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Philistines

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Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, "Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands."

—Judges 16:23

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

Name

The term *Philistine* (as well as *Palestine*) comes from the Hebrew *pēlišṭī(m)*, which occurs 288 times in the Old Testament; the term *pēlešet* ("Philistia") occurs eight times. *Pēlišṭī(m)* is usually 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.

Origins

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 or

the beginning of the second millennium. The Book of Genesis tells of several encounters with the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham and Isaac at Gerar.

According to the Bible, the Philistines came to Canaan from the islands and coastlands of the Aegean Sea, including the island of Crete. In Ezekiel 25:15–16 and Zephaniah 2:4–5, the term *Cherethites* (i.e., Cretans) occurs in poetic parallel with *Philistines*.¹ In Jeremiah 47:4 and Amos 9:7, the Philistines are specifically associated with *Caphtor*, a term that occurs in cuneiform documents in several languages as *Kaptara* and in Egyptian texts as *Keftiu* and that can be identified with Crete or its environs.² That Caphtorites are to be identified closely with Cherethites is also indicated by Deuteronomy 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 Yahweh'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 the datum in Genesis 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 that their progeny was later settled in Canaan by the Egyptians under Ramesses III or else that they went to Caphtor from Egypt.³

However, we should note that Genesis 10 links the Philistines with various Hamitic peoples, including Canaanites (vv. 6–20), and not with the Indo-European descendants of Japheth from the coastlands or islands (vv. 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.⁴

1. On the Cherethite = Cretan equation, see Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Philistines," in *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, ed. Donald J. Wiseman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 56 and n. 15.

2. On the Caphtor = Crete equation, see *ibid.*, 54, 56; Frederick W. Bush, "Caphtor," *ISBE* 1:610–11; Richard S. Hess, "Caphtor," in *ABD* 1:869–70; Gary A. Rendsburg, "Gen 10:13–14: An Authentic Hebrew Tradition concerning the Origin of the Philistines," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 13 (1987): 90 n. 3. That the term *Caphtor* may be broader than just one island is suggested by, among other evidence, the Septuagint version of Jer. 29:4, which reads "the islands" for the Masoretic Text's "the island of Caphtor" (at 47:4).

3. On the latter, see Rendsburg, "Gen 10:13–14."

4. John F. Brug, *A Literary and Archaeological Study of the Philistines*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 265 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1985), 10–15, 46–50. For a similar suggestion, see also Roland K. Harrison, "Philistine Origins: A Reappraisal," in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement* 67 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 11–19.

Egyptian Evidence

Outside the Bible, the Philistines are first mentioned by Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses III (1184–1153) in connection with great land and sea battles in his eighth year between the Egyptians and people they called "the peoples of the sea."⁵ 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 Pharaoh Merenptah (1208), as allies of a powerful group of Libyans who opposed the Egyptian king.⁶ Five groups of Sea Peoples are mentioned: Sherden and Lukka (both previously known) and Ekwesh, Teresh, and Shek-esh (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).⁷ These (and other) peoples also are called "northerners coming from all lands" and foreigners from the "islands" in Egyptian texts.⁸

The Philistines themselves do not appear until the events of Ramesses' eighth year (1176). At the beginning of the twelfth century, 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. It is not clear exactly what the initial cause of the unrest and dislocation was; indeed, it probably had no single cause. However, evidence from Italy, Greece, the Aegean islands, Asia Minor, northern Syria, Canaan proper, Cyprus, and Egypt indicates that empires were threatened from within and without, economies were collapsing, societies were breaking apart, political stability was nonexistent, and even natural disasters were contributing to the general collapse of civilizations.⁹

5. The Egyptian dates used here are the "low" dates laid out by Kenneth A. Kitchen in "The Basics of Egyptian Chronology in Relation to the Bronze Age," in *High, Middle or Low?*, ed. Paul Åström (Göteborg: Åströms, 1987–89), 1:37–55; 3:152–59. There is near unanimity now among Egyptologists concerning a low dating scheme, particularly after the accession of Ramesses II (1279).

6. James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (1906; repr. New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 3:§§569–617; John A. Wilson in *ANET* 376–78.

7. Richard D. Barnett, "The Sea Peoples," in *CAH* 2/2:360–69; Nancy K. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), 105–15, 198–201.

8. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 3:§574; 4:§§64, 75.

