

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 262

OUT OF CAPHTOR

A Covenant Deep Dive into the *Pelishtim* (Philistines) of the Tanakh and the Palestinian People of Today

Are the Palestinian People the Ancient Philistines of the Old Testament? Where Did the Philistines Come From, What Became of Them, How Did Their Name Pass to the Land, and What Does the Covenant Say to Those Who Use the Answer as a Weapon? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Jewish tradition treats the Philistines as a people of the past. The Mishnah records the ruling that Sennacherib <i>“mixed up all the nations,”</i> so that the ancient peoples can no longer be identified (Yadayim 4:4). Modern Hebrew keeps the two names apart: the biblical people are <i>Plishtim</i> , the Palestinians <i>Falastinim</i> . The written Tanakh speaks first: who the Philistines were, and where they went.	Many believers hear <i>“Palestinian”</i> and think of Goliath, and some pulpits read the oracles against Philistia as words about Gaza today. The New Testament never names the Philistines; it records Philip on the Gaza road and preaching in Azotus, ancient Ashdod (Acts 8:26, 40). The Tanakh must be read before any modern equation of the two peoples.	The Qur'an tells how Talut (Saul) led Israel and Dawud (David) slew Jalut (Goliath) (Q. 2:249–251), but it does not name the Philistines as a nation. Early Islamic rule kept the Roman name, organizing the land as <i>Jund Filastin (the military district of Palestine)</i> . The Qur'an's rule protects every innocent soul, whatever its ancestry (Q. 5:32).

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document (**Document 262**) applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to one question asked from two opposite directions: are the Palestinian people of today the Philistines of the Tanakh? It answers three questions the one question contains: whether the Philistines survive as a people, how their name passed to the Land, and what the covenant says about using ancestry as a weapon. It builds on **Document 259** (*Two Sticks in One Hand*), **Document 260** (*Blood Witnesses Against the Sword*), and **Document 130** (*The Ger and the Covenant*), and does not repeat them in full.

Yahweh (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in *bold italic (with the English meaning in parentheses)*. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew.

Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses, or for a historical or scientific fact, two or more independent records),

Single witness, or Not in the text. Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian inscriptions, excavation reports, and genetic studies are cited as historical witnesses. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, and the Qur'an and hadith are cited only as comparative reference, in the opening table, the Comparative Texts table, and the Three-Religion Audit. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy	The table of nations; the patriarchs' covenants with Abimelech; the way of the Philistines; the Caphtorim; the stranger; no inherited guilt
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah	The five lords; Samson; the ark; Goliath; Ittai and the Gittites; the oracles against Philistia and their fulfillment; the remnant joined to Judah
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles	Philistia among those who know Yahweh ; the language of Ashdod; the kings' wars on the coast

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Egyptian records	Medinet Habu reliefs and inscription, Year 8 of Ramesses III; Papyrus Harris I; Onomasticon of Amenope	The Peleset among the Sea Peoples; their settlement on the coast of Canaan
Assyrian and Babylonian records	Calah slab of Adad-nirari III; annals of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon; Babylonian Chronicle ABC 5; Babylon ration tablets	Palashtu; the kings of Ekron and Ashkelon; the destruction of Ashkelon in 604 BCE; princes of Ashkelon in exile
Excavation reports	Ekron Royal Dedicatory Inscription (Tel Migne, 1996); Ashkelon destruction layer of 604 BCE; Sapir-Hen and colleagues on Iron Age pork (2013; 2015; 2016)	The Philistine cities, their kings, their culture, and their end

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Genetic studies	Feldman et al., Science Advances 5(7) eaax0061 (2019); Agranat-Tamir et al., Cell 181 (2020); Haber et al., American Journal of Human Genetics 107 (2020)	The Aegean-linked migration into Ashkelon and its rapid mixing; the ancestry of the modern Levant
Classical and scholarly writings	Herodotus, Histories 1.105, 2.104, 3.5, 7.89; Josephus, Antiquities 1.136; the Septuagint; Louis H. Feldman, Hebrew Union College Annual 61 (1990); David Jacobson (1999)	How the name Palaistine arose and passed to the whole Land; the Greek rendering allophyloi (foreigners)
Arabic and modern records	Jund Filastin (7th century); the Jaffa newspaper Filastin (1911); the Palestine Post (1932) and Palestine Orchestra (1936); statements of Palestinian leaders	How the name was kept, and who was called “Palestinian” before 1948
Rabbinic, New Testament, Qur'an	Mishnah Yadayim 4:4; Acts 8:26–40; Q. 2:249–251; 5:21; 5:32; 49:13	Three-religion audit
Library cross-references	Documents 130, 241, 259, 260; the May 22, 2026 companion study Roots of the Covenant People	Ancestry of the people of the Land; corrections in Section XI

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — ONE NAME, TWO WEAPONS

I-A. The Question as It Is Usually Asked

The question arrives from two opposite directions, and both directions use it as a weapon.

First: some believers reason from the name. **“Palestine”** comes from **“Philistine”**; the Philistines were Israel's enemies; therefore the Palestinians are the Philistines, the prophecies against Philistia are about Gaza, and the war is Goliath against David once more.

