

Lessons from Samson

on

Faith, Valor, Deception & Repentance

*(When quoting scriptures, from the Rotherham Emphasized Bible New Testament,
I will substitute the Hebrew word Yahshua for Jesus, Yahweh and Elohim for God and Anointed for Christ.)*

Yahshua (Joshua) instructed the children of Israel that, “One man of you, can chase a thousand,—for, Yahweh your Elohim, is he that fighteth for you...” (Josh. 23:10). Samson, a judge of Israel for twenty years, fulfilled the words of Yahshua as recorded above. He killed, in one day, one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.¹ Yahweh raised up judges, such as Samson, to save Israel from the hand of their enemies.² A judge of Israel was called to administer Yahweh’s justice,³ which Samson unleashed on the Philistines including their god Dagon. Yahweh called Samson from his birth for a purpose to, “save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (Jud. 13:5); Samson, a man filled with the spirit of Yahweh, a man of strength and weaknesses, made Yahweh’s Hall of Fame as recorded in Hebrews 11. His life is recorded for our instruction on how to imitate his faith, valor and repentance and also to learn to evade and expose the deceptions of darkness.

The Lesson of Samson’s Faith and Valor

The name ‘Samson’ means “like the sun.” Yahweh is referred to as the sun; “...for, a sun and shield, is Yahweh Elohim” (Ps. 84:11). Samson was a judge as also is Yahweh; “Let Yahweh, the Judge, give judgment today...” (Jud.11:22). Samson was Yahweh’s hands, feet and mouth. Yahweh sometimes fulfills His plans in unorthodox ways. (See the paper, “Yahweh’s Plans Accomplished in Unorthodox Ways,” under “Understanding Yahweh’s Word”) Samson’s mission was to “begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (Jud. 13:5). Why were the Philistines still in the land of Canaan? The children of Israel disobeyed Yahweh’s commandment to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan. (See Appendix A) Yahweh commanded them to “...smite them [Canaanites], thou shalt devote them to destruction, thou shalt not solemnise with them a covenant, neither shalt thou shew them favour” (Deu. 7:2). The Israelites were also told, “thine eye shall not look with pity upon them” (Deu. 7:16). The Israelites did not fully keep these commandments, resulting in their lives being kept in bondage, at different times, by the nations they were commanded

¹ And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass,—have I piled them up in heaps! With the jawbone of an ass, have I smitten a thousand men! Judges 15:16

² Jud 2:18 And, when Yahweh raised them up judges, then was Yahweh with the judges, and saved them out of the hand of their enemies, all the days of the judge,—for Yahweh was grieved at their outcry, because of them who oppressed them, and ill-treated them.

³ Jud 4:5 she used to sit, therefore, under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel, in the hill country of Ephraim,—and the sons of Israel came up to her, for justice.

Ruth 1:1 And it came to pass, in the days when the Judges administered justice...

to destroy. Yahweh's blessing on Israel, as well as upon ourselves, is dependent upon us fully obeying His voice.

Yahshua (Joshua) destroyed thirty-one Canaanite kingdoms but because of his age and time he could not destroy the rest of the nations, which included the Philistines (Jos. 13:1-2). The tribes of Israel would have to destroy the rest of the nations but some of them were slothful. "So Yahshua [Joshua] said unto the sons of Israel,—How long, will ye be too slothful, to enter in and take possession of the land, which Yahweh Elohim of your fathers, hath given unto you" (Jud. 18:3)? After Yahshua's death, Israel disobeyed Yahweh's commandment to destroy the rest of the inhabitants of the land, which resulted in the Philistines remaining in power (Josh. 1:21-36). (See Appendix B) The Israelites kept them as neighbors, intermarried with them and taxed them. The consequence being, as Moses prophesied, they began following the gods of Canaan (Deu. 7:4). The time span between Yahshua's (Joshua's) death and Samson was over 300 years. The time span from Samson to David was approximately 130 years. We have approximately 430 years of the Philistines harming Israel because Yahweh's original commandment to destroy them was not adhered to by the Israelites.