9. See Vincent R. D. Desborough, *The Last Mycenaean and Their Successors* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964); *The Mycenaean in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 1972) [no editor listed]; Barnett, "Sea Peoples," 359–71; Frank H. Stubbings, "The Recession of Mycenaean Civilization," in *CAH* 2/2:338–58; William H. Stiebing, "The End of

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.¹⁰ The Sea Peoples were part of the great upheavals, but by no means were they the primary cause of the unrest. For example, the picture reliefs of Ramesses III from Medinet Habu show slow-moving ox-carts, women, and children traveling alongside the warriors and chariots.¹¹ Since women, children, and ox-carts did not normally go into battle in the ancient Near East, it may have been that the warriors 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.¹² Alternatively, some Sea Peoples may have already been resident in Palestine long enough to have established households 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.¹³

In Ramesses' 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, Shekesh, Denyen and Weshesh," according to Ramesses, and it also included the Sherden.¹⁴ The Shekesh and Sherden had been among the earlier adversar-

the Mycenaean Age," *Biblical Archaeologist* 43 (1980): 7-21; George E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 142-73; Sandars, *Sea Peoples*; Vassos Karageorghis, "Exploring Philistine Origins on the Island of Cyprus," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 10.2 (1984): 16-23; Ronald L. Gorny, "Environment, Archaeology, and History in Hittite Anatolia," *Biblical Archaeologist* 52 (1989): 78-96; Trude Dothan, "The Arrival of the Sea Peoples: Cultural Diversity in Early Iron Age Canaan," in *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology*, ed. Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever, Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 49 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 1-14.

10. On the Sea Peoples' migrations, see Lawrence E. Stager, "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 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.

11. The plates of Ramesses II's reliefs were published in H. H. Nelson, *Medinet Habu*, vols. 1-2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930-32). For convenient sketches and discussion of the land and sea battles, see Yigael Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Study*, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill/London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963), 248-51, 336-43; Trude Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 5-13.

12. So Sandars, *Sea Peoples*, 120-21.

13. George E. Mendenhall, "Cultural History and the Philistine Problem," in *The Archaeology of Jordan and Other Studies Presented to Siegfried H. Horn*, ed. Lawrence T. Geraty and Larry G. Herr (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1986), 542, 544. See also the evidence below that some of the Sea Peoples were mercenaries.

14. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 4:§§59-82, esp. §§64, 403; William F. Edgerton and John A. Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III: The Texts in "Medinet Habu," Volumes*

ies 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.¹⁵ 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 the Peleset are never specifically associated with the islands or the sea, as some other Sea Peoples are; nor in the Bible are the Philistines a seafaring people. Indeed, there is evidence that some of the Sea Peoples may not have come from distant lands at all.¹⁶

The land battle apparently came first. The Sea Peoples had come by land and 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 cities in Asia Minor and Cyprus, heading east and then south toward Egypt.¹⁷ Ramesses met them at the Egyptian frontier. The battle was fierce, but Ramses claimed total victory.¹⁸ 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, Ramesses claimed a great victory.¹⁹ 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.

Ramesses 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.²⁰ Eventually he allowed the Peleset, along with other groups, to settle in southwestern

I and II, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 12 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), 53; Wilson in ANET 262-63.

15. 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).

16. Brug, *Philistines*, 18-20.

17. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 4:§§64-66; Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III*, 53-56; Wilson in ANET 262-63.

18. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 4:§§66-68; Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III*, 38-39, 55-58.

19. Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III*, 41-43.

20. Ibid., 30-31, 47, 48; Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 4:§§44, 403. On Ramesses' historical accuracy, see Barnett, "Sea Peoples," 378; Brug, *Philistines*, 27-28 and n. 84; Barbara Cifola, "Ramses and the Sea Peoples," *Orientalia* 57 (1988): 275-306.



Captives of Ramesses III displayed at Medinet Habu, including a Philistine (second from right), 12th century B.C. (height: 3' 9")

Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

Canaan, which was precisely the area in which the biblical Philistines were to be found in the following years.²¹

Other Extrabiblical Evidence

Cuneiform and other Semitic documents provide some limited, general information concerning various Sea Peoples.²² Worthy of note here is a Ugaritic reference to Shikels (i.e., Shekelesh or, possibly, Tjeker) who were mercenaries "liv[ing] in ships" and who were allied with Ugarit. The Amarna letters refer to Sherden and others who also appear as mercenaries in Canaan.²³ All of these are earlier than Ramesses III's time.

21. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 4:§410. In other Egyptian texts, Sherden, Tjeker, and Peleset are found in southwestern Canaan after Ramesses III; see Kitchen, "Philistines," 57 and n. 28; and the references in n. 27 below. Bryant 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?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17.6 (1991): 44–52, 89–90, 92.

22. 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.

23. See Brug, *Philistines*, 30–33; Itamar Singer, "The Origin of the Sea Peoples and Their Settlement on the Coast of Canaan," in *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1500–1000 B.C.)*, ed. Michael Heltzer and Edouard Lipiński (Louvain: Peeters, 1988), 239–50.

Biblical and Extrabiblical 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 extrabiblical data concur in assigning some Philistine origins to coastal areas or islands in and around the Aegean Sea, although neither set of data is very specific. The extrabiblical data also point to the eastern Mediterranean.

The two sets of data diverge somewhat concerning the date that Philistines entered Canaan. According to the Bible, some Philistines already were resident in Canaan at the beginning of the second millennium, while 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.²⁴ However, there are other alternatives since some Egyptian and Semitic evidence places some Sea Peoples (if not Philistines per se) in Canaan prior to the twelfth century.

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. They were relatively peaceful, in contrast to the Philistines of the Egyptian or later biblical texts. Their names in Genesis (esp. 26:26) are a combination of Semitic names (Abi-melek and Ahuzzath) and non-Semitic ones (Phico), which 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 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), and contacts such as the Hebrew patriarchs had are not at all unreasonable.²⁵

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.²⁶ Their being called "Philistines" in the Bible may simply reflect the political dominance of the Peleset among those who did settle in Canaan. Indeed, excavations

24. For example, R. A. S. Macalister, *The Philistines: Their History and Civilization* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 39; John A. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 52–54. Cf. Dothan, *Philistines*, 15 n. 52.

25. Kitchen, "Philistines," 56–57.

26. Ibid., 57; Dothan, *Philistines*, 25; Brug, *Philistines*, 46–50; Harrison, "Philistine Origins."

in southwestern Canaan reveal hints of the presence of other peoples besides the Peleset/Philistines, such as the Tjekker at Dor and the Sherden at Acco.²⁷

Thus, the Philistines in Genesis and those in the later biblical texts may not have been related genetically.²⁸ Their common features may have been that both had their origins in remote island or coastal areas to the north and west and that both 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.²⁹

History

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

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.³⁰ 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.

27. Avner Raban, "The Harbor of the Sea Peoples at Dor," *Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (1987): 118–26; Moshe Dothan, "Archaeological Evidence for Movements of the Early 'Sea Peoples' in Canaan," in *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology*, ed. Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever, Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 49 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 59–70.

28. Although genetic connections between some should not be ruled out a priori.

29. 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."

30. Critical scholars usually see the episodes in Genesis 20 and 26 as variants of one event; e.g., Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible 1 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 150–52, 203–4; and Claus Westermann, *Genesis* 12–36, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 423–24. I assume that they are separate events, written about in such a way as to maximize the similarities between the stories; see also John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:185–89. In either case, however, the information garnered about Philistines is essentially the same.

Philistines and the Israelite Judges

During the period around 1150–1000, the Philistines were Israel's major adversaries.³¹ The "five lords of the Philistines" were among the nations that Yahweh left to test Israel (Judg. 2:6–3:6). Shamgar the judge killed six hundred of them with an oxgoad (Judg. 3:31). The Philistines were among the pagan nations to whose gods the Israelites turned, to whom Yahweh sold them, and from whom he delivered them (Judg. 10:6–7, 11).

Their major conflict with Israel came against Samson, around the beginning of the eleventh century. Despite Samson's less-than-exemplary character, Yahweh 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 (Judg. 14–15 and 16), 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 eleventh century, they held 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).³²

After Samson, the first of the Philistines' recorded struggles with Israel 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 was captured (1 Sam. 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 Sam. 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 (1 Sam. 6:6) and to the "gods" who had struck the Egyptians with the plagues (1 Sam. 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

31. The date 1150 reflects Kitchen's low dates for Ramesses III and Amihai Mazar's judgments concerning the dates for the appearance of actual Philistine material remains; see Mazar, "Emergence of the Philistine Material Culture," *Israel Exploration Journal* 35 (1985): 95–107; idem, "Some Aspects of the 'Sea Peoples' Settlement," in *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1500–1000 B.C.)*, ed. Michael Heltzer and Édouard Lipiński (Louvain: Peeters, 1988), 251–60.

