

# Judges 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

## Analysis

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**Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.**

This verse claims Judah conquered three of the five major Philistine cities (the Pentapolis). Gaza (azzah, אַזָּה), Ashkelon (ashqelon, אַשְׁקָלוֹן), and Ekron (eqron, אֶקְרֹן) controlled crucial coastal trade routes and Mediterranean ports. However, verse 19 immediately qualifies this success, and Judges 3:3 confirms Philistine pentapolis remained unconquered. The Septuagint (Greek OT) actually reads "Judah did NOT take" these cities, suggesting either textual corruption or that "took" means temporary conquest without permanent occupation—similar to Jerusalem (v. 8, 21).

The Philistines were Sea Peoples who settled Canaan's coast around 1175 BCE, contemporaneous with Israel's conquest. They possessed superior iron technology and professional military organization, making them formidable adversaries throughout the judges period. Their five cities (adding Gath and Ashdod to the three mentioned) operated as independent city-states united for defense. Philistine pressure on Israel escalates through Judges (Samson's era, chapters 13-16) and into Samuel's time (1 Samuel 4-7), with David finally subduing them (2 Samuel 5:17-25, 8:1).

Theologically, Judah's incomplete conquest of Philistine territory illustrates the pattern of partial obedience characterizing Judges. Initial success gave way to

compromise and accommodation. This mirrors Christian experience—areas of initial victory that aren't maintained through vigilance become renewed spiritual battlegrounds. The Philistines' persistent presence troubled Israel for centuries, demonstrating how incomplete obedience creates ongoing problems. Paul warns against giving Satan a foothold (Ephesians 4:27) and exhorts believers to complete sanctification (2 Corinthians 7:1), recognizing that unconquered sin areas will reassert themselves unless thoroughly addressed.

## Historical Context

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The Philistines arrived in Canaan as part of broader Sea Peoples migrations that destabilized the eastern Mediterranean around 1200 BCE. Egyptian records (Ramesses III's temple at Medinet Habu) describe repelling Sea Peoples' invasions, with some groups (including Philistines) settling Canaan's coast. Archaeological evidence shows Philistine material culture (distinctive pottery, architecture) appearing suddenly in coastal sites during Iron Age I (1200-1000 BCE). Their cities featured planned layouts with stone-built structures more sophisticated than contemporaneous Israelite settlements.

Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron were major urban centers. Gaza controlled the Via Maris (coastal highway) connecting Egypt and Mesopotamia. Ashkelon was a significant port with extensive trade networks. Ekron (Tel Miqne) has been extensively excavated, revealing massive olive oil industrial operations producing hundreds of thousands of liters annually for export. These cities' economic importance and military strength made them formidable obstacles to Israelite expansion westward.

The textual question (did Judah or didn't Judah take these cities?) reflects the conquest's complexity. Military raids could destroy cities without establishing permanent occupation. Samson later raids Philistine territory (Judges 14-15), and David eventually brings them under tribute (2 Samuel 8:1), but Philistines retained significant independence. This pattern of incomplete conquest continues into the monarchy, with Philistine resurgence periodically threatening Israel (1 Kings 15:27, 16:15, 2 Kings 18:8). Complete conquest awaited eschatological fulfillment

—prophets foretold Philistia's ultimate judgment (Jeremiah 47:1-7, Ezekiel 25:15-17, Zephaniah 2:4-7).

## Related Passages

**Ephesians 2:8** – Salvation by grace through faith

## **John 3:16 — God's love and salvation**

## Study Questions

1. What 'Philistine cities' in your spiritual life represent areas of initial victory that weren't maintained, becoming renewed battlegrounds?
2. How does the Philistines' superior technology parallel worldly advantages that make certain sins or temptations particularly difficult to overcome?
3. What spiritual disciplines and community accountability structures help maintain victories rather than surrendering reconquered territory?

## Interlinear Text

וְלֹפֶךְ	יהוֹדָה	אַתָּה	עַצְמָה	אַתָּה	גְּבוּלָה	אַתָּה
<b>took</b> H3920	<b>Also Judah</b> H3063	H853	<b>Gaza</b> H5804	H853	<b>with the coast</b> H1366	H853

גְּבוּלָה:

## Additional Cross-References

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**Joshua 11:22** (Parallel theme): There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.

**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.

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