

BACKGROUND OF SHILOH & THE PHILISTINES

I. BACKGROUND OF THE CITY OF SHILOH

A. The Days of Joshua:

1. **Joshua 18:1** “The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at **Shiloh** and set up the tent of meeting there.”

- a. Shiloh becomes the center of Israel and where they gather with Joshua to divide the land.
- b. The ark and tabernacle will remain in Shiloh for 300-350 years. Perspective: America celebrates its 250-year anniversary 2026.



B. The Days of 1 Samuel:

1. The ark never returns to Shiloh after its capture in **1 Samuel 4**.

- a. Captured by Philistines – **1 Samuel 4**
 - b. Returned → Kiriath-jearim – **1 Samuel 7**
 - c. First failed move by David – **2 Samuel 6:1–11**
 - d. Successful arrival in Jerusalem – **2 Samuel 6:12–17**
2. **1 Samuel 4** speaks of the ark’s capture and defeat of Israel’s army but makes no mention of Shiloh being attacked or destroyed.
3. **Archaeology** indicates that after the Philistines captured the Ark (**1 Samuel 4**), the city of Shiloh was destroyed.

a. Archaeologist Israel Finkelstein PhD.

- i. “A destruction layer, including a thick accumulation of ash, was uncovered at Shiloh... This destruction is dated to the mid–11th century B.C.E.”¹
- ii. “The destruction layer is evident throughout the tell (city hill)...”²

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b. Excavations at Shiloh reveal a thick ash layer from the mid–11th century BC, matching the Bible’s account of Israel’s defeat and the loss of the Ark in **1 Samuel**.

4. **Scriptures outside of 1 Samuel speak of Shiloh’s destruction:**

- a. **Psalms 78:60-64** “He forsook his dwelling at **Shiloh**... the tent where he dwelt among mankind, ...and delivered his power to captivity, ...his glory to the hand of the foe... Fire devoured their young men... their priests fell by the sword...”
- b. **Jeremiah 7:11-15** “Go now to my place that was in **Shiloh**, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it” Again, **1 Samuel** makes no mention of this defeat (also see **Jeremiah 26:6, 9**).

5. **Why is 1 Samuel silent on Shiloh’s fall?** The pain was likely too close

II. THE BACKGROUND OF THE PHILISTINES: WHO AND WHERE?

A. They were Greeks & Italians invading Lebanon, Syria, Canaan, Mesopotamia & Egypt

1. **1 Samuel** mentions the Philistines more than all other book in the Bible combined.
2. **Josh. 13:1–3** shows Philistine territory part of the conquest.
3. The Egyptians called this league of nations the “*Sea People*.”
4. Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts speak about this invasion.
 - a. “*The enemy ships came... our cities are burned...*”³



¹ Israel Finkelstein, *Shiloh: The Archaeology of a Biblical Site*, 373–78, esp. discussion of Iron I destruction layer.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiloh_%28biblical_city%29?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ James B. Pritchard, ed., 138–139.

- b. *“They came from their islands... all at once the lands were removed and scattered.”⁴*
- c. *“The foreign countries made a conspiracy in their islands. All at once the lands were removed and scattered in the fray. No land could stand before their arms ...coming forward toward Egypt, ...flame prepared before them.”⁵*

5. **Their Name in Language:** Egyptian: p-r-s-t (Peleset)

Hebrew: פְּלִשְׁתִּים (*Pelištīm*) and in English, **Philistine**.⁶

- 6. They arrive during Aegean Greek History; 1200-1177 B.C.E., a few centuries after the battle of Troy and Achilles.
- 7. David and Goliath happen around 1020-1000 B.C.E. (ish)
- 8. Two traditions found in **1 Samuel 17** give further support for Identifying the Philistines as Greeks.
 - a. **Goliath is wearing bronze greaves** (shin armor). This was unique to Greek soldiers.
 - b. **Champion Fighting:** The challenge of two soldiers fighting one on one in place of the armies is an exclusive Greek theme of war.
- 9. The Philistines had five capitols on the coast; **Joshua 13:3** *“the five lords of the Philistines; those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.*
- 10. The facts support the Sea Peoples as Philistines & Israel's great adversary of **1 & 2 Samuel**.⁷
- 11. **Iron age:** King David leverages the technology of Iron & his military skill conquering them.
- 12. The Philistines will appear a few times after David's reign but more like the remnants of a marauding tribe than a nation (**2 Chron. 21:16–17; 2 Chron. 26:6–7; 2 Chron. 28:18**).

