

~AZEKAH (381)

(A-ze'kah) [from a root meaning dig up, that is, hoe]

- A city in the Shephelah region, guarding the upper reaches of the Valley of Elah. The site is identified as **Tell Zakariyeh**, **Tel `Azeqa**, about 26 kilometers (16 miles) Northwest of Hebron.
- The first mention of the city occurs at;
- At this they gathered together and went on up, five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, these and all their camps, and they proceeded to camp against Gibeon and to war against it. (**Joshua 10:5**)
- Upon that the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying; Do not let your hand relax from your slaves. Come up to us quickly and do save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites inhabiting the mountainous region have collected together against us. (**Joshua 10:6**)
- So Joshua went on up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant mighty men. (**Joshua 10:7**)
- Then Yehowah said to Joshua; Do not be afraid of them, for into your hand I have given them. Not a man of them will stand against you. (**Joshua 10:8**)
- And Joshua proceeded to come against them by surprise. All night long he had gone up from Gilgal. (**Joshua 10:9**)
- And Yehowah went throwing them into confusion before Israel, and they began to slay them with a great slaughter at Gibeon and went pursuing them by way of the ascent of Bethhoron and slaying them as far as **Azekah** and Makkedah. (**Joshua 10:10**)
- And it came about that while they were fleeing from before Israel and were on the descent of Beth-horon, Yehowah hurled great stones from the heavens upon them as far as **Azekah**, so that they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword. (**Joshua 10:11**)

- With regard to the combined attack of five Canaanite kings against Gibeon. Joshua and his army, coming to the relief of Gibeon, chased the Canaanite armies as far as **Azekah** and Makkedah, a distance of about 30 kilometers (19 miles). The city was thereafter assigned to the tribe of Judah.
- This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Judah by their families. (**Joshua 15:20**)
- Jarmuth and Adullam, Socoh and **Azekah**. (**Joshua 15:35**)
- During the reign of King Saul, **1117-1078 B.C.E**, the Philistines massed their forces between Socoh and **Azekah**, putting forth Goliath as their champion. When the Israelites arrived, the two armies faced each other across the Valley of Elah until David's surprise victory over Goliath put the Philistines to flight.
- And the Philistines went collecting their camps together for war. When they were collected together at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, then they took up camping between Socoh and **Azekah**, in Ephes-dammim. (**1 Samuel 17:1**)
- As for Saul and the men of Israel, they collected themselves together and took up camping in the low plain of Elah, and they went drawing up in battle formation to meet the Philistines. (**1 Samuel 17:2**)
- And the Philistines were standing on the mountain on this side, and the Israelites were standing on the mountain on that side, with the valley between them. (**1 Samuel 17:3**)
- And a champion began to go out from the camps of the Philistines, his name being Goliath, from Gath, his height being six cubits and a span. (**1 Samuel 17:4**)
- And there was a helmet of copper on his head, and he was clad with a coat of mail, of overlapping scales, and the weight of the coat of mail was five thousand shekels of copper. (**1 Samuel 17:5**)
- And there were greaves of copper above his feet and a javelin of copper between his shoulders. (**1 Samuel 17:6**)

- **And the wooden shaft of his spear was like the beam of loom workers, and the blade of his spear was six hundred shekels of iron, and the bearer of the large shield was marching ahead of him. (1 Samuel 17:7)**
- **Then he stood still and began to call to the battle lines of Israel and say to them; Why do you come out to draw up in battle formation? Am I not the Philistine and you servants belonging to Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. (1 Samuel 17:8)**
- **If he is able to fight with me and he does strike me down, we must then become servants to you. But if I myself am a match for him and I do strike him down, you must also become servants to us, and you must serve us. (1 Samuel 17:9)**
- **And the Philistine went on to say; I myself do taunt the battle lines of Israel this day. Give me a man, and let us fight together! (1 Samuel 17:10)**
- **When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, then they became terrified and were greatly afraid. (1 Samuel 17:11)**
- **Now David was the son of this Ephrathite from Bethlehem of Judah whose name was Jesse. And he had eight sons. And in the days of Saul the man was already old among men. (1 Samuel 17:12)**
- **And the three oldest sons of Jesse proceeded to go. They went after Saul to the war, and the names of his three sons that went into the war were Eliab the firstborn, and his second son Abinadab and the third Shammah. (1 Samuel 17:13)**
- **And David was the youngest, and the three oldest themselves went after Saul. (1 Samuel 17:14)**
- **And David was going and returning from Saul to tend the sheep of his father at Bethlehem. (1 Samuel 17:15)**
- **And the Philistine kept coming forward at early morning and at evening and taking his position for forty days. (1 Samuel 17:16)**
- **Then Jesse said to David his son; Take, please, to your brothers this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread, and**

carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. (1 Samuel 17:17)