The Judge, 'Shamgar,' who judged Israel approximately 150 years before Samson, by himself killed six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad. This saved Israel for a period of time but the sons of Israel again, did the thing that was wicked in the sight of Yahweh,—so Yahweh delivered them up into the hand of the Philistines, forty years (Jud. 3:31, 13:1). Samson, by himself, would be called to accomplish Yahweh's will, which was to destroy the Philistines and give Israel their inheritance. Why was he alone? The rest of the Israelites lacked the faith and courage to help Samson fulfill Yahweh's will against the Philistines (Jud. 15:11). This cowardness was similar to the event when of twelve spies when they were sent out to spy out the land of Canaan. Out of the twelve spies only two were full of faith, Yahshua and Caleb, while the other ten were full of fear (Deu. 1:26-40).

From Samson's birth unto his death, he was a vessel separated unto Yahweh. Yahweh blessed him and the spirit of Yahweh began to urge him to and fro among the Philistines. A lion attacked Samson but the spirit of Yahweh came mightily upon him and he tore the lion apart, bare handed (Jud. 14:5-6). Yahweh urged him to take a wife of the Philistines, even though intermarrying was against Yahweh's commandment.⁴ (Yahweh can make

⁴ And Samson went down to Timnath,—and saw a woman in Timnath, of the daughters of the Philistines. So he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said—A woman, have I seen in Timnath, of the daughters of the Philistines,—now, therefore, take her for me, to wife. And his father and his mother said to him—Is there not, among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, a woman, that thou art going away to take a woman from among the uncircumcised Philistines? But Samson said unto his father—Take, her, for me, for, she, is pleasant in mine eyes. Now, his father and his mother, knew not, that, from Yahweh, it was, that, an occasion [opportunity], he was seeking of the Philistines,—at that time, the Philistines having dominion over Israel. Now, his father and his mother, knew not, that, from Yahweh, it was, that, an occasion, he was seeking of the Philistines,—at that time, the Philistines having dominion over Israel. Jud. 14:1-4

When Yahweh thy God shall bring thee into the land which thou art going in to possess, and shall clear away many nations from before thee—the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites, and the Canaanites and the Perizzites, and the Hivites and the Jebusites...thou shalt not solemnise with them a covenant, neither shalt thou shew them favour; neither shalt thou intermarry with them,—thy daughter, shalt thou not give unto his son, nor, his daughter, shalt thou take for thy son; Deu. 7:1-3

exceptions for His own commandments.) Yahweh's judgment on the Philistines, through Samson, began after Samson's Philistine wife betrayed him, which resulted in the spirit of Yahweh coming upon him, and he killed thirty Philistines (Jud. 14:19). He then destroyed their crops by fire. Later on he killed one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass newly–slain (Jud. 15:15).

(Samson's life must have been an inspiration to David who also was a mighty man of faith⁵ and valor, called and anointed with the spirit of Yahweh to fight the Philistines.⁶ Like Samson, David also killed a lion with his bare hands, after he was anointed with the spirit of Yahweh.⁷ David killed the champion of the Philistines, Goliath, with a sling and beheaded him in front of the troops; Yahweh wrought a great victory by David for all Israel (I Sam. 19:5). "So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands" (1Sam. 18:7). One other similarity between Samson and David was that Samson sinned with Delilah and David sinned with Bathsheba. Both suffered greatly for their sin and both repented and both were restored to serve Yahweh until their death. One significant difference between Samson and David is that Samson stood alone against the Philistines, while David did not, which might have accounted for Samson's premature death. "And it came to pass [approximately 130 years after Samson], after this, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them,—and took Gath and her villages, out of the hand of the Philistines...so Yahweh gave victory to David, whithersoever he went" (I Chron. 18:1,6).