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III. ARE PALESTINIANS OF TODAY RELATED TO THE ANCIENT PHILISTIENS?

A. The facts from history, migration genealogy and geography say no. Here is why.

- 1. Twice Israel returned and reformed as a nation; 538 BC & 1948 AD.
- 2. “After a final revolt in 125 AD, Rome killed 500,000 Jews and enslaved more. The Emperor Hadrian banned Jews from Jerusalem renaming the land *Syria Palaestina*, after his fondness of the Greek book the Iliad. Syria Palaestina was referencing the Greeks of old.
 - a. **Eusebius 325 AD:** *“The whole nation was prohibited [by Emperor Hadrian] from entering the district around Jerusalem... and the land was called Syria Palaestina.”⁸*
 - b. *“At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina...”⁹ Jupiter Capitolina is the chief Roman god.*
 - c. **Dio Cassius 230 AD** *“Fifty of their most important outposts and 985 of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain... many more perished by famine, disease, and fire... thus nearly the whole of Judea was made desolate.”¹⁰ ...“The whole nation was prohibited from this time on from entering the district around Jerusalem... and the city was colonized by foreigners.”¹¹*
- 3. The Philistines (Greek descendants) were gone by the 10th century B.C.E.; eleven centuries before the Romanas drove out the Jews from Israel.
- 4. When Rome became Christian (Constantine) they continued to call It Palestine till Islam.

⁴ James B. Pritchard, ed., 262.

⁵ James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 262–263 (Medinet Habu inscription of Rameses III, Year 8).

⁶ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 339.

⁷ https://www.worldhistory.org/Sea_Peoples/

⁸ *Ecclesiastical History* 4.6; also cf. *Onomasticon*.

⁹ Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 69.12.1.

¹⁰ Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 69.14.1–2, in *Dio's Roman History*, trans. Earnest Cary, Loeb Classical Library 176 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925).

¹¹ Dio, *Roman History* 69.14.

5. 'After the Arab Muslim conquest in the 7th century (650 A.D.), Palestine experienced "a steady tribal inflow from the desert" along with conversions, which gradually transformed the population into an Arabic-speaking and predominantly Muslim society of immigrants.¹²
6. Gaza was once a Philistine city, but the people there today are not Philistines.
7. After Islam took root, no one referred to the area as "Palestine" till the British after WW1.

"Lessons in Ark-ology - Rabbit Foot Religion"

1 Samuel 4:1-22

I. WHAT BRINGS US TO THIS BATTLE?

A. The Introduction of a new Judge, Samuel. 1 SAULUEL 1-3

1. The first three chapters shine the light on Samuel's birth and upbringing.
2. The next few shine light on the ark and the death of the Judge Eli and his sons.

B. The Fall of the Old Leadership as we knew it 1 Samuel 1-7

1. Eli was the Judge. **1 Sam. 4:18 He had judged Israel forty years.**
2. We read the fall of Eli, the death of his sons, the defeat of Israel's army the capture of the ark & destruction of their capitol Shiloh.
3. **What is said concerning Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas?**
 - a. **2:12** they were "**worthless and knew not the Lord**"
 - b. **2:13-16, 29** They held no reverence for the sacrifices for God from His people.
 - c. **2:16** They were men of violence "**will take it by force.**"
 - d. **2:22** They had "**sex with the women serving at the gate of the tabernacle**" (adultery).
 - e. **3:13** "**blaspheming**" **ללל** Diminished God and considered his honor as insignificant. They did horrible things that were shameful. Plural, meaning they did a lot of them.
 - f. **2:30** They despised God by their conduct "**Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,' but now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me, for those who honor (כבוד) Kaved- Honor, weight. me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed (ללל blaspheme).**"
4. Note: Blaspheme in Hebrew is to reduce, diminish, disregard. And to honor means to give weight to someone. These themes fill these chapters.
5. **What Does God say concerning Eli?**
 - i. **2:29:** A prophet rebukes Eli saying you "**honor your sons above me.**"
 - ii. **3:13:** For **failing to restrain your sons.** Restrain is a poor translation for the concept **כהה** **literally "failing to censure"** Eli should have denounced & dismissed his sons from ministry because they were not just unqualified, they were vile.

