

# The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

ISSN 1203-1542

<http://www.jbsonline.org> and

<http://purl.org/jbs>



Articles in JHS are being indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, [RAMBI](#), and [BiBIL](#). Their abstracts appear in Religious and Theological Abstracts. The journal is archived by *Library and Archives Canada* and is accessible for consultation and research at the Electronic Collection site maintained by *Library and Archives Canada* (for a direct link, [click here](#)).

**VOLUME 8, ARTICLE 21**

**NADAV NA'AMAN, IN SEARCH OF THE ANCIENT NAME  
OF KHIRBET QEYAFA**

## IN SEARCH OF THE ANCIENT NAME OF KHIRBET QEYAFÁ

NADAV NA'AMAN

DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH HISTORY,

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

### 1. KHIRBET QEYAFÁ AND THE KINGDOM OF GATH

Khirbet Qeyafa is located on the north side of the Valley of Elah, east of Tell Zakariyeh (biblical Azekah) and north of Khirbet 'Abbad (biblical Socoh). The Elah Valley, which it overlooks, is best known from the biblical story of the battle between David and Goliath (1 Sam 17:1). The recent excavations of Khirbet Qeyafa unearthed a fortified stronghold on top of a hill. The stronghold was surrounded by a casemate wall covering an area of about 23 dunams, the pottery on the floors is dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Garfinkel and Ganor 2008). Among the important finds from the site is a proto-Canaanite ostrakon, as yet unpublished.

Garfinkel and Ganor discussed the possible political affiliation of the city and suggested that it was a Judahite stronghold on the border of Philistia. Their main arguments are the similarity of the pottery to that of Judahite sites, the absence of pig bones and the assumed language of the ostrakon. Since the site is peripheral, the kind of pottery unearthed there and the absence of Philistine pottery cannot decide the issue of political affinity. Moreover, it is precarious at this early stage of excavation to determine whether or not there are pig bones at the site. Even if we assume that the inhabitants of Khirbet Qeyafa avoided consuming pork meat, it might have

been a city of the kingdom of Gath, like the Iron Age I site of Beth-shemesh, which belonged to the kingdom of Ekron but its inhabitants avoided eating pork (for the issue of pig remains as an ethnic diagnosis, see Hesse 1990; 1995; Hesse and Wapnish 1997).<sup>1</sup> Finally, Proto-Canaanite inscriptions of the Iron Age I-IIA are known mainly from the lowlands (i.e., ‘Izbet-Şarṭah, Gezer, Beth-Shemesh, Tel Batash, Tell eṣ-Şāfi, Tel Zayit, Qubur el-Walaidah), and are rare in the hill country. Hence the assumption that Khirbet Qeiyafa was connected to the neighboring lowland kingdom of Gath (Tell eṣ-Şāfi), located 11.5 km west of it.

## 2. THE ANCIENT IDENTITY OF KHIRBET QEYAFa

What might have been the identity of Khirbet Qeiyafa? The story of the battle of David and Goliath describes the arena of the battle as follows (1 Sam. 17:1–2): “Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered in Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim; and Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines”. The description indicates that the story was written after the consolidation of the kingdom of Judah, when Socoh (and Azekah) were Judahite cities. According to the description, the Philistines encamped south of the Elah Valley, where Ephes-dammim must be sought, and Saul and his army arrived from the northeast and encamped north of the valley. Although the Israelite army encamped not far from Khirbet Qeiyafa, this important stronghold is not mentioned in the story. Evidently, the site was destroyed and deserted at the time when the story was written.

There is yet another story of a battle between a Judahite warrior with Goliath of Gath, related in 2 Sam 21:19: “Again there was fighting with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan the son of Ya‘are >oregim<, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Gittite, whose spear had a shaft like a weaver’s beam.” Three elements connects this short anecdote with the story of the battle of David and Goliath: (a) in both stories the Israelite warrior is described as PN<sup>1</sup> (David, Elhanan) son of PN<sup>2</sup> (Jesse, Ya‘are/Ya‘ir) the Bethlehemite; (b) the Philistine warrior is introduced with his full name, Goliath

---

<sup>1</sup> I very much doubt the great importance attributed by Bunimovitz and Lederman (2006: 422) to pig bones as a major element in determining political affinity in the Iron Age I-II period. In their words, “Apparently, by denying Philistine cultural traits (e.g., pig consumption), Beth-Shemesh was involved in the process of Israelite ethnogenesis and affiliated itself with the Israelite sociopolitical entity.” These scholars discuss political affinity as if it was a matter of free choice, rather than a decision made by the strong kingdoms. Moreover, the Bible deals countless times with the self-definition of the Israelites, and the consumption of pork never figured in it. The Philistines are pejoratively called “uncircumcised”, not pork eaters. Bunimovitz’s and Lederman’s view is anachronistic, attributing to the monarchical period a social concept taken from the reality of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

the Gittite; (c) Goliath's weapon is described in the same words in the two episodes: "whose spear had a shaft like a weaver's beam".