32. This does not mean that the Philistines introduced iron to the Near East, nor that iron was exclusive to Philistia in 1150–1000, but rather that they—and not the Israelites—controlled metalworking technology and finished-metal products during this period. See James D. Muhly, "How Iron Technology Changed the Ancient World," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 8.6 (1982): 40–54; Dothan, *Philistines*, 20, 91–93; Brug, *Philistines*, 165–68.

land was pacified, and Israel recovered the cities and territory that the Philistines had taken.

Philistines and the Israelite Kings

The next recorded Philistine-Israelite conflict came after Israel asked for and received a king (1 Sam. 13–14). Saul's son Jonathan initially defeated a Philistine garrison at Geba, near his hometown of Gibeah (1 Sam. 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 (1 Sam. 14:13–23). Saul had continuing conflicts with Philistines throughout his reign (1 Sam. 14:52), and 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 Sam. 17). He killed Goliath and the Philistines were routed, retreating toward their cities of Gath and Ekron.³³

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 (1 Sam. 23:1–5), and Saul later fought them when they made a raid on Israelite territory (1 Sam. 23:27–28). David twice fled to Philistine territory to escape Saul (1 Sam. 21:10–15 [MT 21:11–16]; 27; 29). Saul died at the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 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 (1 Sam. 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 (who were either Philistines or a group closely allied with them), the Pelethites, and Gath, a Philistine city (2 Sam. 15:18). Even one of his loyal commanders was from Gath

33. 2 Sam. 21:19 states that Elhanan killed Goliath. For a solution to this problem, see Carl F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (1872; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 465–66.

(2 Sam. 15:19–22). The list of David's heroes attests to the continuing struggle with the Philistines over his entire lifetime (2 Sam. 23:9–16).

Despite their survival in later centuries, David effectively eliminated the Philistines' 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 Kings 18:8), Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:11), Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:16–17), Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:6–7), and Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:18). They appear occasionally in the records of Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings who invaded Canaan,³⁴ but they never figured again as a significant political or military force.

Society and Culture

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

Military

The Bible provides some glimpses of Philistine military capacities; for example, the detailed description of Goliath's battle gear (1 Sam. 17:5–7):

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

Goliath's spear, helmet, coat of mail, and particularly his leg greaves were typical for Aegean warriors.³⁵ His spear being "like a weaver's rod" probably refers to a lash of cord wrapped around the spear shaft, with a loop into

34. See Hayim Tadmor, "Philistia under Assyrian Rule," *Biblical Archaeologist* 29 (1966): 86–102; Nadav Na'aman and Ran Zadok, "Sargon II's Deportations to Israel and Philistia," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 40 (1988): 36–46; H. J. Katzenstein, "Philistines (History)," in *ABD* 5:326–28.

35. See Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Greece and Babylon: Early Contacts between the Aegean and the Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 43–46; Yadin, *Art of Warfare*, 354–55; cf. A. M. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour of the Greeks* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), 14–34.

which the warrior inserted one or more fingers.³⁶ When the spear was thrown, it would spin, thus flying farther and truer. Goliath's spear tip was made of iron, as the Philistines then controlled metalworking and weapons. However, by the early tenth century, the military and technological tide had shifted: Samuel, Saul, and David subdued the Philistines, and blacksmiths from northern Palestine began producing carburized iron (steel). Philistine sites show no corresponding technological advances.³⁷

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

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 *šārim* ("commanders") (1 Sam. 18:30; 29:3).

The Egyptian reliefs of Ramesses III also show impressive Philistine personal armor and weapons. Their headgear appears to have been a distinctive headband that held the hair in a stiff, upright arrangement, which some have called a "feathered" headdress.³⁹ This was by no means unique to the Philistines, however: similar headgear or hairstyles 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 tasseled kilts that did not quite reach the knees.

The Sea Peoples fought with infantry, ships, and chariots. Each foot soldier 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, had two

36. 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 Yigael Yadin, "Goliath's Javelin and the מִנְיָר אֶרֶבֶם," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 86 (1955), 58–69; idem, *Art of Warfare*, 354–55.

37. 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.

38. See Roland de Vaux, "Single Combat in the Old Testament," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, trans. Damian McHugh (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), 122–35; Robert P. Gordon, *I and II Samuel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 154 and n. 12; F. Kyle McCarter Jr., *I Samuel*, Anchor Bible 8 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), 290–91.

