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David's Ziklag

Based on an article by Ruth Schuster Ha'Aretz July 8 2019



Tel al-Rai, identified as Ziklag, where David took refuge from Saul
Excavation expedition to Khirbet a-Ra'i

According to researchers from the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, the biblical town of Ziklag may have recently been found. The ruins of what is thought to be Ziklag were found near the modern town of Kiryat Gat in southern Israel and have been dated to the early 10th century B.C.E. – the time associated with King David. If confirmed, the find confirms the biblical account, indicating yet again that that David was more than just a local hilltop chieftain, as some researchers claim; he ruled over a significant kingdom in Judea.

Ziklag is mentioned in the Books of Joshua and Samuel as a Philistine town abutting the city of Gath (after which the modern city of Kiryat Gat is named). Archaeologists point out that the name Ziklag stands out in the biblical record because it is neither Semitic nor Canaanite but, apparently, Philistine.

Finding Ziklag

<https://youtu.be/PZogvLiM080>

Israel Antiquities Authority, YouTube: [click to watch the video](#)

King David's Time

According to the Bible, when the youthful David fell into disfavor with King Saul, who tried to spear him, he fled to the Philistines. The Philistine king Achish of Gath allowed David to move to Ziklag, which became a base where David built up his forces while keeping a discreet distance from Achish in order to hide his activities and the fact that he had not really gone over to the Philistine enemy.



Wine and oil were stored in jars like these

Excavation expedition to Khirbet a-Ra'i

The future Israelite king's decision to seek sanctuary with the Philistines is one of the stranger episodes in the Bible. Before he seized the throne of Judah and Israel, David and his men purported to ally with the Philistines against the Israelites, led by king Saul. In fact, David led brutal forays against other enemies of his people: the Amalekites, Geshur and Gezer. He too experienced loss as the Amalekites, nomads from the south, attacked Ziklag in his absence: "David rose up early, he and his men, to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines... it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites

had made a raid upon the South, and upon Ziklag ... and had taken captive the women and all that were therein, both small and great" (1 Samuel 29:11-30, 32), Later, upon Saul's death, David left Ziklag for Hebron, where he was anointed king.

Science Versus Scripture

These days, even the "minimalist camp" of biblical archaeologists, not guided by scripture but by their scientific discipline, admit that David did exist – as did, King Saul, David's nemesis, and King Solomon, David's son. In the course of turbulent eras in which they lived David could have taken refuge in Ziklag, a town, the location of which was unknown. Over the years, archaeologists have suggested no less than 12 potential sites in the south-central regions of Israel as the biblical Ziklag.

Now, after seven seasons of excavation, Prof. Joseph Garfinkel of Hebrew University, Saar Ganor of the Antiquities Authority, and Prof. Dr. Kyle Keimer and Dr. Gil Davis of Macquarie University, Australia, believe they've found it, at a site called Khirbet al-Rai (or Arai) in the Judean foothills, between Kiryat Gat and Lachish.



Tel al-Rai, identified as Ziklag, where David took refuge from Saul
Excavation expedition to Khirbet a-Ra'i

Khirbet al-Rai, the researchers explain, is the only one of proposed site where there is evidence of continuous occupation. Remains of both a Philistine community and of a settlement from the era of King David have been discovered there. Carbon 14 tests show Khirbet al-Rai dating to the 10th century B.C.E. – King David's time. The ruins of the Philistine settlement discovered have been dated to the 12th and 11th centuries B.C.E.. They include massive, spacious stone structures, and ceramics unique to the Philistines in foundation deposits, such as bowls and an oil lamp. The range of complete vessels includes large quantities of storage jars for oil and wine. The archaeologists also found jugs and bowls decorated in the style known as "red slipped and hand burnished," typical to the period of King David. The archaeologists also found stone and metal artifacts similar to finds from the same period in Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and Gath – all major Philistine cities.

Above the Philistine remains dig was the later stratum associated with King David; findings show that an intense fire destroyed many of the structures of the era. Excavations here have yielded dozens of intact vessels looking remarkably like the ones discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa, identified as biblical Sha'arayim, and also excavated by Garfinkel and Ganor. Qeiyafa, which is not far from Beit Shemesh, was a fortress that dates to the early 10th century B.C.E., David's time. Suggestions that it was the site of one of his palaces have not been proven.

The discoveries at Qeiyafa reignited the argument about whether or not there had been a United Kingdom of Judah and Israel under David and Solomon. Garfinkel, for one, believes that the important findings at Qeiyafa indicate that David ruled an area that ranged at least as far as the Shfela, southern-central Israel. Detractors point out that there is no evidence of any connection between Qeiyafa and Jerusalem, or proof that David controlled a large area.

Based on the excavations at Lachish and now at Tel Arai, Garfinkel and Ganor now argue that David, ruling from Jerusalem, controlled a not-large area between that city, Hebron and Qeiyafa, and the fact that according to what we know presume to know these were the only fortified cities in his kingdom. The kingdom also held sway over a dozen to 20 unfortified villages and a nomadic population. Further finds are likely to modify their views still further.



