

Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 15, Archaeology and the Rise of the Israelite Monarchy, Saul.

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This is Dr. Jeffrey Hudon in his teaching on Biblical Archaeology. This is session 15, Archaeology and the Rise of the Israelite Monarchy, Saul.

We begin our discussion on Archaeology and the Rise of the Israelite Monarchy with another few slides on the Philistines or the Sea Peoples.

And again, the Philistines, as far as we know, also by land but certainly by sea, invaded the coastal cities of Canaan at the end of the Late Bronze Age and established five capitals or epicenters like a Greek polis that were loosely confederated and these were Ekron, Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza. And so, they continued to want to push eastward to get land for growing crops, whereas the Israelites up in the hill country wanted to push westward to get those same areas of land in the Shephelah or the foothills. And so, you have this, again, conflict between the twelve Israelite tribes, particularly Judah and the Philistines.

We'll go site by site and talk about the Philistine and major Philistine sites, but here's an artist's depiction of a Philistine market at Ashkelon, probably one of the most extensively excavated Philistine cities, and again, some Philistine pottery. So, the idea from, for a long time, archaeologists with the Philistines are that you have Canaanite epicenters, large Canaanite cities, being destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Period, around 1200, and then repopulated by Sea Peoples, peoples from the Aegean, with completely different material culture. And these people included the group called the Philistines.

The first one, of course, is Ekron. We've already seen an artist's rendition of the massive temple that was discovered there at Tel Miqne. These are the project directors, Seymour Gittin and the late Trudy Dotan from Hebrew University.

This was the great inscription found near the end of the excavation and identified the site. It mentions Ekron and also Achish, the name Achish, which of course is known in an earlier context in the Bible. Ekron, Tel Miqne, was also a very large city.

You had an upper city, but then, in the 7th century, it expanded and became one of the largest olive oil producers in the Middle East, possibly the largest as far as we know. Gath we've seen several times, and again another 9th century Philistine pottery assemblage excavated. And, of course, the altar and the pictures of the site of Gath or Tel es-Safi.

And that's the excavator there holding the ostrakon, mentioning the name Goliath. That's Aaron Mayer of Bar-Ilan University. And Ashdod, and again, this is that Assyrian administrative center outside the walls of Ashdod that's recently been uncovered.

A very famous goddess called Ashdod made up, of course, was found at Ashdod the excavator Moshe Dothan. And a picture of the excavations as they were carried out in the 1960s. Ashdod, by the way, is also a seacoast city, but not right on the seacoast.

There are a few miles, a couple of miles, separating the site from the seacoast. So, there was also a port called Ashdod-Yam that was used in antiquity. And Ashkelon, again, was a very important Philistine city right on the coastline.

And you can see here the Middle Bronze Age moat and line of walls, kind of a bow-shaped course of those walls. And excavated here, the moat and the Glossean wall here, and the Middle Bronze Gateway, which has been restored. So, a lot of interesting finds from Ashkelon, a very major dig, well-funded, and again led by Larry Stager on the left and followed by Dan Master.

And that ceased operations here just a few years ago. Again, Gaza, another coastline city, is not very well excavated because it's built up to this day. So, a little bit more about the Philistines.

They established those five city-states or a series of polis, or whatever the plural form of polis is, ruled by not a king, but a lord, or in Hebrew, Saron. Saron was a term, probably an Aegean term, that was transliterated into Hebrew. Philistines were very advanced in metallurgy and had a monopoly initially on iron, so all the Philistine armies were equipped with iron spears, iron swords, and iron weaponry, whereas the Israelites and other adversaries had to deal with bronze.

So, this is very important, and if an Israelite farmer had an iron plow, as the book of 1 Samuel mentions, he had to go down and get that plow sharpened or repaired by a Philistine blacksmith because the Israelites simply didn't have that technology. Highly developed in Philistine, or excuse me, in material culture, architecture, and pottery, the Philistines were the cultural equivalent to Paris and New York during the period of the judges. We don't use this term anymore, but the term in English, older English, Philistine, used to mean uncultured or uncouth, but they were actually the opposite.

The Israelites were actually the hillbillies, the uncultured people. The Philistines were cultured and more high society, highbrow type of people. And so, you think you put yourself in the position of Samson or somebody living in those rural, rustic, hill

country villages and looking down at the lights of Timna or Ekron or Gath and see the fantastic temples and architecture and nightlife going on there, you're drawn to that.

And so that's the idea that that is given by the material culture and the artifacts we have excavated at Philistine sites. Very, very advanced. Philistine pottery went through various stages.

This is kind of something for a little bit of laughs here that I pulled off from online. But that's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu giving a lecture on Philistine pottery. Not really.

But anyway, the first stage was monochrome pottery, which is the same as Mycenaean pottery from the Aegean. Then bichrome debased. And then, finally, late Philistine decorated ware.

