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To cite this article: M. H. Segal (1922) David's War Against The Philistines, Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 54:2, 74-78, DOI: [10.1179/peq.1922.54.2.74](https://doi.org/10.1179/peq.1922.54.2.74)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/peq.1922.54.2.74>

Published online: 19 Jul 2013.

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DAVID'S WAR AGAINST THE PHILISTINES.

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THE events of the great War which David waged against the Philistines in the early years of his reign are recorded in a number of fragmentary notices in various parts of the Second Book of Samuel. The passages are as follows: 2 Sam. v, 17-21; v, 22-25; viii, 1; xxi, 15-17; 18; 19; 20-21; xxiii, 9-10; 11-12; 13-17. At first sight these passages seem to be disconnected, and to deal with isolated events. But a closer examination of their contents and their topography reveals the fact that the passages can be arranged in three groups, dealing with three distinct sets of events. This leads to the conclusion that the Philistine War had three stages: 1. The first invasion of Judah by the Philistines, resulting in their defeat at Baal Perazim. 2. The second invasion of Judah by the Philistines, resulting in their defeat at Gob. 3. Finally, David's invasion of Philistia, which concluded with the battle of Gath, and the permanent subjugation of the Philistines to Judah.

1. The first group of passages consists of v, 17-21, and xxiii, 13-17. David had just been anointed king over all Israel. The Philistines, fearing a revival of Israelitish power, came up into Judah "to seek out David." Unable to maintain his position in the mountains of Hebron, David went down to the low-lying Fastness (המצודה, v, 17). The name of this *məšūdah* to which David retreated is not given in this passage. It cannot be identical with the *məšūdah* Zion mentioned above (v, 7, 9), for, as the expression "go up" in v. 19 shows, this *məšūdah* was lower than the Vale of Rephaim. No doubt modern scholars are right in identifying this *məšūdah* with the *məšūdah* mentioned in our second passage of this group, which was situated at Adullam below in the Philistine borderland (xxiii, 13, 14. Cp. also 1 Sam. xxii, 1, 4, 5, with Driver's notes to all these passages in his second edition [1913]. See further the writer's note on 1 Sam. xxii, 1, in his "Studies in the Books of Samuel" in the *Jew. Quar. Rev.*, x, 218 [Philadelphia, 1919]). Thereupon the Philistines invaded the country in great force (v, 18)

and penetrated as far as the Vale of Rephaim, probably in order to prevent the arrival of reinforcements from the Israelitish tribes north of Jerusalem. The Philistines held the country firmly, and while their main body was encamped in Rephaim, they also placed a garrison at Bethlehem (xxiii, 13*b*, 14*b*). Unable to meet the Philistines in open battle, David at first resorted to guerilla warfare. While he himself harassed the enemy from his retreat at Adullam, and threatened their communications with their home-base in Philistia, David's chief warriors carried on skirmishes in the mountains. This seems to be the implication of xxiii, 13*a*, which speaks of a visit of David's Three Champions, who "descended and came to David to the Cave of Adullam." This was the occasion of the exploit of the Three Champions at the Well of the Gate of Bethlehem (xxiii, 15-17). Eventually David felt strong enough to ascend from Adullam and attack the enemy's main camp in Rephaim. I have conjectured elsewhere (*ibid.*, *Jew. Quar. Rev.*, v, 210) that David was helped in this battle by a tempest and downpour of rain, and that we should read in v, 20, "when the waters broke forth" (כפרץ for כפרץ). If so, we may have an allusion to this victory in David's Song of Triumph (2 Sam. xxii, 14-18. Cf. also Judges v, 4, 20-21). This battle of Baal Perazim resulted in a complete victory for David, and thus ended the first stage of the Philistine War (v, 19-21).

2. The second group of passages, dealing with the second stage of the War, is found in v, 22-25; xxi, 15-17, 18, 19; xxiii, 9-10, 11-12. Judging by the larger number of passages in this group, the second Philistine campaign must have been of a much more formidable character than the first campaign. The Philistines seem to have made now a great effort to recover their lost supremacy. As in the first campaign, they again invaded the territory of Judah, and occupied the Vale of Rephaim, presumably in order to cut off David from his northern subjects (v, 22). And, as before, David again retreated from the mountains to the low-lying borderland. But this time he established his headquarters at a place called Gob, and not at Adullam (xxi, 16, reading "and they dwelt in Gob," for Ishbi-benob *see* Wellhausen in Driver, *ad loc.*). We do not know the position of Gob, but judging from the position of the other localities mentioned in this campaign, Gob must have been situated north-west of Adullam, in the neighbourhood of the Vale of Elah, or, perhaps, still further north in the borderland of

the old Danite territory. It may be that David moved further north, because he was now relying on help from the other tribes. This is supported by the use of the name of Israel in the passages connected with this second campaign (xxi, 15, 17 ; xxiii, 9). The Philistines seem to have made desperate efforts to capture Gob. We have records of at least three different battles fought at Gob. In the first of these, David himself was attacked by a Philistine champion, whose name is probably concealed in the corrupt: "and David waxed faint" (ויעָף דָּוִד ; xxi, 15 ; see Wellhausen in Driver, *ad loc.*), and was only saved from death by the prowess of Abishai. The other two battles at Gob were also marked by the great exploits in single combat of David's warriors against Philistine champions (xxiii, 15-19).