39. 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.

six-spoked wheels, and were operated by crews of three who were also armed with two long spears. They could only have engaged in short-range combat, a disadvantage against the Egyptian charioteers equipped with bow 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.⁴⁰

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).⁴¹ Each one was headed by a "lord" (*seren*).⁴² Philistine rulers were also simply called "kings."⁴³ Under these lords or kings were the Philistine commanders (*šārim*) mentioned above.

40. On their ships (and much more), see Avner Raban, "The Constructive Maritime Role of the Sea Peoples in the Levant," in *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1500–1000 B.C.)*, ed. Michael Heltzer and Édouard Lipiński (Louvain: Peeters, 1988), 261–94; Avner Raban and Robert R. Stieglitz, "The Sea Peoples and Their Contributions to Civilization," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17.6 (1991): 34–42, 92–93. Cf. also the evidence from Tell Acco in this period: Michal Artzy, "On Boats and Sea Peoples," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 266 (1987): 75–84.

41. For *entrée* into discussion of the excavations at these sites, see the following. For Ashdod: Moshe Dothan, "Ashdod at the End of the Late Bronze Age and the Beginning of the Iron Age," in *Symposia Celebrating the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, ed. Frank M. Cross (Cambridge, Mass.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1979), 125–34. For Ashkelon: Stager, "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon." For Ekron (Tel Migne): Seymour Gitin and Trude Dothan, "The Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines," *Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (1987): 197–222; Trude Dothan, "Ekron of the Philistines," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16.1 (1990): 26–35. On the limited excavations made at Gaza (Tell Harube) in 1922, see Asher Ovadiya, "Gaza," in *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah and Ephraim Stern (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 408–17; and H. J. Katzenstein, "Gaza," in *ABD* 2:912–15. Trude Dothan has now excavated the burial ground at Deir el-Balah, near Gaza, where she uncovered a large cache of anthropoid clay coffins; see *Philistines*, 252–60. The location of Gath is uncertain, but scholarly consensus now places it at Tell es-Safi; see Anson F. Rainey, "The Identification of Philistine Gath," *Eretz-Israel* 12 (1975): 63*–76*. However, no excavations have been carried out there since 1899; see Ephraim Stern, "Es-Safi, Tell," in *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah and Ephraim Stern (Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 1024–27; Joe D. Seger, "Gath," in *ABD* 2:908–9.

42. 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 *tyrannos* ("tyrant"); see A. Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 22; Kitchen, "Philistines," 67; Sandars, *Sea Peoples*, 166; Brug, *Philistines*, 197.

43. The Philistine rulers in Genesis are called "kings," and Achish is "king" of Gath in David's time (1 Sam. 21:10, 12 [MT 21:11, 13]). Assyrian records later refer to Philistine kings, as well; Kitchen, "Philistines," 77 n. 125; Katzenstein, "Philistines (History)."

Along with the cities of the pentapolis, many other Canaanite cities were "Philistinized" over time to one degree or another.⁴⁴ The cities were well planned and laid out; some were walled (e.g., Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron),⁴⁵ 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 Miqne [Ekron]), which is otherwise unknown in Canaan but well known in the Aegean and Anatolian worlds.⁴⁶ For the most part, however, these were typical Canaanite cities, with short life cycles as Philistine cities: by 1000, they had been completely Canaanized. None rivaled the great cities of the Late Bronze Age, such as Ugarit.

Pottery

Philistine pottery is usually identified as the most distinctive part of their material culture. It flourished around 1150–1000⁴⁷ and was influenced by a number of styles, including Mycenaean, Egyptian, Cypriot, and Canaanite.

The most prominent influence was the delicate and beautifully crafted and painted Mycenaean pottery that found its way across most of the Mediterranean basin around 1400–1200. 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 included 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.⁴⁸

44. For a convenient survey of all excavations in Philistine territory up to the early 1980s, see Dothan, *Philistines*, 25–93; more briefly, Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1990), 308–13.

45. On Gaza, see Judg. 16:2–3; Trude Dothan, "What We Know about the Philistines," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 8.4 (1982): 30–35; and Stager, "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," 29.

46. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 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.

47. Although its influence can be traced in Philistia beyond this time; see Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 533–36.

48. The definitive work on Mycenaean pottery is A. Furumark, *The Mycenaean Pottery* (Stockholm: n.p., 1941). See, more briefly, Ruth Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 179–81; W. Taylour, *The Mycenaean* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), 48–52.