Gob is the place where Elhanan fought Goliath, and Sibbecai the Hushathite fought Saph, another Philistine warrior (2 Sam. 21:18). Where was this place? The answer depends on the literary relations between the two stories and the possible identity of Elhanan and David.

The assumed identity of Elhanan as David has been discussed many times by scholars. David is a unique name—there is no other person with this name, either in the Bible or in the ancient Near East. This is the basis for the notion that Elhanan was a proper name and David was either an appellative, title or throne name that he adopted at a certain stage in his career (Honeyman 1948:23–24; von Pákozdy 1956; see Dempster 1992; Ehrlich 1992). Stamm (1960), however, suggested that David, in the sense of 'uncle' (*dād*), was the early name of David and consequently dismissed the identification of David with Elhanan. David might well have been a throne name,<sup>2</sup> but his identification with Elhanan is uncertain, especially in view of their different father's name, Ya'are/Ya'ir and Jesse.<sup>3</sup> The author of the Book of Samuel was not bothered by the conflicting traditions, which could support the opinion that he considered them as one and the same person.<sup>4</sup>

There are many indications, however, that the story of David and Goliath is a late composition (for details see Barthélemy, Gooding, Lust and Tov 1986; Rofé 1987; Auld and Ho 1992; Dietrich 1996; for a discussion of Goliath's armor, see Galling 1966; Finkelstein 2002: 142–148).<sup>5</sup> Thus it is clear that 2 Sam 21:19 represents the earliest and more accurate layer of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. with the cases of Yedidiah/Solomon, Jehoahaz/Shallum, Eliakim/Jehoiakim, Mattaniah/Zedekiah.

<sup>3</sup> For the suggestion that the letters  $\text{ער}$  in Ya'are are a ligature of an original Hebrew  $\text{ש}$ , and that Ya'are ( $\text{יער}$ ) is a distortion of the name Jesse ( $\text{יש}$ ), see Goldschmid 1948/49; Weiss 1963: 194.

<sup>4</sup> The author of Chronicles, however, dismissed the identification, rewrote the text and attributed to Elhanan the killing of Lahmi, the brother of Goliath (1 Chr. 20:5) (see Japhet 1993: 366–369).

<sup>5</sup> Isbell (2006: 261–263) suggested that the author of the David and Goliath story tried to tighten the literary link between his story and the anecdotes of the fighting of four Judahite warriors against four Philistine warriors. He noted that David choose five smooth stones (17:40) but used only one, and suggested that the other four stones allude to the other four struggles with the Philistines mentioned in 2 Sam. 21:14–22.

tradition and therefore, Elhanan of Bethlehem was probably the warrior who killed Goliath (so Ehrlich 1992; 1996: 131). Moreover, the three common elements of the two episodes prove that the author of the David-and-Goliath story extracted some details from the ancient account. A fourth element that he borrowed was the location of the battle, but he updated the names and expanded the details in keeping with the reality of his own time.

In this light, I suggest identifying Khirbet Qeiyafa with Gob, which is mentioned as the place of the second and third battles with the Philistine warriors (2 Sam. 21:18–19).

### 3. GOB IN PLACE OF NOB IN 2 SAMUEL 21:16?

The fourth battle was conducted near Gath (vv. 20–21), and it seems that the author of the four episodes (vv. 15–21) described the westward advance of the Israelite army as a result of the victories of the warriors. Unfortunately, the text of the first episode (vv. 15–17) is corrupted. Some scholars (Isser 2003: 35; see BHS) suggested that the battle took place at Nob (v. 16 *wayešbu benob*).<sup>6</sup> However, Nob does not fit the geographical context of the four anecdotes. Wellhausen (1871: 210) suggested emending the text to read *wayešbu begob* (“they camped in Gob”), and commentators followed his suggestion (Smith 1899: 378; Nowack 1902: 239; Driver 1913: 353; Hertzberg 1964: 385).<sup>7</sup> If this is indeed the case, the text in vv. 15–21 makes a perfect sense (for recent discussion of these episodes, see Ehrlich 1996: 126–132, with earlier literature). It follows the well-known pattern of the three and four: David and his warriors camped near Gob = Khirbet Qeiyafa, the main Philistine stronghold on the border of the kingdom of Gath, won the three battles with the Philistines champions, then advanced westwards and fought for the fourth time near the capital city of Gath.

### 3. HISTORY, MEMORIES AND SOURCES IN THE STORY OF DAVID’S RISE

Historically, we may assume that several clashes between David's and elite Philistine troops took place in the Elah Valley, near Khirbet Qeiyafa, which controlled the main road leading to Gath (for single combats in the ancient Near East and the Bible, see de Vaux 1972). It goes without saying that the Israelites could not capture the strong fort and all the clashes of the elite troops took place near it. The victories of Israelite warriors over outstanding Philistine warriors who belonged to a special elite corps (*yelidē*

<sup>6</sup> Eissfeldt (1966: 119–122) suggested that Gob is a shortened form of Gibe-thon; Halpern (2001: 148 n.7, 150–151, 321) also suggested that Gob is a shortened form of Geba/Gibeon. For a detailed discussion of the MT and the versions of vv. 15b–16a, see Pisano 1984: 151–154.

<sup>7</sup> I assume that the text was corrupted due to haplography. Tentatively, the text might be restored as follows: ... *nyšbw* <*hgb nyqm* (x)>*bnb* ..., “... they camped <at Gob and (x)>*bnb* <arose> ...”.

*bārāpā*’; see Willesen 1958a; 1958b; L’Heureux 1976) was remembered for many years and finally recorded in a chronicle in the literary pattern of three and four, which conveyed the message that after three battles David and his men were able to overcome Gob and advance to the capital city of Gath.

The source for the four anecdotes may be the one I called “the chronicle of early Israelite kings” (Na’aman 1996: 173–179; 2003: 203–215). I have suggested that the chronicle was written in the first half of the 8th century BCE, and that the chronicler collected oral stories of the early monarchical period that he had heard and described them in a dry, matter-of-fact, manner. It was probably the main written source from which late authors extracted concrete details for their narratives about the history of David. However, the great antiquity of the historical memory as reflected in the analysis of the four episodes calls for a re-evaluation of the date, and it is possible that the chronicle was composed earlier than the date I suggested.

The identification of Gob with Khirbet Qeiyafa supports the assumption of some scholars of the great antiquity of the memories of David’s rise to the throne. Khirbet Qeiyafa was already destroyed in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the anecdotes in 2 Sam. 21:18–19 still refer to it as an inhabited central place. It is the first time that the great antiquity of a biblical story/tradition is bored out by the discovery of a site that was deserted at such an early date. It might indicate that some other parts of the stories of David’s rise to the throne (such as his enthronement at Hebron, the conquest of Jebus/Jerusalem [2 Sam 5:6–9], and David’s two wars with the Philistines [2 Sam 5: 17–25]), which cannot be examined by archaeological tools, also commemorate events of the time of David.

Another lesson to be learned is that the late author of the story of David and Goliath made an effort to tie his story to the arena where, according to the old story, the event took place. But as the toponymic reality in the area had changed since the original event, he described the episode in keeping with the reality of his own time. Other late authors might also have described events according to the old traditions they knew, thereby supplying clues for reconstructing the events they described many years later.