- **And these ten portions of milk you should bring to the chief of the thousand, also, you should look after your own brothers as regards their welfare, and a token from them you should take. (1 Samuel 17:18)**
- **Meantime, Saul and they and all the other men of Israel were in the low plain of Elah, fighting against the Philistines. (1 Samuel 17:19)**
- **Accordingly David got up early in the morning and left the sheep to the keepers charge and picked up and went just as Jesse had commanded him. When he came to the camp enclosure, the military forces were going out to the battle line, and they raised a shout for the battle. (1 Samuel 17:20)**
- **And Israel and the Philistines began drawing up battle line to meet battle line. (1 Samuel 17:21)**
- **Immediately David left the baggage from off him to the care of the keeper of the baggage and went running to the battle line. When he came, he began asking about the welfare of his brothers. (1 Samuel 17:22)**
- **While he was speaking with them, why, here the champion, his name being Goliath the Philistine from Gath, was coming up from the battle lines of the Philistines, and he began speaking the same words as before, and David got to listen in. (1 Samuel 17:23)**
- **As for all the men of Israel, on their seeing the man, why, they went fleeing on account of him and were very much afraid. (1 Samuel 17:24)**
- **And the men of Israel began to say; Have you seen this man that is coming up? For it is to taunt Israel that he is coming up. And it must occur that, the man who strikes him down, the king will enrich him with great riches, and his own daughter he will give him, and the house of his father he will set free in Israel. (1 Samuel 17:25)**
- **And David began to say to the men that were standing close by**

- him; What will be done to the man that strikes down that Philistine over there and actually turns away reproach from upon Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he has to taunt the battle lines of the living God? (**1 Samuel 17:26**)
- Then the people said to him the same words as before, saying, This is the way it will be done to the man that strikes him down. (**1 Samuel 17:27**)
 - And Eliab his oldest brother got to hear as he spoke to the men, and Eliab's anger grew hot against David, so that he said; Why is it that you have come down? And in whose charge did you leave those few sheep behind in the wilderness? I myself well know your presumptuousness and the badness of your heart, because you have come down for the purpose of seeing the battle. (**1 Samuel 17:28**)
 - To this David said; What have I done now? Was it not just a word? (**1 Samuel 17:29**)
 - With that he turned about from beside him toward someone else and went saying the same word as before, and, in turn, the people gave him the same reply as formerly. (**1 Samuel 17:30**)
 - So the words that David spoke came to be heard, and they went telling them before Saul. Hence he fetched him. (**1 Samuel 17:31**)
 - And David proceeded to say to Saul; Do not let the heart of any man collapse within him. Your servant himself will go and actually fight with this Philistine. (**1 Samuel 17:32**)
 - But Saul said to David; You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a boy, and he is a man of war from his boyhood. (**1 Samuel 17:33**)
 - And David went on to say to Saul; Your servant became a shepherd of his father among the flock, and there came a lion, and also a bear, and each carried off a sheep from the drove. (**1 Samuel 17:34**)
 - And I went out after it and struck it down and made the rescue from its mouth. When it began rising against me, I grabbed hold of its beard and struck it down and put it to death. (**1 Samuel**

17:35)

- **Both the lion and the bear your servant struck down, and this uncircumcised Philistine must become like one of them, for he has taunted the battle lines of the living God. (1 Samuel 17:36)**
- **Then David added; Yehowah, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, he it is who will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. At this Saul said to David; Go, and may Yehowah himself prove to be with you. (1 Samuel 17:37)**
- **Saul now went clothing David with his garments, and he put a copper helmet upon his head, after which he clothed him with a coat of mail. (1 Samuel 17:38)**
- **Then David girded his sword on over his garments and undertook to go but could not, because he had not tried them out. Finally David said to Saul; I am unable to go in these things, for I have not tried them out. So David removed them off him. (1 Samuel 17:39)**
- **And he proceeded to take his staff in his hand and to choose for himself the five smoothest stones from the torrent valley and to place them in his shepherds bag that served him as a receptacle, and in his hand was his sling. And he began approaching the Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:40)**
- **And the Philistine began to come, coming nearer and nearer to David, and the man carrying the large shield was ahead of him. (1 Samuel 17:41)**
- **Now when the Philistine looked and saw David, he began despising him because he proved to be a boy and ruddy, of beautiful appearance. (1 Samuel 17:42)**
- **So the Philistine said to David; Am I a dog, so that you are coming to me with staves? With that the Philistine called down evil upon David by his gods. (1 Samuel 17:43)**
- **And the Philistine went on to say to David; Just come to me, and I will give your flesh to the fowls of the heavens and to the beasts of the field. (1 Samuel 17:44)**

- **In turn David said to the Philistine; You are coming to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I am coming to you with the name of Yehowah of armies, the God of the battle lines of Israel, whom you have taunted. (1 Samuel 17:45)**
- **This day Yehowah will surrender you into my hand, and I shall certainly strike you down and remove your head off you, and I shall certainly give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines this day to the fowls of the heavens and to the wild beasts of the earth, and people of all the earth will know that there exists a God belonging to Israel. (1 Samuel 17:46)**
- **And all this congregation will know that neither with sword nor with spear does Yehowah save, because to Yehowah belongs the battle, and he must give you men into our hand. (1 Samuel 17:47)**
- **And it occurred that the Philistine rose and kept coming and drawing nearer to meet David, and David began hurrying and running toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:48)**
- **Then David thrust his hand into his bag and took a stone from there and slung it, so that he struck the Philistine in his forehead and the stone sank into his forehead, and he went falling upon his face to the earth. (1 Samuel 17:49)**
- **So David, with a sling and a stone, proved stronger than the Philistine and struck the Philistine down and put him to death, and there was no sword in David's hand. (1 Samuel 17:50)**
- **And David continued running and got to stand over the Philistine. Then he took his sword and pulled it out of its sheath and definitely put him to death when he cut his head off with it. And the Philistines got to see that their mighty one had died, and they took to flight. (1 Samuel 17:51)**
- **At that the men of Israel and of Judah rose and broke into shouting and went in pursuit of the Philistines clear to the valley and as far as the gates of Ekron, and the fatally wounded of the Philistines kept falling on the way from Shaaraim, both as far as Gath and as far as Ekron. (1 Samuel 17:52)**
- **Afterward the sons of Israel returned from hotly pursuing the**

Philistines and went pillaging their camps. (1 Samuel 17:53)

- At the division of the nation following Solomon's death circa 998 B.C.E, King Rehoboam of Judah fortified Azekah along with Lachish and other strategic cities.

- And Rehoboam continued to dwell in Jerusalem and proceeded to build fortified cities in Judah. (2 Chronicles 11:5)

- Thus he rebuilt Bethlehem and Etam and Tekoa. (2 Chronicles 11:6)

- And Beth-zur and Soco and Adullam. (2 Chronicles 11:7)

- And Gath and Mareshah and Ziph. (2 Chronicles 11:8)

- And Adoraim and Lachish and Azekah. (2 Chronicles 11:9)

- And Zorah and Aijalon and Hebron, fortified cities, which were in Judah and Benjamin. (2 Chronicles 11:10)

- Excavations made at Tell Zakariyeh reveal the remains of walls and towers and evidence of a fortified citadel at the locations highest point.

- When Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian troops overran the kingdom of Judah, 609-607 B.C.E, Azekah and Lachish were the last two fortified cities to fall before the overthrow of Jerusalem itself.

- And Jeremiah the prophet proceeded to speak to Zedekiah the king of Judah all these words in Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 34:6)

- When the military forces of the king of Babylon were fighting against Jerusalem and against all the cities of Judah that were left remaining, against Lachish and against Azekah, for they, the fortified cities, were the ones that remained over among the cities of Judah. (Jeremiah 34:7)

- Apparent confirmation of this was revealed by the discovery of the inscribed ostraca called the Lachish Letters, one of them containing the following message, evidently directed by a military outpost to the military commander at Lachish, which reads in part; we are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord

hath given, for we cannot see **Azekah**. [Ancient Near Eastern Texts, edited by J. B. Pritchard, 1974, p. 322]

- If, as seems to be the case, this letter was written at the time of the Babylonian attack, it would indicate that **Azekah** had already fallen so that **no signals were being received from that fortress**.
- Following the 70-year period of desolation of the land, **Azekah** was one of the cities resettled by the returning Jewish exiles.
- And as regards the settlements in their fields, there were some of the sons of Judah that dwelt in Kiriath-arba and its dependent towns and in Dibon and its dependent towns and in Jekabzeel and its settlements. (**Nehemiah 11:25**)
- Zanoah, Adullam and their settlements, Lachish and its fields, **Azekah** and its dependent towns. And they took up camping from Beer-sheba clear to the valley of Hinnom. (**Nehemiah 11:30**)