Samson believed Yahweh and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Yahweh is a Jealous Elohim.⁸ The Philistines and some of the Israelites worshipped Dagon, while Samson worshipped Yahweh (Jud. 10:6). Yahweh conquered the Egyptian gods through Moses;⁹ He had Gideon throw down the altar of Baal and cut down the sacred stem (Jud. 6:26); He had Samson assault Dagon by conquering the Philistines. Samson represented 'Yahweh' as the Philistines represented the god 'Dagon' (Jud. 16:23). (In David's time the Ark of Yahweh was brought into the temple of Dagon, which resulted in Dagon bowing down to Yahweh.¹⁰) A man of uncommon valor and faith, filled with the spirit of Yahweh conquered thousands; defeating Dagon. Samson judged Israel for twenty years instead of

⁵ 1Sa 17:37 And David said, Yahweh, who hath rescued me out of the power of the lion, and out of the power of the bear, he, will rescue us out of the hand of this Philistine. Then said Saul unto David—Go! and, Yahweh, will be with thee.

⁶ 1Sa 16:13 And Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren. And the spirit of Yahweh came mightily upon David, from that day forward.

⁷ 1Sa 17:36 Thy servant could slay, either a lion or a bear,—and, this uncircumcised Philistine, shall become, as one of them, for he hath reproached the ranks of a Living Elohim.

⁸ De 5:9 thou shalt not bow thyself down to them, nor be led to serve them,—for, I Yahweh, thy Elohim, am a jealous El, visiting the iniquity of fathers upon sons, even unto three generations and unto four, unto them that hate me;

⁹ Ex 12:12 I will pass along, therefore, throughout the land of Egypt, this night, and will smite every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from man even to beast,—and, against all the gods of Egypt, will I execute judgments—I, Yahweh.
I Kings 18:21–40

¹⁰ 1Sa 5:4 And, when they rose up early in the morning of the morrow, lo! Dagon, was lying prostrate on his face to the earth, before the ark of Yahweh—and, the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, had been cut off against the threshold, only, Dagon himself, was left to him.

forty years, as did the judges Othniel, Deborah, Gideon and David. Why? Probably because of his premature death, which was the result of the deception of Delilah.

Samson honored his vow to Yahweh, up until the deception of Delilah, as ‘One Separate,’ which is the Hebrew word, ‘Nazirite.’ We have no record that the Israelites helped him in his mission to destroy the Philistines but the spirit of Yahweh armed him completely. We also have a vow with Yahshua; we have been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Yahshua and by the spirit of Yahweh. For we have been bought with a price! Therefore we are commanded to glorify Yahweh in our bodies (I Cor. 6:11-20). Samson was equipped with the spirit of Yahweh, which enabled him to perform the will of Yahweh supernaturally. We also are equipped with the supernatural power that comes from the spirit of Yahweh. Yahshua told us, “He that believeth on me, the works which, I, am doing, he also, shall do; and, greater than these, shall he do, because, I, unto the Father, am going” (Jn. 14:12). We are the Body of the Christ clothed with power from on high. Samson executed the will of Yahweh alone, as we also may have to. Our warning from Yahweh is to learn from the deception that blinded, imprisoned and enslaved Samson.

The Lesson of Delilah

The name ‘Delilah,’ is derived from the Hebrew word, ‘dalal.’ The meaning of dalal is “to hang, languish, hang down, be low.” The first usage of dalal is in Judges 6:6; “Thus was Israel greatly *impoverished* [dalal], because of Midian,—and the sons of Israel made outcry unto Yahweh.” Another usage of dalal is in Psalm 79:8, “Do not remember against us former iniquities,—Haste thee, let thy compassions, come to meet us, For we have been *brought very low* [dalal]”! The lessons we will learn from Delilah are:

- 1) Not to fellowship with darkness; people, religion, movies, books, video games, etc.
- 2) Darkness’s mission is to blind us, put us into chains and enslave us to work for it.
- 3) Yahweh’s power will depart when we fellowship with darkness;
- 4) Yahweh will return when we return to Him.

Samson was impoverished and brought very low because of Delilah, as also we will be if we fellowship with darkness. Samson’s fellowship with Delilah resulted in his blindness, imprisonment and enslavement; “And the Philistines seized him, and put out his eyes,—and took him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of bronze, and it came to pass that he used to grind in the prison” (Jud. 16:21).