There was a sudden cutoff of Mycenaean imports in the eastern Mediterranean at the beginning of the twelfth century, at the time of the great upheavals mentioned above. In its place is found locally made pottery (known as Mycenaean IIIc) that imitates the Mycenaean 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. After the disruptions, the quality deteriorated visibly: the vessels had thicker walls, with cruder decorations, and were often unfinished.⁴⁹

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.⁵⁰ First, features of this pottery were extant in the eastern Mediterranean before the wave of Sea Peoples that included Peleset arrived around 1176. 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 Philistine sites—less than thirty percent even where it is the most abundant (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).⁵¹

Nevertheless, an eclectic Philistine style can be identified.⁵² 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

49. 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 Isadore Perlman, "Provenience Studies of Mycenaean Pottery Employing Neutron Activation Analysis," in *The Mycenaean in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 1972), 213–24; G. Cadogan, "Patterns in the Distribution of Mycenaean Pottery in the East Mediterranean," in *The Mycenaean in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 1972), 166–74; Jan Gunneweg, Trude Dothan, Isadore Perlman, and Seymour Gitin, "On the Origin of Pottery from Tel Miqne-Ekron," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 264 (1986): 3–16.

50. See especially Brug, *Philistines*, 53–144; cf. also Mazar, "Emergence."

51. See Carol Kramer, "Pots and Peoples," in *Mountains and Lowlands*, ed. Louis D. Levine and T. Cuyler Young (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1978), 91–112; Peter J. Parr, "Pottery, Peoples and Politics," in *Archaeology in the Levant: Essays for Kathleen Kenyon*, ed. Peter R. S. Moorey and Peter Parr (Warminster: Aries & Phillips, 1978), 202–9; W. Y. Adams, "On the Argument from Ceramics to History," *Current Anthropology* 20 (1979): 727–44.

52. W. A. Heurtley, "The Relationship between 'Philistine' and Mycenaean Pottery," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 5 (1936): 90–110; Furumark, *Mycenaean Pottery*, 118–22; Desborough, *Last Mycenaean*, 207–14; Amiran, *Ancient Pottery*, 266–68; Dothan, *Philistines*, 94–219; idem, "What We Know about the Philistines," 36–38; Brug, *Philistines*, 53–144.

pottery and the division of decorations into discrete areas (metopes).⁵³ Philistine pottery continued traditional Mycenaean-like bell-shaped bowls, large elaborately decorated kraters (i.e., large, two-handled bowls), and stirrup jars.⁵⁴ Decoratively, Mycenaean motifs carried on in Philistine pottery included stylized birds, spiral loops, concentric half-circles, and scale patterns.⁵⁵ Cypriot influence can best be seen in the bottle and the elongated, horn-shaped vessel.⁵⁶ Egyptian influence is most visible in the tall, long-necked jug, which was often decorated with a stylized lotus that is typical of Egyptian art.⁵⁷ Canaanite influence came to be 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.⁵⁸

Language

Despite many isolated possibilities, no clear examples of Philistine language or writing have survived. In the Old Testament, 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.⁵⁹

Religion

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

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

53. Stager proposes (against the prevailing consensus) that even the earlier phase of single-colored pottery should be called “Philistine”; see “When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon,” 35–36.

54. 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.

55. Dothan, “What We Know about the Philistines,” 37; idem, *Philistines*, 96–160.

56. Dothan, “What We Know about the Philistines,” 37; idem, *Philistines*, 160–72.

57. Dothan, “What We Know about the Philistines,” 37–38; idem, *Philistines*, 172–85.

58. Dothan, “What We Know about the Philistines,” 38; idem, *Philistines*, 185–91; Amiran, *Ancient Pottery*, 266–68.

59. See n. 42 above. For a survey of attempts to link other words, names, and inscriptions with the Philistines, see Brug, *Philistines*, 193–200; Joseph Naveh, “Writing and Scripts in Seventh-Century Philistia,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 35 (1985): 8–21; Aharon Kempinski, “Some Philistine Names from the Kingdom of Gaza,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 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.