Second: some Palestinian political voices are from antiquity. Yasser Arafat spoke of **“our forefathers, the Canaanites and Jebusites”**; Mahmoud Abbas has told the United Nations that Palestinians descend from the Canaanites; Saeb Erekat called himself **“the proud son of the Canaanites”** in 2018. Here the ancient peoples of the Land are used to claim a title older than Israel's.

Third: a counter-claim says the reverse: the Philistines vanished, the Palestinians are recent Arab immigrants, and the name is a borrowed costume with nothing ancient behind it.

All three answers cannot be true, and none of them can be accepted because it is repeated. This Institution comes to the subject aligned with no government, party, or faction. It brings the Tanakh, the oldest covenant record of the Philistines, and sets beside it what the inscriptions, the excavations, and the genetic studies actually show.

I-B. The Question in the Tanakh's Own Terms

The one question holds three separate questions, and each must be answered on its own witnesses.

The question of lineage: does the people the Tanakh call *pelishtim* (*Philistines*) still exist, and do the Palestinians descend from it?

The question of the name: how did *Peleshet* (*Philistia*), a strip of coast with five cities, become the name of the whole Land?

The question of the covenant: if some ancestry could be shown, what would the Torah allow anyone to do with it?

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is single witness when only one carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh, and the record, do not say it.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The Tanakh has a precise vocabulary for the Philistines, their land, and their origin. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>pelishti / pelishtim</i> (<i>Philistine / Philistines</i>), פְּלִשְׁתִּים	H6430	The people of the five coastal cities; a gentile name, always used of a people, never of Israel	Genesis 10:14; 1 Samuel 17:4
<i>Peleshet (Philistia)</i> , פְּלִשְׁת	H6429	The territory of the Philistines, the southern coastal plain; the root of <i>Palaistine</i> , <i>Palaestina</i> , and <i>Filastin</i>	Exodus 15:14; Isaiah 14:29; Joel 3:4 [Hebrew 4:4]

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>palash (to roll, wallow), פָּלַשׁ</i>	H6428	A verb sharing the same letters; used of rolling in ashes in mourning. Any link to the people's name is unproven	Jeremiah 6:26; Micah 1:10
<i>Kaftor (Caphtor), כַּפְתּוֹר</i>	H3731	The coastland beyond the sea from which the Philistines came; widely identified with Crete	Deuteronomy 2:23; Jeremiah 47:4; Amos 9:7
<i>kereti (Cherethite), כֶּרֶתִי</i>	H3774	A people of the Philistine coast, often read as “ <i>Cretan</i> ”; also a unit of David's guard	1 Samuel 30:14; 2 Samuel 8:18; Zephaniah 2:5
<i>seren (lord, ruler), סֶרֶן</i>	H5633	Title of the five Philistine rulers, used only of the Philistines; possibly a non-Semitic loanword	Joshua 13:3; 1 Samuel 6:16–18
<i>arel (uncircumcised), עֶרֶל</i>	H6189	The Philistines' mark of difference from Israel and her Semitic neighbors	Judges 14:3; 1 Samuel 17:26
<i>Dagon (Dagon), דָּגוֹן</i>	H1712	Chief god of Ashdod and Gaza, a god the Philistines took from the Canaanite world	Judges 16:23; 1 Samuel 5:2–5
<i>gitti (Gittite, man of Gath), גִּתִּי</i>	H1663	A man of the Philistine city of Gath; used of Goliath and of Ittai, David's loyal commander	2 Samuel 15:18–22
<i>mamzer (mixed people), מִמְזֵר</i>	H4464	In Zechariah 9:6 , a mixed population settled in Ashdod in place of the old Philistine one	Zechariah 9:6
<i>alluf (clan-chief), אֱלֹף</i>	H441	The honored place the surviving Philistine remnant receives in Judah	Zechariah 9:7
<i>she'erit (remnant), שְׂאֵרִית</i>	H7611	What is left after judgment: “ <i>the remnant of the Philistines</i> ” shall perish	Amos 1:8; Jeremiah 25:20

Three lexical observations govern what follows.

First, *pelishtim* (*Philistines*) is a name for a people, and *Peleshet* (*Philistia*) is a name for a place. In the Tanakh *Peleshet* is the coast of the five cities, not the whole Land: “*pangs have taken hold of the inhabitants of Philistia*” (Exodus 15:14) is set beside Edom, Moab, and Canaan as separate peoples. Where the King James Version prints “*Palestina*” or “*Palestine*” (Exodus 15:14; Isaiah 14:29, 31; Joel 3:4), the Hebrew is always *Peleshet*, the coast.

Second, the Hebrew gives no certain meaning for the name. The verb *palash* (*to roll, wallow*) shares its letters (Jeremiah 6:26; Micah 1:10), and some have read the people's name as “*wanderers*” or “*invaders*.” The Tanakh never explains the name that way, and the Egyptian form *Peleset* (Section IV-A) suggests the Philistines brought the name with them.

Third, the ancient Greek translators struggled with the name. In the Torah and much of Joshua the Septuagint writes *Phylistieim*, but from Judges through Kings it usually translates the word as *allophyloi* (*foreigners, people of another stock*). The earliest translation of the Tanakh understood the Philistines chiefly as the outsiders on Israel's western border. It did not treat the name as a lineage anyone could claim.

III. WHO WERE THE PHILISTINES? — THE TANAKH'S RECORD

III-A. They Came from Beyond the Sea

Tanakh says four times, in four different books, that the Philistines were not native to Canaan.