Other fights in this campaign took place at *Pas Dammim* (פַּס דָּמִים, as in 1 Chr. xi, 13, for the corrupt בַּחֲרָפִים in 2 Sam. xxiii, 9 ; see Driver, *ad loc.*), which is identical with *Ephes Dammim*, situated in the Philistine-Judean borderland between Socoh and Azekah, and is mentioned in the story of David's combat with the Philistine champion in the Vale of Elah (1 Sam. xvii, 1) ; and at *Lehi* (so read in xxiii, 11 ; see Driver, *ad loc.*), which was also situated in the Philistine-Judean borderland, and had become famous by one of Samson's exploits (Judges xv, 9, *sqq.*). These fights went first against the Israelites. But the situation was saved by the prowess and skill of David's champions. Thus David succeeded in maintaining his position in the borderland. However, the main force of the Philistine was still in his territory in Rephaim. When at last David felt strong enough to attack the enemy's camp in Rephaim, he was enjoined by the Oracle not to risk a frontal attack on the enemy who was encamped on higher ground (v, 23, reading, "Thou shalt not go up *against them*," as in LXX), but to take the enemy in the rear. Evidently David was to climb up from Gob into the mountains above Rephaim, and from this higher ground attack the Philistines in the rear. The attack proved successful. The Philistines retreated towards their border, probably in a westerly direction towards Gath. At Gob, however, which was strongly held by David, their retreat was stopped, and the beaten enemy had to turn in a northerly direction towards Gezer, in order, presumably, to get to Ekron. In this new line of retreat the Philistines suffered such a crushing defeat that their power was broken for ever, and they were never again able to

invade Israelitish territory. This final defeat is recorded in v, 25b. The Massoretic reading, "from Geba" (מִגְבָּע), as well as the "Gibeon" of the LXX and 1 Chr. xiv, 16, are both impossible on geographical grounds (*cf.* Driver, *ad loc.*), and I propose to read "from Gob" (מִגֹּב), as in xxi, 18 (*cf.* vv. 16, 19)—the *y* of the Massoretic מִגְבָּע is a dittography of the first letter in the following עָד. The verse will then read, "He smote the Philistines from Gob until thou comest unto Gezer."

This great victory at Gob relieved David of any fear of further attacks from the Philistines, and left him free to turn his energies to the consolidation of his kingdom. The first step in that direction was the capture of the Jebusite stronghold, which he rebuilt as his new capital (v, 6-9). By this achievement David both removed the strong barrier which had separated Judah from the other tribes, and also secured for himself a capital which was at once safer and more convenient than Hebron. That the capture of Jerusalem did not precede the Philistine War, as would appear from our present text of 2 Sam. v, is quite evident. We are told distinctly that the Philistines came up to seek out David, as soon as they had heard of his anointment as king over all Israel (v, 17). This is exactly what we should have expected from such a vigilant and active foe as the Philistines. They would not have delayed their attack until David had captured such a stronghold as Zion, and effected a junction with the northern tribes. Nor would they in that case have needed "to seek out David" (לְבַקֵּשׁ, v, 17). They would have known where to find him, viz., at Zion. Further, if David had already been in possession of Jerusalem he would not have retreated to Adullam. These reasons also hold good against the assumption that the capture of Jerusalem took place before the second Philistine campaign.

I may be permitted here to withdraw the view I expressed elsewhere (*J. Q. R.*, vol. IX, p. 46), which is also held by some other writers (*e.g.*, Macalister, *The Philistines*, p. 58), that the capture of Jerusalem is to be assigned to the interval between the first and second campaign against the Philistines, viz., between v, 17-21, and v, 22-25. The words "thou shalt not go up" in v, 23, prove conclusively that in the second campaign also David was not in Jerusalem, but in a locality that was situated lower than the Vale of Rephaim, namely, at some place, say Gob, which, like Adullam,

was situated below somewhere in the Philistine borderland. Further, it is not likely that David would have possessed the strength to besiege Jerusalem while still engaged in the life and death struggle against the Philistines.

3. The capture of Jerusalem was followed by a series of events which further tended to strengthen and consolidate David's rule over Israel. These were the embassy of Hiram, himself probably also an enemy of the maritime Philistines, the erection of David's residence and the enlargement of his harem (v, 10-16), the establishment of the Ark in Jerusalem (ch. vi), and the prophecy of Nathan (ch. vii), and perhaps also the coming of Mephibosheth to Jerusalem (ch. ix), the Famine (xxi, 1-14), and the military census (ch. xxiv). Then came the third and final stage of the Philistine War. Secure against enemies from within and against invasion from without, David set out on that policy of expansion and aggression which characterized the middle period of his reign, and which is described in ch. viii. The first step in this new policy was the subjugation of the Philistines. This is recorded in the third and last group of our passages, viz., viii, 1, and xxi, 20-21.

It is evident that the battle of Gath, the principal city in Philistia (1 Sam. xxvii, 5, &c.), which is mentioned in xxi, 20, must have taken place subsequent to all the fighting in Israelitish territory recorded in v, 17-25; xxiii, 9-16; xxi, 15-19. For the invasion of Gath by the Israelites could only have been rendered possible by a great weakening of the Philistine power and by a corresponding rise in the power of David, now the aggressor, such as must have resulted from the first two campaigns which we described above. Hence we may safely conclude that the battle of Gath, mentioned in xxi, 20, is identical with the war of aggression which is recorded in viii, 1, and which resulted in the permanent subjugation of the Philistines to Judah (viii, 1, "and he subdued them"). We thus see that the paraphrase, "Gath and her villages," which 1 Chr. xviii, 1, gives for the difficult *Metheg-ammah* in 2 Sam. viii, 1 (*cf.* LXX and Driver, *ad loc.*), is based on a true recollection of the fact that David's victory at the battle of Gath formed the final conclusion to his great war against the Philistines.