

**EPISODE 7: The Philistines— Samson, Samuel, Saul and David**

**Judges, I-II Samuel**

**10/12-10/13**

***6****The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.* ***…13****Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim,* ***14****Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim.*

Genesis 10:6, 13-14

*Now these are the nations that the Lord left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan.* ***2****It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before.* ***3****These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites…*

Judges 3:1-3

1. **THE PHILISTINES: ORIGINS AND CULTURE**
   1. A warlike people who, with the other *Sea Peoples*, migrated from the Aegean basin to the southern coast of Palestine in the early twelfth century b.c. and became one of Israel’s principal rivals.
   2. The Hebrew name for the Philistines is *pelishtim*. The modern term ‘Palestine’ is derived from Palaistinoi, a Greek name given to the descendants of the Philistines.
   3. The exact origin of the Philistines remains uncertain, but they were part of a great ethnic upheaval that occurred in the Aegean area in the final decades of the thirteenth century b.c. Ultimately, the Sea Peoples reached the coasts of Phoenicia, Palestine, and Egypt.
   4. Ramesses III, fought two groups of the Sea Peoples, the Tjekker and the Philistines around 1190 b.c.). The battle was fought on land and sea, and the Egyptians repelled the invaders. Following his victory, Ramesses settled the Philistines along the southern coast of Canaan, and this Aegean people claimed a new homeland—Philistia.
   5. The Philistines organized themselves into a league of city-states. The ‘Philistine pentapolis’ was composed of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. Expansion westward into the interior eventually brought them into conflict with the Israelites.
   6. Philistine Culture and Religion
      1. Philistine culture is a syncretistic blend of Aegean, Egyptian, and Canaanite elements.
      2. **Very early the Philistines accepted the local Canaanite deities, dedicating temples to Dagon in Gaza (Judg 16:21–23), Ashdod (1 Sam 5:2–3), and Beth-shan (1 Chr 10:10–12), and to Astarte (1 Sam 31:10).**
      3. Dagon (1 Chr 10:10) Head of the Philistine pantheon appears to have been the Canaanite god, to whom the temples of Gaza and Ashdod, and possibly also at Beth-shan, were dedicated. Half fish—half human.
      4. Baal-zebub (Baal-zebul), has his temple in Ekron. “The Lord of the Flies.”
      5. Ashtoreth: temple at Beth-shan (1 Sam 31:8–13).
      6. Philistine priests appear only once in the Bible, when the Ark was captured and taken to Ashdod (1 Samuel 5).
      7. Carried idols into battle (2 Sam 5:21) and to “Houses of Images,” apparently a reference to temples in which images of the gods were kept. Among the few specifically Philistine religious beliefs that appear in the Bible are the golden images of mice and boils that were sent as a guilt *(ʾašam)* offering to God (1 Sam 6:4–16).[[1]](#footnote-1)
2. **SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES**
   1. Judg. 3:1–3 says that the Philistines were among the nations that the Lord left in Canaan ‘to test’ Israel.
   2. Judg. 3:31, praises Shamgar for delivering Israel by killing six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad.
   3. Samson (Judges 13–16)
      1. Illustrates Philistine encroachment into Hebrew territory, particularly into the areas claimed by the tribes of Judah and Dan.
      2. Judges 13—The Birth of Samson.
      3. Judges 14—Samson’s Marriage and first conflicts with the Philistines (attacks Philistine soldiers at Ashkelon).
      4. Judges 15—Open attacks of Philistines.
         1. Samson burns their crops.
         2. Slays 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.
      5. Judges 16—Samson and Delilah.
         1. The Seduction.
         2. Samson’s Imprisonment, Death and Destruction of the temple of Dagon (in Gaza?).
3. **SAMUEL AND THE PHILISTINES**
   1. Philistine defeat of the Israelites at Ebenezer. the Ark was captured, and Shiloh was destroyed (1 Sam. 4–6; cf. Ps. 78:56–66; Jer. 7:12–14).
   2. Samuel’s victory over the Philistines (1 Sam 7:5–14).
4. **SAUL AND THE PHILISTINES**
   1. The establishment of the monarchy and a regular army enabled Saul to defeat his enemies (chaps. 13–14), in spite of the Philistine superiority in weaponry (cf. 13:19–22).
   2. Saul fought a variety of enemies on all fronts (I Samuel 14:47–48), but particularly the Philisitines.
      1. Reign of Saul (13:1–15:35).
      2. Saul and the Philistines—first rejection of Saul (13:1–23).
      3. Saul and Jonathan (14:1–52)—The Battle of Gibeah.
      4. Saul and the Amalekites—second rejection of Saul (15:1–35).
      5. Deaths of Saul and Jonathan (31:1–13).
5. **DAVID AND THE PHILISTINES**
   1. David and Goliath: battle at the Valley of Elah (17:1–54).
   2. David took refuge with the Philistine king of Gath, Achish, and became one of his vassals (27:1–30:31).
   3. David was not present when the Philistines killed Saul and his sons on Mt. Gilboa (chap. 31). This Philistine victory led to an even greater expansion of their holdings (cf. 31:7)
   4. The death of Saul caused David to break his alliance with the Philistines and establish his kingship in Hebron (2 Sam. 1:1-2:11). In an effort to crush David’s independent state, the Philistines attacked, but David ‘smote the Philistines from Geba to Gezer’ (2 Sam. 5:17–25).
   5. Ultimately, David’s opposition to the Philistines broke their power (2 Sam. 8:1; cf. 1 Chron. 18:1). Although the Philistines continued to resist Israel’s expansion (cf. 2 Sam. 21:15–22; 23:8–39), they were no longer a major threat to the Hebrews.

1. Dothan, T. (1992). [Philistines: Archaeology](https://ref.ly/logosres/anch?ref=VolumePage.V+5%2c+p+330&off=3793&ctx=ars+found+at+Ekron.%0a~There+is+both+agreem). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 5, pp. 330–331). New York: Doubleday. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)