“And Mizraim begot Ludim, and Ananim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, and Pathrusim, and Casluhim, from whom came the Philistines, and Caphtorim” (Genesis 10:13–14)

“And the Avvim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza — the Caphtorim, who came out of Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place” (Deuteronomy 2:23)

“For Yahweh will plunder the Philistines, the remnant of the coastland of Caphtor” (Jeremiah 47:4)

“Are you not as the children of the Cushites to Me, O children of Israel? says Yahweh. Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir?” (Amos 9:7)

Kaftor (*Caphtor*) is identified by most scholars with Crete, matching the Akkadian *Kaptara* and the Egyptian *Keftiu*. The same coast is called the land of the *kereti* (*Cherethites*) (1 Samuel 30:14; Ezekiel 25:16; Zeephaniah 2:5), a name commonly read as “*Cretans*.”

Finding — that the Philistines came into Canaan from a coastland across the sea: **Corroborated** (**Genesis 10:14; Deuteronomy 2:23; Jeremiah 47:4; Amos 9:7**). That *Caphtor* is Crete: the consensus of scholarship, consistent with the Egyptian and Akkadian names, but not stated by the Tanakh itself.

III-B. The Philistines of Abraham and Isaac

Genesis places a Philistine king, Abimelech of Gerar, in the days of Abraham and Isaac (**Genesis 21:32, 34; 26:1, 8, 14–18**). Scholars divide over these passages. Many read them as using the later name for the region and people of Gerar, since the five-city Philistines appear in the historical record only in the twelfth century BCE. Others see an earlier Aegean presence on the coast. The Septuagint and later rabbinic tradition both treated the Genesis Philistines as distinct from those of Judges and Samuel.

What the text does say is more important for this study. Abraham and Isaac both made covenant with the Philistine king:

“Let there now be an oath between us, between us and you, and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm... And he made them a feast, and they ate and drank” (**Genesis 26:28–30**)

Finding — that the patriarchs lived beside the Philistines of Gerar and made covenants of peace with them: **Corroborated** (**Genesis 21:27–32; 26:26–31**). Whether the people of Gerar were the same people as the later five cities: **Not settled by the text**.

III-C. The Five Cities, Their Lords, and Their Gods

From the time of the Judges the Tanakh describes a confederation of five cities, each ruled by a *seren* (lord): *“the five lords of the Philistines: the Gazite, the Ashdodite, the Ashkelonite, the Gittite, and the Ekronite”* (**Joshua 13:3**; compare **Judges 3:3; 1 Samuel 6:17**). They were uncircumcised (**Judges 14:3; 1 Samuel 17:26; 2 Samuel 1:20**), worshiped Dagon (**Judges 16:23; 1 Samuel 5:2–5**) and Baal-zebub of Ekron (**2 Kings 1:2**), kept diviners (**1 Samuel 6:2; Isaiah 2:6**), and held the smiths of the region so that Israel had none (**1 Samuel 13:19–22**).

They were Israel's chief enemy from Samson (**Judges 13:1, 5**) through Saul (**1 Samuel 31**), until David broke their power (**2 Samuel 5:17–25; 8:1**). Later kings fought them on the coast: Uzziah (**2 Chronicles 26:6**), Ahaz (**2 Chronicles 28:18**), and Hezekiah, who struck them *“as far as Gaza”* (**2 Kings 18:8**).

III-D. Enemy and Neighbor — The Philistines Who Joined David

The Tanakh does not paint the Philistines as a single, unchanging enemy. David himself lived a year and four months under Achish king of Gath (**1 Samuel 27:2–7**). When Absalom rebelled, six hundred Gittites, men of Gath, marched with David, and their commander Ittai the Gittite answered the king's offer to release him with an oath by the Name:

“As Yahweh lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, even there will your servant be” (2 Samuel 15:21)

David's own guard was the Cherethites and Pelethites (**2 Samuel 8:18; 15:18; 20:23**), men of the coast whom many scholars read as Cretans and Philistines. And when the ark of **Yahweh** left the house of Abinadab, it rested three months in the house of Obed-edom *“the Gittite,”* and **Yahweh** blessed his whole household (**2 Samuel 6:10–11**). Whether this Obed-edom was a man of Philistine Gath or of the Levitical town Gath-rimmon is disputed; the text calls him a Gittite.

Finding — that men of the Philistine cities entered David's service and swore by **Yahweh**: **Corroborated** (**2 Samuel 15:18–22; 8:18; 15:18**). The Tanakh shows that a Philistine could become a sworn servant of **Yahweh**'s anointed. Philistine birth was never a sentence.

IV. WHAT HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY SHOW

IV-A. The Egyptian Witness: the Peleset

The oldest record of the Philistines outside the Tanakh is carved on the walls of the mortuary temple of Pharaoh Ramesses III at Medinet Habu in Egypt. It records that in the eighth year of his reign, conventionally dated around 1177 BCE (the dates vary by a few decades), a coalition of *“Sea Peoples”* attacked Egypt by land and sea: the **Peleset**, the Tjeker, the Shekelesh, the Denyen, and the Weshesh. The reliefs show the Peleset in feathered headdresses, with ships and ox-carts carrying families. The Egyptian **Peleset** is identified by historians with the Hebrew *pelishtim*.

