figurines, either both above the head or one in the front of the body. The "naturalistic" style is more Canaanite, however.<sup>72</sup>

The use of anthropoid clay coffins has been cited as a distinctive Philistine burial custom. However, this was an Egyptian practice, and it has been found in many non-Philistine sites; it was not unique to Philistines by any means. These coffins were similar to large storage jars, into which bodies were placed. The top third or half of the coffin was cut away so that the body could be inserted and the top replaced. Over the face a rough and somewhat grotesque likeness of the deceased was molded in the clay. A few of these coffins (from Beth-Shean) are decorated with the distinctive fluted or "feathered" headgear known from the Egyptian reliefs of the Sea Peoples.<sup>73</sup>

## **5. Conclusion**

In summary, we can see that the Philistines were a complex people, incorporating groups and cultural influences from different times and places. Their zenith in world

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<sup>71</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 41-44; Philistines, 252-88; Brug, Philistines, 148-64.

<sup>72</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 41, 44; Philistines, 237-49; Brug, Philistines, 186.

<sup>73</sup>. Dothan, "What We Know," 41-44; Philistines, 252-88; Brug, Philistines, 149-52.

history was a brief period ca. 1150-1000 B.C., during which they were settled in southwestern Canaan. They left an indelible impression on Israelite society and history of the period, and, to the degree that the Philistine threat was a factor in the Israelites' ill-considered request for a king "like the nations," their influence remained in Israel many years after they themselves had disappeared. The archaeological record in recent years has complemented the biblical record by illuminating their life and flourishing culture in ways that the biblical record did not.

### **Suggestions for Further Reading**

Neal Bierling, Giving Goliath His Due: New Archaeological Light on the Philistines. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

John F. Brug, A Literary and Archaeological Study of the Philistines. BAR International Series 265. Oxford: B.A.R., 1985.

Trude Dothan, The Philistines and Their Material Culture. New Haven: Yale University, 1982.

Edward W. Hindson, The Philistines and the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971.

Nancy K. Sandars, The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the ancient Mediterranean 1250-1150 BC. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

### **ENDNOTES**

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