



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 8, 2011

## Archeologists: Philistine Relics From Goliath's Hometown of Gath?

*The Blaze* [writes](#):

Close to three millennia ago, Gath was on the frontier between the Philistines, who occupied the Mediterranean coastal plain, and the Israelites, who controlled the inland hills. The city's most famous resident, according to the book of Samuel, was Goliath — the giant warrior improbably felled by the young shepherd David and his slingshot.



The excavation, the pet project of Aren Maeir of Bar-Ilan University, began this week and is expected to last the entire summer. Over 100 diggers have gathered at the site from Canada, South Korea, the United States, and other regions.

Maeir explains that the Philistines “are the ultimate other, almost, in the biblical story.”

A number of Philistine relics have been uncovered from the excavation region, including several 3,000-year-old jugs. One painted shard features a rust-red frame and a black spiral, a common decoration of ancient Greek art which provides a hint of the Philistines' origins in the Aegean.

*The Blaze* gives some background history of these foes of the Israelites:

The Philistines arrived by sea from the area of modern-day Greece around 1200 B.C. They went on to rule major ports at Ashkelon and Ashdod, now cities in Israel, and at Gaza, now part of the Palestinian territory known as the Gaza Strip.

At Gath, they settled on a site that had been inhabited since prehistoric times. Digs like this one have shown that though they adopted aspects of local culture, they did not forget their roots. Even five centuries after their arrival, for example, they were still worshipping gods with Greek names.

Archaeologists have learned that a staple of the Philistine diet was grass pea lentils. Ancient bones also reveal that the Philistines often feasted on pigs and dogs as well, as opposed to the Israelites who viewed these animals as unclean. In fact, these restrictions are still part of Jewish dietary laws today.

Diggers have also uncovered shards that preserve names similar to "Goliath," an Indo-European name. The discovery confirms that the Philistines used such names.

Most notably, what has been unearthed so far upholds the biblical account of Goliath. *The Blaze* explains:

The findings at the site support the idea that the Goliath story faithfully reflects something of the geopolitical reality of the period, Maeir said — the often violent interaction of the powerful



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Philistines of Gath with the kings of Jerusalem in the frontier zone between them.

Maeir states, "It doesn't mean that we're one day going to find a skull with a hole in its head from the stone that David slung at him, but it nevertheless tells that this reflects a cultural milieu that was actually there at the time."

Other findings support elements of the biblical story of Samson in the book of Judges. Samson, after the Philistines had cut his hair off, blinded, and enslaved him, was led to their temple in Gaza, where he shattered two support pillars, destroying the temple. At Gath, the remains of a large structure have been uncovered, which according to Maeir, may have been a known design element in Philistine temple architecture when it was written into the biblical account of Samson.



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