Two further Egyptian texts complete the picture. Papyrus Harris I, written soon after Ramesses III's death, claims he defeated the Peleset and settled them in strongholds. The Onomasticon of Amenope, a word list from around 1100 BCE, names the Peleset beside Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Gaza.

IV-B. The Material Witness: Aegean Culture on the Coast of Canaan

At the same moment, the excavated cities of the coast change character. At Ashdod, Ekron, Ashkelon, and Gath, locally made pottery in the Aegean Mycenaean IIC style appears, along with Aegean-type hearths and a new diet. Pork, rare almost everywhere else in the southern Levant, rose sharply at the Philistine urban centers in Iron Age I: about 13 percent of animal bones at Gath and about 18 to 19

percent at Ekron. Rural villages within Philistia, however, stayed low, and pork declined in the cities during Iron Age II (Sapir-Hen and colleagues, 2013, 2015, 2016). Genetic study of the bones shows that the pigs themselves were European domestic pigs, brought by the newcomers.

IV-C. The Assyrian and Philistine Witness: Kings with Names

Around 800 BCE the Assyrian king Adad-nirari III listed *Palashtu* among the lands paying him tribute, beside Tyre, Sidon, Israel, and Edom. A century later the annals of Sennacherib name Padi king of Ekron and record that Ashkelon's king Sidqa was deported; the annals of Esarhaddon name Padi's son *Ikausu* as king of Ekron.

In 1996 the excavators of Tel Mique found a limestone block in the inner shrine of Ekron's great temple, destroyed in 604 BCE. It reads: *"The temple which Achish son of Padi, son of Yasid, son of Ada, son of Ya'ir, ruler of Ekron, built for Ptgyh his lady. May she bless him, and protect him, and prolong his days, and bless his land."* The inscription confirmed the site as Ekron and gave five generations of its kings. The name *Achish* (אכיש), the same name as David's host at Gath (1 Samuel 27:2), is read by many scholars as *"the Achaeian,"* that is, the Greek. After five centuries in Canaan the kings of Ekron still carried an Aegean name, but they wrote in a Canaanite script and served a goddess of the land.

IV-D. The Genetic Witness: Ashkelon's Dead

In 2019 a team led by Michal Feldman of the Max Planck Institute, with the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, published genome-wide data from ten people buried at Ashkelon across the Bronze and Iron Ages (*Science Advances* 5(7): eaax0061).

First: all the individuals, in every period, drew most of their ancestry from the local Levantine population.

Second: four infants buried beneath the floors of early Iron Age houses, at the moment Philistine culture appears, carried a European-related component not present in the Bronze Age people before them. The best models point to southern Europe, with the ancient populations of Greece, Crete, Sardinia, and Iberia as the closest available matches.

Third: in the later Iron Age cemetery that component could no longer be detected. In the words of the study's authors, the genetic footprint was diluted by the local Levantine gene pool within no more than about two centuries. As the excavation director Daniel Master put it, the people of Ashkelon remained *"Philistines"* to their neighbors, but the distinctiveness of their genetic makeup was no longer clear.

Finding — that a people linked to the Aegean world arrived on the southern coast of Canaan at the start of the Iron Age: **Corroborated** by four independent kinds of witness (the Tanakh's *Caphtor*; the Egyptian *Peleset*; Aegean-style material culture; the Ashkelon genomes). That the newcomers quickly intermarried with the people of the land, so that within about two centuries they were genetically indistinguishable from their neighbors: **Corroborated** (Feldman 2019; Achish's Canaanite script and local goddess; the Tanakh's Dagon and Baal-zebub).

V. WHAT BECAME OF THE PHILISTINES?

V-A. The Prophets Foretold Their End

No people in the Tanakh receives more oracles of ending than Philistia.

“And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holds the scepter from Ashkelon, and I will turn My hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, says the Lord Yahweh” (Amos 1:8)

“Baldness has come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley” (Jeremiah 47:5)

“Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of Yahweh is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines: I will destroy you, that there shall be no inhabitant” (Zephaniah 2:5)

Ezekiel gives the charge: *“because the Philistines have acted in revenge... to destroy with perpetual hatred,”* Yahweh would *“cut off the Cherethim, and destroy the remnant of the seacoast”* (Ezekiel 25:15–16; compare Isaiah 14:29–31; Jeremiah 25:20).

V-B. The Oracles Fulfilled: Nebuchadnezzar, 604 BCE

The Babylonian Chronicle records that in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, in the month of Kislev (late 604 BCE), he marched to Ashkelon, captured it, seized its king, plundered it, and *“turned the city into a mound and heaps of ruins”* (ABC 5). The excavators of Ashkelon found that destruction exactly: a burned city whose last layer preserves its grain, wine jars, and scales as the Babylonians left them. Ekron's temple, where the Achish inscription was found, fell in the same campaign. Ration tablets from Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon list princes of Ashkelon among the royal captives, beside Jehoiachin king of Judah and his sons.

The Babylonian conquest did to Philistia what the prophets had said. Its cities were destroyed, its kings and leading families were carried to Mesopotamia, and the Philistine kingdoms never rose again. No

inscription after the sixth century BCE is written in the Philistine script; the later ostraca of Persian-period Ashkelon are in Phoenician and Aramaic.