Fellowshipping with Darkness

Yahweh has commanded us not to fellowship with darkness (II Cor. 6:14-18). He has warned us that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (I Cor. 5, Gal. 5). Proverbs 6:27 says, “Can a man snatch up fire in his bosom, and, his clothes, not be burned?” What is the, ‘Delilah,’ in our lives, whose purpose it is to blind, imprison and enslave us? The tools of deception are enticing lies told seductively. Our fellowshipping with darkness could be an

intimate relationship with an unbeliever; religion disguised as Christianity;¹¹ activity such as violent video games; movies we should not view; books we should not read or television programs we should not watch. At first Samson felt in control of Delilah. Their relationship was pleasurable to Samson and he was deceived into believing that Delilah loved him. As time moved on, the darkness engulfed Samson; instead of him controlling Delilah, darkness had control over him. Father has warned us, “Be not getting diversely yoked with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Beliar? Or what part hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a shrine of Yahweh with idols? For, we, are *the* shrine of an Elohim, that liveth:—even as Yahweh hath said—will dwell in them, and walk, and will be their Elohim, and, they, shall be my people” (II Cor. 6:14-16). Our adversary’s purpose is to veil Yahweh’s Word, thereby blinding the minds of the unbelieving so that evil may abound (II Cor. 4:4). Yahweh’s purpose is to open our eyes and to turn us from darkness unto the light, and the authority of Satan unto Himself (Acts 26:18). Samson became blind by choosing darkness over Yahweh.

Saul, before he became the Apostle Paul, was blinded, imprisoned and enslaved by false religion. His Delilah was false Judaism. Saul was deceived into working for the slanderer when he thought he was pleasing Yahweh. Christ said, “there cometh an hour, that, every one who killeth you, shall think to be rendering, divine service, unto Yahweh” (Jn. 16:2)! Why was Paul blinded by deception? He did not adhere to the written Word of Yahweh but was practicing the doctrines and traditions of men. Yahshua (Joshua) fulfilled his mission because He obeyed the commandment from Yahweh that said, “This scroll of the law must not cease out of thy mouth, but thou must talk to thyself therein, day and night, that thou mayest take heed to do according to all that is written therein,—for, then, shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and, then, shalt thou have good success” (Josh. 1:8). Samson’s encounter with his Delilah led him away from Yahweh unto his own demise.

Being Deceived

The slanderer has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:6). Being deceived implies, “the imposing of an idea or belief that contributes to a person’s bewilderment or helplessness or makes him further the agent’s end.”¹² Samson loved a woman in the ravine of Shorek, whose, name, was Delilah (Jud. 16:4). Samson did not discern that Delilah was his enemy and that she would receive eleven hundred pieces of silver for his capture (Jud. 16:5). She was no friend to Samson, as the serpent was no friend to Eve, even though he promised her the enticing lie, “Ye shall not, die.” We must not underestimate the ability of the deceiver as he works through people and other alluring avenues such as entertainment. The coveting

¹¹ **United Church of Christ; 1972: Ordination of first openly gay minister** The UCC's Golden Gate Association ordains the first openly gay person as a minister in a mainline Protestant denomination: the Rev. William R. Johnson. In the following three decades, General Synod urges equal rights for homosexual citizens and calls on congregations to welcome gay, lesbian and bisexual members. In 2005 General Synod goes one step further: it becomes the first leadership body of a large U.S. church to support equal marriage rights for same-sex couples; <http://www.stillspeaking.com/about/beliefs.htm>

¹² Deceive; Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary

of the flesh, the coveting of the eyes, and the vain grandeur of life is of the world whose path leads to destruction (I Jn. 2:16). We must realize that “our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but, against the principalities, against the authorities, against the world-holders, of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies” (Eph. 6:12). Delilah was an agent for the Philistines, who were the agents for our adversary. Delilah wanted money; the Philistines wanted revenge; the adversary wanted the Israelites enslaved so he could accuse them before Yahweh.¹³

