

## Philistines in North Africa

### Commentary for July 1, 2015 — ... Joab's Great Chase?

The Philistines appear again at the end of the narrative of this month's article, "Israel and Judah: 11. David's Restoration as King." The "[July 2015 Newsletter](#)" gives useful information to introduce the article.

In my November 1, 2008 Commentary, "[Old Testament History, the Basics](#)" I quoted a long passage by Dr. Ernest L. Martin from 1986. He tells of traditions and inscriptions in North Africa that left records of ancient monuments from King David's time.

Dr. Ernest Martin wrote:

**"In the conduct of wars near the time of David when an army would penetrate into enemy territory or chase an enemy to a certain location, it was common to set up a stone marker showing this. ...**

**Notice what the traditions say about certain stone markers found in areas of North Africa. They show a real similarity to the prevailing custom.** [Dr. Martin then quotes the work of Abraham Isaac Laredo:]

**'Rabbi Joseph Schwarz in his book *Tebuat Ha-Arez* (Jerusalem, 1845) says:**

**"According to the accounts of people of repute and worthy of all confidence, and who continually arrive from Morocco to Jerusalem, it is a certain and well known fact that near the region of Zagora, in the kingdom of Fez in Morocco there is an inscription in Ashurit letters, engraved on a stone tablet, which says: 'Up to here I, Joab, son of Zeruya, pursued the Philistines.'" (Laredo, pp. 107–109)"<sup>1</sup>**

**• Ernest Martin, 1986**

If this inscription is true, then when did Joab, David's General of the Army, pursue the rogue Philistines across North Africa, only to stop his pursuit when he reached the land of Morocco? Such a long pursuit must have taken most of a year. (Yes, it is possible, but unlikely, that this artifact was fabricated in the 1800s or earlier.) I believe this pursuit by Joab and a portion of David's army likely took place after the last great wars of Israel with the Philistines. They may be accounted for in 2 Samuel 21:15–22 and 1 Chronicles 20:4–8 (told in this month's article).

This could have happened in the years after Solomon's birth and before Absalom's rebellion.<sup>2</sup> This was a period of about 13 years. During that same time period, David's Philistine body-guard, were the Gittites (Gittite means "**belonging to Gath**") and they fought loyally for

<sup>1</sup> Abraham Isaac Laredo, *Bereberes y Hebreos en Marruecos* [Berbers and Hebrews in Morocco] (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1954), pp. 81–82.

<sup>2</sup> King Solomon, David's successor, has no record of conflict with the Philistines, although later kings of Judah did have conflicts with them. The Philistines likely were compliant vassals of Israel and Solomon (1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chronicles 9:26).

David several times, as well as during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15:18–19, 22, 18:2, 21:19; 1 Chronicles 13:13, 20:5), as did the Cherethites (Cretans) who were related to the Philistines (2 Samuel 8:18, 15:18, 20:7, 23; 1 Kings 1:38, 44; 1 Chronicles 18:17).

Whenever it was, the Philistines that Joab was chasing must have committed some horrendous acts to cause such a long and determined pursuit. The inscription does not indicate whether Joab caught the fugitive Philistines in Morocco and killed them (which Joab did well), or if he merely stopped pursuing them. In fact, it may have been more than a pursuit. Joab's travels may have been an expedition for exploration as well.

Apparently many Israelites followed Joab into North Africa (and even Spain) as indicated by Jewish traditional history. Procopius, the 6<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine historian, recorded that a synagogue was in Boreium of Cirenaica (Libya) that dated to the time of Solomon.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Martin also wrote:

**"This was not the only inscription about this conquest by David's general. Nahum Slouschz says that the inhabitants of the island of Djerba and of Djebel Gharian in Tunis, also believe that their ancestors established themselves in Libya in the time of Solomon and preserve the remembrance of a stone tablet found in their territory with the inscription: 'Up to here came Joab, son of Zeruya' (Laredo, p. 117).**

**In Morocco local Jews testified that the city of Hadjir Solaiman (Rock of Solomon) in the region of Dra'a was founded by Joab. This city derived its name from a stone tablet found there which read: 'Up to here Joab, General of the Army, pursued the Philistines.' (Laredo, p. 107).**

**In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Abraham Ibn David Ha-Levi of Toledo, Spain, in his Sepher Ha-Qabblah says the Berbers claimed to be descendants of the Philistines, who had been expelled from the Land of Canaan as a result of their wars with David and Joab.**

**... Why am I giving these traditional histories about Canaanites, Edomites, Philistines, and Jews moving into North Africa and Spain? It is to show that the majority of historical records written in the time of David and Solomon (and later periods up to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC) were destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar, the 'head of gold,' put an end to the civilizations of the past."**

**• Ernest Martin, 1986**

Read or reread the entire text that Dr. Martin wrote in 1986, in my November 1, 2008 Commentary, "[Old Testament History, the Basics](#)."

## **Byte Show Update**

John Evans (GeorgeAnn Hughes' son) has been very sick for two weeks and has not had time to do additional recordings of *Essentials*. He and I recorded chapter 20, but it appears we will have to redo it because of a "buzzing" sound that makes it impossible to use. Pray that John recovers fully and can continue his mother's work.

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<sup>3</sup> See Procopius, [The Buildings](#), VI.2.21.