## REFERENCES

- Auld A.G. and Ho, C.Y.S. 1992. The Making of David and Goliath. *JSOT* 56: 19–39.
- Barthélemy, D., Gooding, D.W., Lust, J. and Tov, E. 1986. *The Story of David and Goliath: Textual and Literary Criticism*. (OBO 74). Fribourg and Göttingen.
- Bunimovitz, S. and Lederman, Z. 2006. The Early Israelite Monarchy in the Sorek Valley: Tel Beth-Shemesh and Tel Batash (Timnah) in the 10th and 9th centuries BCE. In: Maeir, A.M. and de Miroschedji, P. eds. *“I will Speak Riddles of Ancient Times” Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*. Winona Lake: 407–427.
- Dietrich, W. 1996. Die Erzählungen von David und Goliath in I Sam 17. *ZAW* 108: 172–191.
- Dempster, S.G. 1992. Elhanan. *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2. New York: 455–456.
- Driver, S.R. 1913. *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (2<sup>nd</sup> revised ed.). Oxford.
- Ehrlich, C.S. 1992. Goliath. *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2. New York: 1073–1074.
- Ehrlich, C.S. 1996. *The Philistines in Transition. A History from ca. 1000-730 BCE*. Leiden.
- Eissfeldt, O. 1966. Israelisch-philistäische Grenzverschiebungen von David bis auf die Assyrerzeit. *ZDPV* 66: 115–128.
- Finkelstein, I. 2002. The Philistines in the Bible: A Late-Monarchic Perspective. *JSOT* 27: 131–167.
- Galling, K. 1966. Goliath und seine Rüstung. *SVT* 15: 150–169.
- Garfinkel, Y. and Ganor, S. 2008. Ḥorvat Qeiyafa - a Fortified City on the Philistia-Judah Border in the Early Iron II. In: Amit, D. and Stiebel, G.D. eds. *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Religion, Collected Papers*, vol. II. Jerusalem: 88–96 (Hebrew).
- Goldschmid, P. 1948/49. Propose to Regard “Elhanan” as David Private Name. *Bulletin of the Jewish Palestinian Society* 14: 122 (Hebrew).
- Halpern, B. 2001. *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor King*. Grand Rapids.
- Hertzberg, H.W. 1964. *I and II Samuel: A Commentary* (OTL). London.
- Hesse, B. 1990. Pig Lovers and Pig Haters: Patterns of Palestinian Pork Production. *Journal of Ethnobiology* 10: 195–225.
- Hesse, B. 1995. Husbandry, Dietary Taboos and the Bones of the Ancient Near East: Zooarchaeology in the Post-Processual World. In: Small, D.B. ed. *Methods in the Mediterranean Historical and Archaeological Views on Texts and Archaeology*. Leiden: 197–232.
- Hesse, B. and Wapnish, P. 1997. Can Pig Remains Be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East. In: Silberman, N.A. and Small, D. eds. *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing Past, Interpreting the Present* (JSOTSup 237). Sheffield: 238–270.

- Honeyman, A.M. 1948. The Evidence for Regnal Names Among the Hebrews. *JBL* 67: 13–25.
- Isbell, C.D. 2006. A Biblical Midrash on David and Goliath. *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 20: 259–263.
- Isser, S. 2003. *The Sword of Goliath. David in Heroic Literature*. Atlanta.
- Japhet, S. 1993. *I & II Chronicles* (OTL). Westminster and Louisville.
- L'Heureux, C.E. 1976. The *y<sup>l</sup>lédé hārāpā'* - A Cultic Association of Warriors. *BAJOR* 221: 83–85.
- Na'aman, N. 1996. Sources and Composition in the History of David. In: Fritz V. and Davies P.R. eds. *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (JSOTSup. 228). Sheffield: 170–186.
- Na'aman, N. 2003. In Search of Reality Behind the Account of David's Wars with Israel's Neighbours. *IEJ* 52: 200–224
- Nowack, W. 1902. *Die Bücher Samuelis* (Hand Kommentar zum Alten Testament 1/4 part 2), Göttingen.
- Pákozdy, L.M. von 1956. 'Elhānān - der frühere Name Davids? *ZAW* 68: 257–259
- Pisano, S. 1984. *Additions or Omissions in the Books of Samuel. The Significant Pluses and Minuses in the Massoretic, LXX and Qumran Texts* (OBO 57). Freiburg and Göttingen.
- Rofé, A. 1987. The Battle of David and Goliath: Folklore, Theology, Eschatology. In: Neusner, J., Levine, B.A. and Frerichs, E.S. eds. *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, Philadelphia: 117–151.
- Smith, H.P. 1899. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*. (ICC). Edinburgh.
- Stamm, J.J. 1960. Der Name des Königs David. *SVT* 7: 165–183.
- Vaux, R. de. 1972. Single Combat in the Old Testament. *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*. London: 122–135.
- Weiss, R. 1963. On Ligatures in the Hebrew Bible (א=ב). *JBL* 82: 188–194.
- Wellhausen, J. 1871. *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis untersucht*. Göttingen.
- Willesen, F. 1958a. The *Yālid* in Hebrew Society. *Studia Theologica* 12: 192–210.
- Willesen, F. 1958b. The Philistine Corps of the Scimitar from Gath. *JSS* 3: 327–335.