Putting Out Our Eyes, Binding Us with Chains Grinding in the Enemies Prison

The slanderer’s mission is to blind us to the truth of Yahweh’s Word, thereby imprisoning us and having us work for him. After we have been blinded and imprisoned we begin to grind in the prison or otherwise work for the deceiver. If we rebel against our Father’s instructions, we will forge the same chains that will bind us. Samson, the judge who walked the supernatural walk with Yahweh, became blinded, imprisoned and enslaved. This also is the intention of our adversary when he entices us with temptation; the end result being our slavery. James 1:14-15 explains Samson’s scenario as well as ours, if we do not heed to Father’s Words of Life; “but, each one, is tempted, when, by his own coveting, he is drawn out and enticed, Then, the coveting, having conceived, giveth birth to sin, and, the sin, when full-grown, bringeth forth death.” Our worldly coveting leads to sin, which can eventually lead to our premature death. The slanderer has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9). Our Life’s Compass is the written Word of Yahweh. Once we discard that compass, thereby choosing slavery, we will be “billow-tossed and shifted round with every wind of teaching,—in the craft of men, in knavery suited to the artifice of error” (Eph. 4:14).

Yahweh’s Departure

“And she [Delilah] made him sleep upon her knees, and called for a man, and caused him to shave off the seven braids of his head,—and she began to humble him, and his strength departed from him. And she said—The Philistines, are upon thee, Samson! And he awoke out of his sleep, and said—I will go out now, as time after time, and shake myself free: he, not knowing, that, Yahweh, had departed from him” (Jud. 16:19-20). Yahweh does not leave us but we leave Yahweh resulting in our loss of spiritual protection and power. Today we are children of Yahweh and we cannot lose His gift of holy spirit as Samson did but when we are walking in darkness we are blinded, not knowing where we are going. The confession and repentance of our sins cleanses us from all unrighteousness, enabling us to be able to walk in power and fellowship, with Christ and our Father (I Jn. 1:9). Forgiveness is received in a twinkling of an eye!

¹³ Re 12:10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying—Now, hath come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our Elohim, and the authority of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren hath been cast out, who was accusing them before our Elohim day and night;

The Lesson of Samson's Repentance and Forgiveness

Samson's repentance and faith resulted in his forgiveness and the restoration of his supernatural strength, which was derived from the spirit of Yahweh. "So then Samson cried unto Yahweh [*repentance*], and said,—My Lord Yahweh! remember me, I pray thee,—and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O Elohim, that I may be avenged, with one avenging, for my two eyes, upon the Philistines. Then did Samson grasp [*faith*] the two middle pillars, whereon the house rested, and whereon it was upheld, and he braced himself against them,—the one with his right hand, and the other with his left. And Samson said—Let my soul die with the Philistines! And he bowed mightily [*supernatural power*], and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead, whom he slew at his death, were more than they whom he slew in his life" (Jud. 16:28-30). Yahweh's will to "save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines," was in part accomplished by One Man, who dared to believe Yahweh. We also can receive absolution from our sins, resulting in our eyes being opened, our chains being broken and our position in the Body of the Christ restored. When we walk in the light, we no longer serve the enemy but the one who died for us. Our spiritual strength, derived from our gift of holy spirit, operated by faith, can extinguish every fiery dart of the wicked one, as promised in Ephesians chapter six; thereby delivering the Body of the Christ and mankind from wickedness. Yahweh has promised us that we will not be blinded, imprisoned or enslaved if we obey his words. We also have the ability and the duty to exercise spiritual power, like Samson, because we have received the gift of holy spirit. Christ is our Head and we are his powerful Body. Let our actions be well pleasing in his sight, by walking by faith, exhibiting valor and exposing the deceptions of our adversary!

Appendix A

The Destruction of the Canaanite Nations

By Joseph Bryant Rotherham

(Page 259 of the “Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible”)