II. LESSONS IN ARK-OLOGY

A. Time Changes everything

1. There is 350 years between Josua dividing the land from Shiloh and this moment.
 1. **Example: Is the Religious & Cultural environment of our country the same as in 1776?**
2. Joshua brings promise, the book of Judges brings problems, 350 yrs. Worth.
3. Everything rises and falls on leadership.

B. The First Battle

1. Israel went against the Philistines

¹² *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Palestine: From the Arab Conquest to 1900," accessed April 16, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Palestine/Roman-Palestine>.

2. The First Rattle: Lost 4,000 men
 - a. **Example:** Fill every seat in this room 10x and we have 4,000 people

C. Rabbit Foot Religion:

1. **1 Samuel 4:3** “Let us get the ark.” Elders who plan without prayer face peril.
2. Their solution was bringing the ark, and it guarantee the Lord’s presence with his people.¹³
 - a. **Advice:** The medieval church worshiped relics. God doesn’t and we shouldn’t.
3. The elders understood clearly that if God was not “with” them, defeat was inevitable (**Num 14:42; Deut. 1:42**). They mistakenly assumed, however, that wherever the ark was, the Lord would follow.¹⁴
 - a. **1 Sam. 4:11** “the ark of God was captured” The elders prayerless plans proved disasterous.
 - b. It was never the Ark of God. It was always the God of the Ark.
 - c. **Acts 17:24** The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,
4. The elders doubtless remembered the account of Joshua’s victory over Jericho, in which the ark was a highly visible symbol of divine help and strength (**Josh 6:2–20**; cf. also **Num 10:35**)¹⁵
5. A lesson from Adolescent Manipulation:
 - a. **Illustration:** Teenagers who make plans for a date and then ask for the car.
 - b. Bring the ark made the people feel the obligate God putting his reputation on the line.
 - c. This is putting God to the test, and it didn’t work.
6. When we, whether Israelites or Christians, operate this way, our concern is not to seek God but to control him, not to submit to God but to use him. So, we prefer religious magic to spiritual holiness; we are interested in success, not repentance.¹⁶

D. The Rebel Yell: (To scare the opposition psychologically)

1. **1 Samuel 4:5** As soon as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded.
 - a. There is a difference between Spirit filled faith and Emotion filled Hype.
2. “Lest the reader be tempted to join *all Israel* in their unrestrained enthusiasm (*great shout*) as the *ark of the LORD* is brought *into the camp* (v. 5), the narrator notes at the end of verse 4 that the ark is attended by *Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas*. This brief notice is ominous, given what the foregoing narratives have described of the shameful behavior of these two and the judgment certain to befall them.”¹⁷
3. **1 Samuel 4:6-9** And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, “What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” And when they learned that the ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, “A god has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. ⁸Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. ⁹Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight.”

E. The Second Battle

1. Israel loses the ark & 30,000 people.

¹³ Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 595.

¹⁴ Ronald F. Youngblood, 595.

¹⁵ Ronald F. Youngblood, 595.

¹⁶ Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 54.

¹⁷ V. Philips Long, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 73.

- a. **Example:** Fill every seat in this room 75 times and you have 30,000 people
2. Even the best plans go wrong unless we pray and place God's honor above our own.
3. Some say the problem was many suffered for the few (Hophni and Phinneaus) just like Achen at Jericho (**Joshua 7**) but the culture top to bottom was filled with frivolity.
4. **Abraham Lincoln:** "Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other".

IV. CONCLUSION: