

What is the significance of Ekron in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Ekron-in-the-Bible.html>

Ekron, an ancient Philistine city, is first mentioned in Joshua 13:2-3, “This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines and Geshurites, from the Shihor River on the east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north, all of it counted as Canaanite though held by the five Philistine rulers in Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron; the territory of the Avvites.” The cities mentioned in this text—including Ekron—were the five major Philistine cities. Philistia of old was situated along the Mediterranean coast, which is now modern-day Israel and the Gaza strip. The Philistines were long enemies of ancient Israel.

Ekron served as a significant border city of the Philistines. During the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan, Ekron came under the possession of the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:43). However, Dan appears to have lost Ekron back to the Philistines. The city is mentioned in 1 Samuel 5:10 as a Philistine territory.

An especially noteworthy mention of Ekron is found in 1 Samuel 5, showcasing God’s power over other gods. During the time of Eli the high priest, God permitted the Philistines to triumph over the Israelites and capture the ark of the covenant. The Philistines saw the event as a victory of their gods over the God of Israel. They faced a rude awakening when they kept the ark in the temple of their god Dagon at Ashdod and woke the following day to see Dagon fallen close to the ark. This happened twice, and the second time the image of Dagon was broken in pieces (1 Samuel 5:4-5).

The people of Ashdod also felt the heavy hand of God’s judgment in the form of a plague, so the Philistines moved the ark to Gath, then to Ekron, the closest Philistine city to

Jerusalem. When it came to Ekron, the people exclaimed, “They have brought the ark of the god of Israel around to us to kill us and our people” (1 Samuel 5:10). The Philistine leaders then returned the ark from Ekron to Israel (1 Samuel 6:4-5).

In the time of Elijah, the Israelites under King Ahaziah lived contrary to God’s commands. After getting injured, Ahaziah sent men to Ekron to consult the false god Baal-Zebub rather than seeking help from the true God, incurring God’s wrath (2 Kings 1:2-4). His attempt to consult Baal-Zebub at Ekron marked the spiritual decline of Israel at the time. With a few exceptions, the kings of Judah after Solomon rebelled against God, eventually leading to exile in Babylon.

Another passage that links Ekron to sin and judgment is Zephaniah 2:4, “Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted.” Judgment is also mentioned in Jeremiah 25:17-20: “So I took the cup from the Lord’s hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it: Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn, a curse—as they are today; Pharaoh king of Egypt, his attendants, his officials and all his people, and all the foreign people there; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the Philistines (those of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the people left at Ashdod).”

In the broader biblical narrative, Ekron stands as a reminder of God’s supremacy and His judgment over evil. It also serves as a point of enduring conflict between Israel and the Philistines.