In reviewing the destruction of the nations of Canaan, it is most important to bear in mind the terrible nature of the crimes for which they were exterminated. Their very worship was grossly sensual and revoltingly cruel. In honor of their deities women surrendered their virtue. Their sacred places were brothels. The generative organs were openly represented by disgusting symbols. The people had holy prostitutes, male and female. Lustful gods are cruel, and demanding to be worshiped with human blood. Hence, to the king-idol Molech, the Canaanites, with some contiguous nations, immolated (to sacrifice) their sons and daughters. At such crimes as these nature shudders; and the Palestine was fain (glad, rejoiced), in abhorrence, to eject her inhabitants. Who shall say that the Most High has not the right to extinguish such polluters of the earth and contaminators of mankind as these? Doubtless the world has been made permanently the sweeter and the more habitable by reason of the occasional Divine use of the besom (to sweep with force or violence) of destruction. Let us remember that there was long waiting before these nations were destroyed. Not till their iniquity was “full” did the stroke of vengeance fall. It was doubtless both safe and kind that the extermination was to be made ruthlessly complete. And let us not forget that Joshua’s commission was divine, direct, positive, explicit and repeated; and therefore no example for generals destitute of such sanctions. How far other commanders may volunteer, or be lawfully commissioned, to follow Joshua’s example is, for us, a question of casuistry¹⁴ into which we are not here called upon to enter. Moreover, Divine Mercy drew a line around the devoted nations, and outside that line people might be spared unless, indeed, the interdict went forth against them; while, on the other hand, Divine Equity warned the Hebrews that, if they fell into the same sins, they would receive a like punishment. For their father’s sake, indeed, they were not to be utterly annihilated; but short of that, if they would sin, they must suffer. Their land would vomit them forth, We know the sad sequel: they fell into sensual and cruel idol-worship; and Yahweh kept His word, as the captivities of Assyria and Babylon attest. We have yet to trace the long and painful story of Israel’s sin and punishment: let us be thankful that we shall also have the privilege of turning over a brighter leaf and dwelling on glowing prophetic songs of redemption, deliverance and salvation...

To complete, once for all, the needful reference to this painful and admonitory subject, the student has only to connect the worship of the Golden Calf (Ex. 32) with the Egyptian worship of Apis, as briefly disclosed by the “Encyclopedia Britannica,” to apprehend why, on that occasion, the sedate Moses was driven frantic with consternation; and has only to conceive, in the light of the facts indicated in Numbers 25 and in this note, the real nature of the awful snare into which Israel fell at Baal-peor,¹⁵ to apprehend that instant excision alone could be trusted to prevent national extermination.

¹⁴ The science, art, or reasoning of the casuist; that part of Ethics which resolves cases of conscience, applying the general rules of religion and morality to particular instances in which ‘circumstances alter cases’, or in which there appears to be a conflict of duties. Often (and perhaps originally) applied to a quibbling or evasive way of dealing with difficult cases of duty; sophistry.

¹⁵ Master of the generative organ; a Moabitish idol in whose worship females prostituted themselves. Davies’ H. L.

Appendix B

The Philistines

Philistines: (immigrants), The origin of the Philistines is nowhere expressly stated in the Bible; but as the prophets describe them as "the Philistines-from Caphtor," Am 9:7 and "the remnant of the maritime district of Caphtor" Jer 47:4 it is prima facie probable that they were the Caphtorim which came out of Caphtor" who expelled the Avim from their territory and occupied it; in their place, De 2:23 and that these again were the Caphtorim mentioned in the Mosaic genealogical table among the descendants of Mizraim. Ge 10:14 It has been generally assumed that Caphtor represents Crete, and that the Philistines migrated from that island, either directly or through Egypt, into Palestine. But the name Caphtor is more probably identified with the Egyptian Coptos. [CAPHTOR]