V-C. The Last Trace: the Language of Ashdod

The Tanakh itself records the last trace of a Philistine city's separate identity, a century and a half after the fall:

“In those days also I saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab. And their children spoke half in the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but according to the language of each people” (Nehemiah 13:23–24)

After Nehemiah the Tanakh never mentions the Philistines as a living people again. The coast passed to Phoenicians, Greeks, Hasmoneans, and Romans. The cities kept their names, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod (Azotus), but the nation was gone.

V-D. The Remnant Joined to Judah

The same prophet who foretold Philistia's end also foretold what would become of its survivors:

“And a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood from his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; and he also shall remain for our Elohim, and he shall be like a clan-chief in Judah, and Ekron like the Jebusite” (Zechariah 9:6–7)

The word is *alluf* (*clan-chief*), אֱלִיף, H441, the title of the chiefs of Edom's clans (Genesis 36:15). The comparison is exact: the Jebusites of Jerusalem were not wiped out but absorbed into the city of David (2 Samuel 24:18–24; Joshua 15:63). The prophet says the Philistine remnant would be purged of its idolatry and incorporated into Judah itself. A psalm goes further and enrolls Philistia among the nations born in Zion:

“I will mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me; behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Cush: this one was born there” (Psalms 87:4)

Finding — that the Philistines ceased to exist as a distinct nation after the Babylonian conquest and the century that followed: **Corroborated** (Jeremiah 47:4–5; Zephaniah 2:5; Nehemiah 13:24; the Babylonian Chronicle; the Ashkelon and Ekron destruction layers). That people of the Philistine cities were absorbed into their neighbors, Judah included: **Corroborated** (Nehemiah 13:23–24, recorded; Zechariah 9:7, foretold). The irony must be stated plainly: by the Tanakh's own witness, the descendants of the Philistine remnant are as likely to be found among the Jews as among anyone else.

VI. HOW THE NAME PASSED TO THE LAND

The Philistines disappeared; their name did not. The table traces it.

PERIOD	FORM OF THE NAME	WHAT IT MEANT	WITNESS
c. 1177 BCE	Peleset	One of the Sea Peoples	Medinet Habu; Papyrus Harris I
Iron Age	Peleshet	The coast of the five cities	Exodus 15:14; Isaiah 14:29; Joel 3:4
c. 800 BCE	Palashtu	The Philistine coast as a tributary land	Adad-nirari III
5th c. BCE	Palaistine (Syria Palaistine)	The district of Syria between Phoenicia and Egypt, reaching inland	Herodotus 1.105; 2.104; 3.5; 7.89
1st c. CE	Palaestine	The land named after Philistinus, son of Mizraim	Josephus, Antiquities 1.136
c. 135 CE	Syria Palaistina	The Roman province formerly called Judaea	Coins and inscriptions after the Bar Kokhba revolt
357–409 CE	Palaestina Prima, Secunda, Tertia	Byzantine provinces of the Land	Byzantine administrative lists
7th c. CE	Filastin (Jund Filastin)	Early Islamic military district, capital Ramla	Umayyad and Abbasid records
1911	Filastin; Filastini	The Land and its people, in an Arabic newspaper of Jaffa	The newspaper Filastin
1920–1948	Palestine; Palestinian	The British Mandate and all its residents, Jews included	Palestine Post (1932); Palestine Orchestra (1936)
After 1948	Palestinian	The Arab people of the former Mandate and their descendants	Common usage by the mid-1950s

VI-A. Herodotus: Already More Than Philistia

The Greek historian Herodotus, in the fifth century BCE, is the first to write *Palaistine*. He places Ashkelon “*in Syria Palaistine*” (1.105) and describes the “*Syrians of Palestine*” as a people who practiced circumcision, having learned it from Egypt (2.104). The Philistines were the one people of the region the Tanakh calls uncircumcised (Judges 14:3; 1 Samuel 17:26). Herodotus’s *Palaistine* therefore already covered peoples other than the Philistines, most probably including the Judeans. Scholars debate how far inland he meant it to reach, but by his day the Greek name had begun to outgrow the five cities. Some scholars, among them David Jacobson (1999), have proposed that Greek writers heard in *Palaistine* a pun on *palaistes (wrestler)*, an echo of the name Israel, “*he who strives with El*” (Genesis 32:28). That proposal remains a single scholarly voice.

VI-B. Hadrian: the Name Made Official

After the Bar Kokhba revolt was crushed in 135 CE, the province of Judaea appears in the record under a new name: *Syria Palaestina*. Coins of Hadrian struck before the revolt called the province Judaea; within a few years official usage was Palaestina. The change is almost always credited to Hadrian, with the aim of erasing the Jewish identity of the Land. The historian Louis Feldman, who argued for that motive, also pointed out that the evidence linking the change to Hadrian personally is circumstantial, and that no ancient writer states the reason (*Hebrew Union College Annual* 61, 1990, p. 19). Hadrian did not invent the name; he made official a Greek name already six centuries old.

