

1 Samuel 17:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim.

Analysis

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The Philistine gathering for battle introduces the military crisis that would reveal David's faith. Shochoh and Azekah in the Shephelah (lowland hills) marked the contested boundary between Philistine coastal territory and Israelite highlands. The place name Ephes-dammim ('boundary of blood') ominously foreshadowed the coming confrontation. Israel's very existence as an independent nation was at stake in this struggle for territorial control.

Historical Context

The Philistines, likely Aegean migrants who settled Canaan's coast around 1175 BCE, possessed iron technology giving military advantage. Their five city-states (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, Ekron) regularly challenged Israelite expansion. The Valley of Elah provided strategic access from the coastal plain into Judah's heartland.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What territorial or spiritual boundaries are currently contested in your life or community?
2. How does understanding the historical stakes deepen your appreciation of David's courage?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲסָפוּ and were gathered together H622	כַּלְשֵׁת יָם Now the Philistines H6430	אֶת H853	מִחֲנִיָּהֶם their armies H4264	לְמַלְחָמָה to battle H4421
וַאֲסָפוּ and were gathered together H622	שׁוֹכַה at Shochoh H7755	אֲשֶׁר H834	לַיהוּדָה which belongeth to Judah H3063	
וַיִּחַן and pitched H2583	בֵּין H996	שׁוֹכַה at Shochoh H7755	וּבֵין H996	עֶזְקָה and Azekah H5825
		בָּאָרְצָה H0	בְּמִיָּם: in Ephesdammim H658	

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 15:35 (Parallel theme): Jarmuth, and Adullam, Socoh, and Azekah,

1 Chronicles 11:13 (Parallel theme): He was with David at Pas-dammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines.

2 Chronicles 28:18 (Parallel theme): The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and

Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

1 Samuel 13:5 (Parallel theme): And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

Judges 3:3 (Parallel theme): Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.