History. --The Philistines must have settled in the land of Canaan before the time of Abraham; for they are noticed in his day as a pastoral tribe in the neighborhood of Gerur. Ge 21:32,34; 26:1,8 Between the times of Abraham and Joshua the Philistines had changed their quarters, and had advanced northward into the plain of Philistia. The Philistines had at an early period attained proficiency in the arts of peace. Their wealth was abundant, Jud 16:5,19 and they appear in all respects to have been a prosperous people. Possessed of such elements of power, they had attained in the time of the judges an important position among eastern nations. About B.C. 1200 we find them engaged in successful war with the Sidonians. Justin xviii. 3. The territory of the Philistines having been once occupied by the Canaanites, formed a portion of the promised land, and was assigned the tribe of Judah. Jos 15:2,12,45-47 No portion of it, however, was conquered in the lifetime of Joshua, Jos 13:2 and even after his death no permanent conquest was effected, Jud 3:3 though we are informed that the three cities of Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron were taken. Jud 1:18 The Philistines soon recovered these, and commenced an aggressive policy against the Israelites, by which they gained a complete ascendancy over them. Individual heroes were raised up from time to time, such as Shamgar the son of Anath, Jud 3:31 and still more Samson, Judg 13-16, but neither of these men succeeded in permanently throwing off the yoke. The Israelites attributed their past weakness to their want, of unity, and they desired a king, with the special object of leading them against the foe. 1Sa 8:20 Saul threw off the yoke; and the Philistines were defeated with great slaughter at Geba. 1Sa 13:3 They made no attempt to regain their supremacy for about twenty-five years, and the scene of the next contest shows the altered strength of the two parties. It was no longer in the central country, but in a ravine leading down to the Philistine plain, the valley of Elah, the position of which is about 14 miles southwest of Jerusalem. On this occasion the prowess of young David secured success to Israel, and the foe was pursued to the gates of Gath and Ekron. 1Sa 17:1 ... The power of the Philistines was, however, still intact on their own territory. The border warfare was continued. The scene of the next conflict was far to the north, in the valley of Esdraelon. The battle on this occasion proved disastrous to the Israelites; Saul himself perished, and the Philistines penetrated across the Jordan and occupied the, forsaken cities. 1Sa 31:1-7 On the appointment of David to be king, he twice attacked them, and on each occasion with signal success, in the first case capturing their images, in the second pursuing them "from Geba until thou come to Gazer." 2Sa 5:17-25; 1Ch 14:8-16 Henceforth the Israelites appear as the aggressors. About seven years after the defeat at Rephaim, David, who had now consolidated his power, attacked them on their own soil and took Gath with its dependencies. The whole of Philistia was included in Solomon's empire. Later when the Philistines, joined by the Syrians and Assyrians, made war on the kingdom of Israel, Hezekiah formed an alliance with the Egyptians, as a counterpoise to the Assyrians, and the possession of Philistia became henceforth the turning-point of the struggle between the two great empires of the East. The Assyrians under Tartan, the general of Sargon, made an expedition against Egypt, and took Ashdod, as the key of that country. Isa 20:1,4,5 Under Senacherib, Philistia was again the scene of important operations. The Assyrian supremacy was restored by Esarhaddon, and it seems probable that the Assyrians retained their hold on Ashdod until its capture, after a long siege, by Psammetichus. It was about this time that Philistia was traversed by a vast Scythian horde on their way to Egypt. The Egyptian ascendancy was not as yet re-established, for we find the next king, Necho, compelled to besiege Gaza on his return from the battle of Megiddo. After the death of Necho the contest was renewed between the Egyptians and the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, and the result was specially disastrous to the Philistines. The "old hatred" that the Philistines bore to the Jews was exhibited in acts of hostility at the time of the Babylonish captivity, Eze 25:15-17 but on the return this was somewhat abated, for some of the Jews married Philistine women, to the great scandal of their rulers. Ne 13:23,24 From this time the history of Philistia is absorbed in the struggles of the neighboring kingdoms. The latest notices of the Philistines as a nation occur in 1 Macc. 3-5. Institutions, religion, etc. -- With regard to the institutions of the Philistines our information is very scanty, The five chief cities had, as early as the days of Joshua, constituted themselves into a confederacy, restricted however, in all probability, to matters of offence and defence. Each was under the government of a prince, Jos 13:3; Jud 3:3 etc.; 1Sa 18:30; 29:6 and each possessed its own territory. The Philistines appear to have been deeply imbued with superstition: they carried their idols with them on their campaigns, 2Sa 5:21 and proclaimed their victories in their presence. 1Sa 31:9 The gods whom they chiefly worshipped was Dagon, Jud 16:23; 1Sa 5:3-5; 1Ch 10:10

LIMITS OF ISRAELITE SETTLEMENT AND THE LAND YET TO BE CONQUERED
JOSH. 13:1-7; 15:63; 16:10; 17:11-18
JUDG. 1:1-3:6

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- City specified by Judges 1 as not taken by Israel
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Limit of Israelite control
- Areas yet to be conquered