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 Chron. 10:10). This god was not unique to the 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.⁶⁰

Ashtoreth was a goddess for whom the Philistines also erected a temple (1 Sam. 31:10). She too was a common Semitic deity, 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.⁶¹

Baal-zebul was the god of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2–3, 6, 16). His name means “lord of the flies,” and it is unknown elsewhere in the ancient Near East. However, it is possible that the name was actually “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 New Testament preserves the form “Baal-zebul” (as *Beelzebul*).⁶²

Temples. Few Philistine temples are extant. At Tell Qasile three superimposed Philistine temples have been uncovered, as have two cultic buildings at Tel Miqne (Ekron).⁶³ At each site, at least two support pillars have been found, reminiscent of those mentioned in the Samson story (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: to approach the altar, one had to turn right after entering. The buildings at Tel Miqne each

60. Terence C. Mitchell, “Dagon,” in *ISBE* 1:851; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 121–22; Robert R. Stieglitz, “Ebla and the Gods of Canaan,” *Eblaitica* 2 (1990): 79–89; Lowell K. Handy, “Dagon,” in *ABD* 2:1–3.

61. John Gray, “Ashtoreth,” in *IDB* 1:255–56; Archibald H. Sayce and Kurt G. Jung, “Ashtoreth,” in *ISBE* 1:319–20; Stieglitz, “Ebla and the Gods of Canaan”; John Day, “Ashtoreth,” in *ABD* 1:491–94.

62. Matt. 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18–19. See Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, Anchor Bible 11 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988): 25; John Gray, *I and II Kings*, 2d ed., Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 463; Duncan McIntosh, “Baal-zebul,” in *ISBE* 1:381; Theodore J. Lewis, “Beelzebul,” in *ABD* 1:638–40; Walter A. Maier III, “Baal-zebul,” in *ABD* 1:554.

63. On Tell Qasile, see Dothan, *Philistines*, 63–67; Amihai Mazar, *Excavations at Tell Qasile*, part 1, Qedem 12 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1980). On Tel Miqne, see Gitin and Dothan, “Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines,” 200–5; Dothan, “Ekron of the Philistines,” 28–33.

consisted of a large hall with several small rooms adjoining it; some of the rooms had cultic platforms (*bāmôt*) 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 *bāmôt* 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 these areas.⁶⁴ Other than these features, extant Philistine temples show no differences from typical Canaanite temples.⁶⁵

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 Kings 1:2). They celebrated in the temples of their 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.⁶⁶

Philistine cultic apparatus give hints as to some of their religious practices.⁶⁷ The most distinctive type of object is the "Ashdoda," a cult figurine found complete at Ashdod and in fragments at other Philistine sites and incorporating Mycenaean, Cypriot, and Canaanite styles. This seated female figurine 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.⁶⁸ A distinctive cult vessel is the *kernos*, a hollow pottery ring found in several Philistine sites (e.g., Beth-shan and Beth-shemesh), although it is most commonly found in Cyprus. About ten inches in diameter, with small objects such as birds, fruits, and bowls set on its outer ring, it may have been used during a religious ceremony, in which liquid was poured into the ring and then poured out.⁶⁹ Another cultic vessel is the *rhyton*, a one-handed ritual or drinking cup with a lion's head decoration. It has been found at several Philistine sites, as well as at Mycenae and Knossos (on Crete) and is pictured on New Kingdom tomb walls in Egypt.⁷⁰

Philistine mourning and burial customs are reflected in the archeological

64. Dothan, *Philistines*, 66 and nn. 214–15; Mazar, *Excavations at Tell Qasile*, 61–73.

65. Brug, *Philistines*, 189–91.

66. Judg. 14:3; 15:18; 1 Sam. 14:6; 17:26, 36; 31:4; 2 Sam. 1:20; 1 Chron. 10:4; cf. 1 Sam. 18:25. See also Brug, *Philistines*, 13–14 and n. 41.

67. See Mazar, *Excavations at Tell Qasile*, 78–121; Dothan, *Philistines*, 219–51; Brug, *Philistines*, 184–88.

68. Dothan, "What We Know about the Philistines," 39–40; idem, *Philistines*, 234–37; Brug, *Philistines*, 185–86.

69. Dothan, "What We Know about the Philistines," 38–39; idem, *Philistines*, 222–24; Brug, *Philistines*, 184–85.

70. Dothan, "What We Know about the Philistines," 38, 40; idem, *Philistines*, 229–34.

remains.⁷¹ No cemeteries have been found in the major Philistine cities, but several elsewhere can be related to Philistine culture on the basis of tomb contents. One characteristic mourning custom is reflected in several figurines that have a long open dress revealing 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.⁷² 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-shan) are decorated with the distinctive fluted or "feathered" headgear known from the Egyptian reliefs of the Sea Peoples.⁷³