Mostly reconstructed vessels found at Tel a-Rai, identified as Ziklag
Excavation expedition to Khirbet a-Ra'i

“That was the composition of the population,” Garfinkel told Haaretz. “I estimate that it had no more than 5,000 residents, about 2,000 in the cities and 2,000 in the villages and another thousand Bedouin, nomads. This is the realistic picture I see of the Kingdom of David. Later King Rehoboam would fortify Lachish and the kingdom would grow further.” In the early days of King David, Garfinkel and Ganor suggest, the hilltop cities of Ziklag and Sha'arayim marked the western frontier of the kingdom, controlling trade routes linking the Philistines and Judeans. Khirbet Qeiyafa in the Elah Valley was opposite Gath, and Khirbet Arai sits opposite Ashkelon – a site from which it was possible to keep an eye on the Philistines.

Oncoming Elections

As noted in MaozNews 136, Israel is to return to the polls on September 7th after Mr. Netanyahu failed in his efforts to present the country with a coalition Government. There are two major blocs being formed. On the centre-right is the incumbent, Mr. Netanyahu, and the Likud, which he leads. On his far right there will be two perhaps, perhaps three parties, each vying to be part of the next coalition (new parties are created as every time elections approach. Many of these are one-time offshoots from existing parties). In the centre is former Chief of Staff Benny Gantz's Blue and White, expected to league with the three parties to his left. The right wing is presently expected to be fractured, although discussion is being held over the possibility of forming a technical bloc that would run as a single political unit. The center and left parties are almost certain to form such a bloc.

The primary issue dividing the two major parties has to do with the question whether or not Mr. Netanyahu should be allowed to serve again as Prime Minister which under suspicion of

bribery, misuse of public funds, abuse of power and breach of trust. Related to these charges of corruption are his efforts to gain control of the police, the judiciary and the press. It is possible that we shall have a unity Government composed of the two major parties, with our without other partners, and without Mr. Netanyahu.

That possibility might be obviated by an expected low voter turnout among the Arabs, who are disappointed with their own political representation. Such an eventuality would raise the proportion of Likud voters' and increase Netanyahu's ability to form a Government.

Ministry News

I have completed translating **Bible study notes on the book of Isaiah** and have commenced work on Jeremiah. I've also **completed commentaries on Nahum, Habakkuk** (on which I had completed a good part of the work of the work some months ago) and **Zephaniah**. As I work through extensive portions of the older Testament, I am repeatedly amazed by the extent and the depth the two Testaments relate one to another, not by way of allegorizing, spiritualizing, imposing New Testament concepts on the Old Testament or by some other presumptive means, but simply by noting the homological unity that exists between the two. The fundamental concepts, commonly termed doctrines or theology, that form and inform both, that drive them and that make up the framework of their worldview, are identical.

One does not need the New Testament to come to Christian convictions. As Paul puts it, speaking of the Old Testament, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17). As Calvin says on this section,

Perfect means here a blameless person, one in whom there is nothing defective; for he asserts absolutely, that the Scripture is sufficient for perfection. Accordingly, he who is not satisfied with Scripture desires to be wiser than is either proper or desirable.

But here an objection arises. Seeing that Paul speaks of the Scriptures, which is the name given to the Old Testament, how does he say that it makes a man thoroughly perfect? for, if it be so, what was afterwards added by the apostles may be thought superfluous. I reply, so far as relates to the substance, nothing has been added; for the writings of the apostles contain nothing else than a simple and natural explanation of the Law and the Prophets, together with a manifestation of the things expressed in them. This eulogium, therefore, is not inappropriately bestowed on the Scriptures by Paul; and, seeing that its instruction is now rendered more full and clear by the addition of the Gospel, what can be said but that we ought assuredly to hope that the usefulness, of which Paul speaks, will be much more displayed, if we are willing to make trial and receive it?

That is one of the reasons I so delight in studying the Old Testament. In my commentaries, both in English (Jonah, Malachi and perhaps others to come) and in Hebrew, I hope to share that delight with my readers. Jonathan Edwards somewhere insisted, "the natural meaning is the spiritual meaning", not the other way around. How wonderfully, delightfully, gloriously true! Maybe someday I should write a book about hermeneutics

The editorial process on **the book of Revelation** in our translation of the New Testament is now well advanced. My **commentary on Romans** is in the hands of the printer, and HaGefen Publishing and I have agreed that the next book to be prepared is the one on **church life**. In

English, my **commentary on Galatians** is being edited. We are slightly overdue. I expect to receive the editorial comments very soon.

We have so far been unsuccessful in selling our house here in Israel due to the extremely slow market. This will inevitably delay our **relocation to the US**, with rather broad practical implications but, although tempted, we do not question God's oversight of our lives. He always has wise and gracious purposes.

Family News

Eran, Avital and the children are in Israel for the month of July. We are enjoying their company very much. **Noam** completed her first year at Gonzaga, where she made the Dean's Honor List. **Maya** is undergoing a combined high-school/college course, where she is making straight A's. She celebrated her 17th birthday while in Israel, where **Nadav** will also celebrate his 13th. **Keith's** health is holding up. He is in earnest search of gainful employment, Shlomit has accepted part-time employment (10 hours per month) and is seeking further part-time employment. **Marcus and Tamar's** home was flooded by a clogged toilet it is too early to know if there has been any permanent damage.

Felix has completed his nurses training and is now prepping for the national exam in September while working as a nurse at an Indian reservation. **Katya** is with child. She is not well and has been granted medical relief from work until she gives birth. There is some concern for the health of the child she is bearing. God willing, **Rose** is to be wed on August 7th. I am to perform the wedding. Her husband to be is a fine young man, a devoted Christian.

Thank you, thank you very much for interceding on our behalf before the throne of grace!

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

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