VI-C. The Mandate: When Jews Were the Palestinians

For most of history “*Palestinian*” was a place of residence, not a nation. Under the British Mandate (1920–1948) every legal resident, Jew and Arab alike, held Palestinian citizenship, and the Jewish community used the name freely: its English daily was *The Palestine Post* (founded 1932, renamed *The Jerusalem Post* in 1950), and its orchestra, founded in 1936, was the Palestine Orchestra, renamed the Israel Philharmonic in 1948. Arabic writers had already used *Filastin* and *Filastini (Palestinian)* for the Land and its people, as in the Jaffa newspaper *Filastin* from 1911. After 1948 the name “*Palestinian*” came to belong to the Arab people of the former Mandate.

Finding — that the name *Palestine* descends from *Peleshet (Philistia)*: **Corroborated** (Exodus 15:14; the Egyptian *Peleset*; Herodotus; Josephus, Antiquities 1.136). That the name passed to the whole Land through Greek and Roman usage, not through any Philistine descendants: **Corroborated** (Herodotus 2.104; the Roman provincial name). That a name given by outsiders carries the lineage of the people it first named: Not in the text, and disproved by the record, since Jews, Christians, and Muslims all bore the name “Palestinian” under the Mandate.

VII. WHO ARE THE PALESTINIANS? — THE ANCESTRY QUESTION TESTED

VII-A. What the Library Has Already Established

Documents 259 and **260** tested the ancestry of the Palestinian people against the primary sources. Their findings, briefly:

First: Palestinians, Lebanese, and most Jewish groups alike draw large shares of their ancestry from the Bronze and Iron Age people of the Levant (Nebel 2000, 2001; Agranat-Tamir 2020; Haber 2017, 2020).

Second: the villagers of Galilee, Samaria, and the countryside stayed on the land through the Roman wars, became largely Christian in the fifth and sixth centuries and, over the following centuries, largely Muslim, and changed their language from Aramaic to Arabic (**Document 259**, Section IV-E).

Third: later arrivals joined them: Arab tribesmen from the conquest onward, Egyptian settlers in the 1830s, and others under Ottoman rule. Many Palestinian clans keep traditions of Arabian tribal origin; those traditions are testimony about families, and the genetic record shows the local core beneath them.

Fourth: no genetic test can name a tribe, or separate Israelite from Canaanite, in anyone's blood (**Document 260**, Section III-E).

VII-B. Where Do the Philistines Fit?

The Ashkelon genomes answer this directly. The Aegean-linked component the Philistines brought was diluted into the local population within about two centuries (Section IV-D). By the time Nebuchadnezzar destroyed their cities, the people of Philistia were genetically part of the same Levantine population as their Judean, Canaanite, and Phoenician neighbors. Whatever ancestry survived from the people of ancient Philistia has since been mixed through twenty-six centuries of the whole region's history, and it cannot be distinguished from the rest.

It is possible that some Palestinians of Gaza and the coastal plain carry ancestry from the people who lived in the Philistine cities. It is equally possible, by **Zechariah 9:7** and **Nehemiah 13:23–24**, that some Jews do. Neither can be shown, and neither makes anyone a Philistine.

VII-C. The Three Claims Weighed

THE CLAIM	WHAT THE WITNESSES SHOW	GRADE
<i>“The Palestinians are the Philistines.”</i>	The Philistines ended as a nation after 604 BCE; their Aegean ancestry was diluted centuries earlier; the modern name came through Greek and Roman usage, not descent	Not in the text; contradicted by the record
<i>“The Palestinians descend from the Canaanites and Jebusites, and are older than Israel.”</i>	Palestinians do descend in large part from the ancient Levantine population. But that population included Israel, and the Tanakh records Israel living among the Canaanites in one population (Judges 1:27–33). Jews descend from it too. No continuous Canaanite or Jebusite national identity is attested after the Iron Age	Shared ancient ancestry: Corroborated . An exclusive or older claim over Jews: Not established
<i>“The Palestinians are recent Arab immigrants with no ancient roots.”</i>	Later arrivals are real, but the genetic record and the founders of Zionism themselves (Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, 1918) testify to a large local core	Not established; contradicted by the record
<i>“The name proves the lineage.”</i>	Jews were <i>“Palestinians”</i> under the Mandate; a territorial name passes to everyone who lives in the territory	Not in the text

Finding — that the Palestinian people are not the Philistines of the Tanakh: **Corroborated** (Sections V and VI). That the Palestinian people descend in large part from the ancient population of the Land, which included Israelites, Canaanites, and the people of the Philistine cities, and which Jews share: **Corroborated** (Documents 259 and 260; Feldman 2019).

VIII. THE PROPHECIES AGAINST PHILISTIA — FULFILLED OR PENDING?

Some teachers read the oracles against Philistia as prophecies about Gaza in our time. The covenant requires that each oracle first be read where it stands.

TEXT	WHAT IT SAYS	WHERE IT STANDS
Amos 1:6–8	Gaza judged for selling whole communities to Edom; <i>“the remnant of the Philistines shall perish”</i>	Fulfilled in the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests

TEXT	WHAT IT SAYS	WHERE IT STANDS
Jeremiah 47; Ezekiel 25:15–17	Pharaoh and the north against Gaza and Ashkelon; the Cherethim cut off	Fulfilled in 604 BCE (Section V-B)
Zephaniah 2:4–7	The coast emptied, then given <i>“to the remnant of the house of Judah”</i>	Read by many as fulfilled when the Hasmoneans took the coast, including Gaza, around 96 BCE
Zechariah 9:5–7	Gaza's king perishes; a mixed people in Ashdod; the remnant becomes <i>“for our Elohim”</i>	Read by many as fulfilled in Alexander's siege of Gaza (332 BCE) and after; its promise is the Philistine remnant joined to Judah
Isaiah 11:14; Obadiah 19	The regathered house of Israel and Judah takes the western slopes and the Philistine plain	Set in the day of the two-house regathering, whose marks Document 259 finds not yet met
Psalms 83:7 [Hebrew 83:8]	Philistia named in a confederacy against Israel	A prayer of lament about the enemies of its own day, not a prediction
Psalms 87:4	Philistia among those born in Zion	Promise; the last word the Psalms speak about Philistia

Four rules of the covenant govern the use of these texts.

