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The Oracle Concerning Philistia

14: 28-32

The oracle concerning Philistia DIG: Who was this oracle written for? Philistia wanted Judah as an ally against Assyria. Why would this message against Philistia be given to Judah? Where should Judah look for safety (14:30a, 32)? What biblical principle is seen here? Are there any Philistines alive today?

REFLECT: What alliances, or getting in with “the right people,” might keep you from trusting in the LORD? What does this oracle tell you about those alliances? How is that going for you? Any bumps in the road? Where does your security lay? What is the evidence of that in your checkbook or in your calendar?



This oracle, written about **Philistia**, was for **Judah’s** benefit as seen in the last verse. This prophecy comes in the year 727 BC, **the year King Ahaz died (14:28)**. It is also the same year that Tiglath-Pileser III died. Other prophets also had oracles against **the Philistines (Jeremiah 47:1-7; Ezeke’el 25:15-17; Amos 1:6-8; Zephaniah 2:4-7; and Zechariah 9:5-7)**. **God** condemned **the Philistine** cities for thinking **they** were safe from destruction.

The issue here is the foolishness of turning away from that which is secure to depend on what is falling apart. **God’s** help often seems so intangible, while the material world seems so real. Today, as in ancient times, we need the Scriptures to help us see the real fragility of what seems on the surface to be so strong. We need to remember that **the LORD has established Zion, God’s** people, and that the Church, made up of Jewish and Gentile believers (**Eph 2:14**) will survive when all the world’s institutions are gone. The Bible says:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding (Prov 3:5). That is what **Isaiah** is saying.⁵⁰

Do not rejoice, all you Philistines (14:29a). The coming destruction included **all** of the **Philistines**. This is necessary because **Philistia**, unlike other surrounding nations, was not united under one king. It was a confederacy of five cities and five kings, Ashcalon, Ashdod, Gaza, Eckron, and Gaz. **God's** judgment will go against all of these cities. While other prophets sometimes limited judgment to certain cities, **Isaiah** condemns *them all*.

The rod that struck you is broken; from the root of the snake will spring up a viper, its fruit will be a darting, venomous serpent (14:29b). The house of David had many battles with **Philistia**. **The rod that struck Philistia** in the past was the house of David. But now that the house of David had been **struck** with **the rod**, the Assyrians, and of course the **Philistines**, were rejoicing over it. But **Isaiah** prophesies that just because the house of David has been **struck** with **the rod** of the Assyrians, that doesn't mean that things will get any better for **Philistia**. Then **he** spells out a progression of judgment for them, from the **snake** (mild), to the **viper** (poisonous), to a **darting, venomous serpent** (deadly). The ones **he** has in mind are three key members of the house of David. Ahaz is the **snake**; under Ahaz territory was lost to the **Philistines (Second Chronicles 28:18)**. Hezekiah is the **viper**; under him most of the territory would be regained (**Second Kings 18:8**). **The Messiah** would be the **venomous serpent** because under **His** rule the house of David would occupy the entire land and **He** would restore their fortunes, but **He** would turn **His** hand against the **Philistines** until the last one is dead (**Amos 1:6-8**). **The sages teach that the purport of the verse is that, though the foreign ruler under whom they had hitherto suffered is dead, a descendant of his would arise and be mightier and more dangerous than the deceased king.**

What was it that caused **the LORD** to be this **venomous serpent** against this nation? What exactly did the **Philistines** do to deserve such a fate? **Ezeki'el** prophesied: **This is what Adonai ELOHIM says: Because the Philistines acted in vengeance and took revenge with malice in their hearts, and with ancient hostility sought to destroy Judah, therefore this is what Adonai ELOHIM says: I am about to stretch out My hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Kerethites and destroy those remaining along the coast. I will carry out great vengeance on them and punish them in My wrath. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I take vengeance on them (Ezeki'el 25:15-17).**

A biblical principle was established when **God** said to Abraham; **I will bless those who**

bless you and curse those who curse you (Gen 12:3). Because **Philistia sought to destroy Judah**, they would be destroyed. In fact, **the LORD tells them, "I will destroy you and none will be left" (Zeph 2:4-7).** **Jeremiah 47:1-7** describes **the near historical prophecy** of the **Philistines** when **they** were attacked and defeated by Nebuchadnezzar in 604-603 BC. This is why there is no **far eschatological prophecy** for **Philistia**. They have been totally destroyed; not one of **them** is left. **It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31).**

In stark contrast to the ominous progression of judgment in **14:29b**, here is the quiet picture of **God's sheep in His pasture**. In contrast to the mighty ones of **Philistia**, **Judah** is pictured **in safety**. The **poorest of the poor will find rest, or pasture, and the needy will lie down in safety. But for Philistia** there is not hope. **He declares: Your root I will destroy by famine; it will slay your survivors (14:30).** They will be exterminated so thoroughly that nothing will remain of them to spring up again.

As a result, **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** teaches us again that the helpless who depend on **Him** are stronger than the powerful who refuse to bend their knee (**Philippians 2:10-11**). Rabbi Sha'ul said it this way: **To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong (Second Corinthians 12:7-10).**

Verses 31 and 32 repeat the form of **verses 29 and 30**, the first verse promising doom on the **Philistines** and the second contrasting **Judah's** security. These verses point to **the Philistine** rebellion against Assyria in 715, for they make it clear that the enemy will come **from the north. Wail, O gate! Howl, O city!** These words evoke the image of **Melt away, all you Philistines! A cloud of smoke comes from the north, and there is not a straggler in its ranks (14:31).**

Philistia now asks a question. **What answer shall be given to the envoys of that nation (14:32a)?** Had Assyria defeated **Judah** and taken **Jerusalem**? **Envoys** were sent by **Philistia** to determine the success or failure of the Assyrian siege of **Yerushalayim**. We know from history that while Assyria did succeed in taking 46 cities, they failed in taking **Tziyon (to see link click Gq - In the Fourteenth Year of Hezekiah's Reign)**. Therefore,

God answers **their** question through **His** prophet when **He** says: **The LORD has established Tziyon, and in her, His afflicted people will find refuge (14:32b)**. As a result, **the Israelites** found safety and plenty, but the **Philistines** would be nonexistent in **the near historical future**.

God who **has established Yerushalayim**, is **her** only security **(28:16)**. How hard it was for the Judeans to learn that, and how hard it is for us to learn that! We deceive ourselves if we believe that military strength, wealth, or intelligence can give us stability and certainty. Unless **the LORD** blessed **Jacob** (or **Judah**), he couldn't save **himself (Genesis 32)**. Or in the words of **Yeshua**: **For whoever wants to save his life will lose it (Luke 9:24)**. But the person who has "lost his life" in dependence upon **God**, that person will be truly secure, whatever may happen **(First Peter 2:4-10)**.