That's kind of the stage of the development of Philistine pottery through the centuries. And you can see some examples here, a beer jug, and some other forms. Again, they serve similar purposes, stirrup jar and crater and whatnot.

They serve similar purposes as pottery for other peoples, including Israelites, but very distinctive in form, manufacture, the actual construction of the pottery, and of course, the finish.

Okay, now we turn to the Israelites and go back to a site we visited before, Ispit sarda. What a contrast.

This is that four room house and that ostrakon found there. The Israelite tribes were only very loosely confederated. They were not united.

Rustic material culture, again, is very, very practical and only for use, for their use, not for their beauty or artistic appearance at all. There are a couple of pictures of Shiloh again; of course, this is where Samuel grew up under Eli, the priest. And again, Scott, I can't think of his name; he's affiliated with ABR, Stripling.

Scott Stripling is excavating the site of Shiloh and claims to have found the site where the tabernacle was erected, the tent of meeting. So, the Ark narrative, again, a passage in 1 Samuel about the Ark being captured by the Philistines and then returned via the Sorek Valley. And, then finally ended up at the house of Abinadab at Kiryat Yarim before David brought it to Jerusalem.

It creates an interesting account of, basically a theological account of how God is not confined to a box. We tend to, like the Israelites did, okay, the Ark is with us. God is with us. You can't do that.

They learned that the hard way as they were destroyed. The army was destroyed by the Philistines. Actually, Shiloh itself, as excavations have shown, was destroyed at that time.

So, the Philistines came right up into the hill country and destroyed Shiloh itself. Now, at this time, kind of in a transition period between the period of judges or these charismatic leaders, one of which was Samuel, and, and, and having a king, Israel was teetering, the tribes are teetering, saying, maybe we do need a king. And this is an important text, very important text, because it gives us an idea of what kingship meant at that time in the ancient Near East.

Let's read these words. With this in mind, we can study the archaeology of the monarchy.

Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, what? This is what a king, a king who will reign over you, will claim as his rights. He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his official officials and attendants.

Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.

But the people refused to listen to Samuel. No, they said, we want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations with a king to lead us and to go out before us to fight our battles.

When Samuel heard all that, the people had said, he repeated it before the Lord. The Lord answered, listen to them and give them a king. And that king, of course, was Saul, a Benjaminite.

Saul, for every outward appearance, appeared to be a king. He was handsome and tall and a mighty warrior. He became a king.

There are two accounts of that in the Old Testament. He made his capital at a site called Gibeah or Givat Shaul, named after him. As we mentioned earlier, that is believed to be the site of Tel el-Ful, north of Jerusalem, on the road to Ramallah.

We mentioned King Hussein's unfinished palace here. This is an artist's depiction of what Saul's palace may have looked like. Only one corner, tower, and a few other walls have been excavated, first by Albright and then by Paul Lapp, before Hussein started construction.

And again, especially with Albright, the records were not well done. The stratigraphy wasn't controlled. And so, it's difficult to know exactly the full history of this site exactly when things were built, and how things were laid out.

But a great picture here of the corner of Saul's tower at Gibeah. And now this is all heavily populated buildings, high-rises and everything else after all those years. David and Goliath.

Again, there are there are many theology and faith lessons here. But let's look at what the archaeological data can tell us. At about this time, the idea of champions from two sides of a conflict, two armies going out and attacking each other man to man, was common in the Aegean.

This has been demonstrated by different scholars and texts. Also, Goliath, by his name, was not an ethnic Philistine or Aegean. He was probably a mercenary and probably local.

He was from Gath and probably his ancestors were at Gath before the Philistines came to the region. And he was probably descended, most likely descended from the giants mentioned in Genesis and other texts, the Nephilim or the sons of Anak or Anakim and others. This was probably one of their descendants who was a very, very large man.

We've seen pictures of the Elah Valley before. And there's another one there with the lineup of armies and this personal combat that took place between David and Goliath. Now, when David served Saul after he killed Goliath, Saul became jealous, and David led and organized a group of followers, David's personal army, and they went to the wilderness of Judah, to the regions east of Jerusalem and Bethlehem and Hebron.

And a great place to hide. And they hid from Saul because Saul was chasing them wanting to kill David out of jealousy. And David eventually, of course, went over to Gath and served the king of Gath, Achish, and was given the site of David's town, which I'll think of in a minute, forgive me.

And he was supposed to be raiding Israelite settlements. He actually was raiding Amalekite settlements. And that was a lot of his career under the Philistines.

Now, in the end, he and his men were supposed to accompany the Philistines up to fight the Israelites at the Jezreel Valley. And fortunately, they didn't trust him enough to do that. He was disinvented from that engagement, which resulted in Saul's death.

And, of course, that occurred at Mount Gilboa. And that was, again, not God's choice for king, but Israel's choice for king. And his son, Jonathan, was killed.

And actually, Saul committed suicide. And that was a great, great loss for Israel, that defeat by the Philistines at Gilboa. And that ended the reign of Saul.

Thank you.

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