First: an oracle is addressed to the nation it names. The Philistine nation that the prophets judged was judged. To move its sentence to a people living in the same place twenty-six centuries later is to move the words.

Second: guilt is not inherited.

“The soul that sins, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father bear the iniquity of the son” (Ezekiel 18:20)

The Torah says the same for human courts: *“fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor sons for fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin”* (Deuteronomy 24:16). Even if Philistine ancestry could be proven in a living person, the covenant would not permit anyone to charge him with Goliath's sin.

Third: a nation's sentence can turn. *“If that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to it”* (Jeremiah 18:8). The very prophets who judged Philistia promised its remnant a place in Judah and in Zion (Zechariah 9:7; Psalms 87:4).

Fourth: the covenant does not command perpetual hatred. Ezekiel condemned the Philistines for *“perpetual hatred”* (Ezekiel 25:15). A believer who adopts perpetual hatred toward a people because of a name commits the sin for which Philistia was judged. *“You shall not hate your brother in your heart... you shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Leviticus 19:17–18).

Finding — that the principal oracles against Philistia were fulfilled against the ancient Philistine nation: **Corroborated** (Jeremiah 47; Ezekiel 25; Amos 1; the Babylonian Chronicle). That they are prophecies about the Palestinian people of today: Not in the text.

IX. WHAT THE COVENANT SAYS TO BOTH SIDES OF THE ARGUMENT

IX-A. Yahweh Moves the Nations

Amos 9:7 is the Tanakh's sharpest answer to every ancestry quarrel. Yahweh tells Israel that He brought the Philistines from Caphtor as surely as He brought Israel out of Egypt. Migration and settlement are His work among every people (**Deuteronomy 32:8**), and the Torah records peoples displacing peoples all through the region (**Deuteronomy 2:10–12, 20–23**). Israel's election was never a claim that other nations' histories were outside His hand. The land itself belongs to Him alone (Leviticus 25:23).

IX-B. Ancestry Carries Neither Guilt Nor Title

The Torah allows even former enemies to enter the assembly: the Edomite and the Egyptian in the third generation (**Deuteronomy 23:7–8**). It gives the stranger an inheritance among the tribes (**Ezekiel 47:22–23**) and promises the foreigner who holds fast to the covenant a place in Yahweh's house of prayer (**Isaiah 56:6–7**). A claim to the Land built on Canaanite blood has no standing in the Torah; a charge against a people built on Philistine blood has none either.

IX-C. The Stranger in the Land Is Protected

“The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Yahweh your Elohim” (Leviticus 19:34)

Whether a Palestinian is counted a native or a stranger, this is the floor. His life is protected because he bears the image of **Elohim (Genesis 9:6)**, not because of his lineage (**Document 260**, Section VII-G).

IX-D. Do Not Bear False Witness About a People

“You shall not raise a false report” (**Exodus 23:1**; compare **Exodus 20:16**). Calling the Palestinian people ***“Philistines”*** in order to apply Philistia’s curses to them is a false report. So is claiming an exclusive Canaanite pedigree in order to erase the Jewish people’s ancient roots in the Land, and so is claiming that the Palestinians have no ancient roots at all. Each says more than the witnesses bear, and **Deuteronomy 19:15–19** names the penalty for a false witness: what he intended for his brother is done to him.

Finding — that **Yahweh** governs the movements and boundaries of all nations, Philistia included: **Corroborated** (**Amos 9:7**; **Deuteronomy 2:23**; **32:8**). That the covenant protects the stranger and forbids inherited guilt: **Corroborated** (**Leviticus 19:33–34**; **Deuteronomy 24:16**; **Ezekiel 18:20**). That ancestry, real or alleged, gives any people a covenant right to harm another: **Not in the text**.

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT

Each tradition is tested against the Tanakh’s own findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	• ISLAM
How the Philistines are remembered	As a vanished people. The Mishnah rules that Sennacherib <i>“mixed up all the nations,”</i> so that an Ammonite convert may enter the assembly (Yadayim 4:4); the ancient nations can no longer be identified.	Through Samson, the ark, and Goliath; the New Testament names Gaza and Azotus (Acts 8:26, 40) and remembers Samson among the faithful (Hebrews 11:32), but never names the Philistines.	Through Jalut (Goliath), slain by Dawud under Talut (Q. 2:249–251). The land was <i>Jund Filastin</i> under the caliphs.
Covenant strength	The Mishnah’s ruling matches Zechariah 9:7 and Nehemiah 13:24 : the old nations are mixed, and no one can be charged by an ancient name.	Philip carried his message along the Gaza road and through the coastal towns (Acts 8:26–40), treating the coast’s people as hearers, not as an accursed race.	The Qur’an says nations and tribes were made <i>“that you may know one another,”</i> and the noblest is the most righteous (Q. 49:13): lineage is not merit.