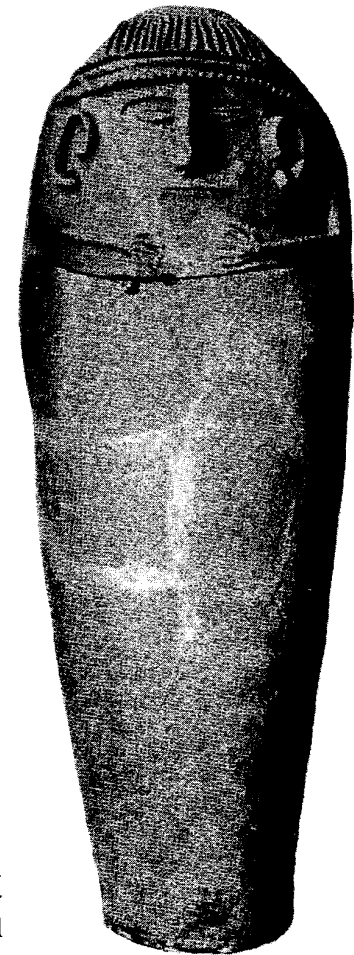
Conclusion

In summary, the Philistines were a complex people, incorporating groups and cultural influences from different times and places. Their zenith in world history was a brief period around 1150–1000, during which they were settled in southwestern Canaan. They left an indelible impression on Israelite society and history of the pe-

71. Dothan, "What We Know about the Philistines," 41–44; idem, *Philistines*, 252–88; Brug, *Philistines*, 148–64.

72. Dothan, "What We Know about the Philistines," 41, 44; idem, *Philistines*, 237–49; Brug, *Philistines*, 186.

73. Dothan, "What We Know about the Philistines," 41–44; idem, *Philistines*, 252–88; Brug, *Philistines*, 149–52.



Beth-shan anthropoid coffin, 11th century B.C. (height: 6' 1")

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority

riod. 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 archeological record in recent years has complemented the biblical record by illuminating their life and flourishing culture in ways that the biblical record did not.⁷⁴

Recommended Reading

- Bierling, Neal. *Giving Goliath His Due: New Archaeological Light on the Philistines*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- Brug, John F. *A Literary and Archaeological Study of the Philistines*. British Archaeological Reports, International Series 265. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1985.
- Dothan, Trude. *The Philistines and Their Material Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Dothan, Trude, and Moshe Dothan. *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines*. New York: Macmillan, 1992.
- Sanders, Nancy K. *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean, 1250–1150 B.C.* London: Thames & Hudson, 1978.

74. After this essay was completed, two books on the Philistines appeared: Neal Bierling, *Giving Goliath His Due: New Archaeological Light on the Philistines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); and Trude Dothan and Moshe Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Macmillan, 1992). Both are popular overviews of the Philistines, the latter by two archeologists who have directed digs at several Philistine sites. See my review of both books in *Archaeology in the Biblical World* 2.2 (1993).

Egyptians

James K. Hoffmeier

Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.
—Acts 7:22

Egypt, "the gift of the Nile," is strategically located at the northeastern tip of Africa, bordering on Sinai and Palestine. Surrounded by deserts on the east and west and naturally defended by a series of cataracts in the south, Egypt is an oasis sustained by the Nile and somewhat cut off from the rest of the world.¹

Strange as it may seem, the Egyptians had no single proper name for their land. Of their several expressions for Egypt, *ḥ.wy* ("the Two Lands") is one of the most common, and the title *Lord of the Two Lands* was regularly used by the pharaoh. Northern Egypt, including the delta, is known as Lower Egypt, while southern Egypt, moving upstream along the Nile, is Upper Egypt. In predynastic Egypt (before 3100), Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt had varying material cultures and worshiped different deities. The Memphite Theology, containing a tradition about the unification of Egypt by a southern king, says that the new capital, Memphis, was the "'Balance of the Two Lands' in which Upper and Lower Egypt had been weighed."² The striking contrast between the rich soil of the Nile Valley and its delta and the vast stretches of desert resulted in the names *kmt* ("the Black Land") and *dšrt*

1. For further information on Egyptian geography, see William C. Hayes, *Most Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Hermann Kees, *Ancient Egypt: Geographical History of the Nile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Karl W. Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization in Egypt: A Study in Cultural Ecology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); John Baines and Jaromír Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File, 1980).

2. Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–80), 1:53.