ELEMENT	✡ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Covenant departure	Naming a present people after a biblical enemy, as when Amalek was invoked in October 2023 (Document 130), transfers an ancient sentence to the living, against Deuteronomy 24:16 .	Pulpits that read Zephaniah 2 , Zechariah 9 , or Psalms 83 as predictions about Gaza today move fulfilled oracles onto a people the prophets never named.	Palestinian political leaders, Muslim and secular, who claim exclusive Canaanite or Jebusite descent to outrank Jewish history go beyond the evidence; the Qur'an itself ties the holiness of the Land to the covenant with Moses' people (Q. 5:21).
Covenant witness	Ittai of Gath swore by Yahweh (2 Samuel 15:21) ; a Philistine could become a sworn servant of David.	The oldest Christian communities on earth are Palestinian; they are heirs of the coast's first hearers, not of Goliath.	Q. 5:32 protects every innocent soul, whatever its descent.

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library's rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else's. Three points need correction or refinement.

Correction 1 — Nablus is not Samaria. The May 22, 2026 companion study *Roots of the Covenant People* (Part IV) equates Nablus with “*Shomron / Shechem*” and calls it “*the ancient capital of the northern Kingdom.*” Nablus is the Roman city Neapolis, founded in 72 CE beside ancient Shechem (**Genesis 12:6**; **1 Kings 12:25**). Samaria, the capital Omri built (**1 Kings 16:24**), lies at Sebastia, about ten kilometers to the northwest. The same study's genetic table also carries the attributions and figures that **Document 260** (Corrections 2, 3, and 4) withdrew; it should be read in light of **Document 260**.

Correction 2 — pork and the Philistines. **Document 241** (*Flesh Forbidden*, Section III) describes pig bones as more frequent at “*Philistine coastal sites.*” Refined: high pork consumption is found at the Philistine urban centers in Iron Age I (about 13 percent at Gath, 18 to 19 percent at Ekron), while rural villages within Philistia stayed low, and pork declined in the Philistine cities in Iron Age II (Section IV-B). **Document 241**'s own caution that the pattern is circumstantial stands.

Correction 3 — Hadrian and the name. **Document 259**, Section IV-E, states that Hadrian renamed the province *Syria Palaestina*. That is the standard account and is kept, but it should be noted that the evidence linking the change to Hadrian personally, and the motive for it, is circumstantial; no ancient writer records the reason (Feldman 1990; Section VI-B).

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The Philistines came into Canaan from Caphtor, beyond the sea, and Yahweh brought them there as surely as He brought Israel out of Egypt.	Genesis 10:14; Deuteronomy 2:23; Jeremiah 47:4; Amos 9:7
II	The Philistine nation was judged and ended, as the prophets said, in the Babylonian conquest and the century that followed.	Jeremiah 47:4–5; Zephaniah 2:5; Ezekiel 25:16; Nehemiah 13:24
III	The Philistine remnant was absorbed among its neighbors, Judah included; its descendants cannot be identified in any people today.	Zechariah 9:7; Nehemiah 13:23–24
IV	The Palestinian people are not the Philistines. The name passed to the Land through Greek and Roman usage and belonged, under the Mandate, to Jews as well as Arabs.	Exodus 15:14; Sections V–VI
V	The oracles against Philistia were spoken against that nation and fulfilled against it; they may not be moved onto a living people by likeness of name.	Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20; Jeremiah 18:7–8
VI	Ancestry, real or alleged, gives no people a covenant title over another and no license to harm another; the stranger is loved as the native.	Leviticus 19:33–34; Deuteronomy 23:7–8; Ezekiel 47:22–23
VII	The last word of the Tanakh about Philistia is not a curse but a birth in Zion: its remnant <i>“shall remain for our Elobim.”</i>	Zechariah 9:7; Psalms 87:4–5; 2 Samuel 15:21

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the question there is usually a believer who has been told that the people of Gaza are Goliath's children, or one who hopes to prove that they are older than Israel. Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: the Philistines are gone. They came from Caphtor, ruled five cities, fought Israel for two centuries, and were ended by Babylon, as **Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Zephaniah** foretold. Their name outlived them; their nation did not.

Second: a name is not a bloodline. *Palestine* is Philistia's name carried by Greeks and Romans to the whole Land. It was named the Jewish orchestra and the Jewish newspaper before it was named an Arab nation.

Third: the people of the Land share one ancient root. Palestinians, Lebanese, and Jews descend in large part from the same ancient population, and the Philistine remnant was mixed into it, Judah included (Zechariah 9:7). No one can claim that root alone, and no one can be cut off from it by an insult.

Fourth: do not move a fulfilled judgment onto the living. *“The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father”* (Ezekiel 18:20).

Fifth: remember Ittai. When David fled Jerusalem, a man of Gath swore by **Yahweh** to stand with him in death or in life (2 Samuel 15:21). The Tanakh records that oath from a Philistine's mouth. The covenant never asked where a man came from; it asks whom he will serve.

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“I will mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me; behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Cush; this one was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; and the Most High Himself shall establish her.”

Psalms 87:4–5 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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