

The Doctrine of the City of Gath

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God."** (John 3:16–18). **"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!"** (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). **If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Preface: Gath is one of the five primary Philistine cities. Gath is approximately 20 miles inland off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, a third of the way to the Salt Sea (even with the upper third of the Salt Sea).

Topics: **The Hebrew
Scriptural References
The Destruction of Gath**

Charts:

1. The Hebrew:
 - a. *Gath* is actually Gath (גַּת) [pronounced *gath*]. The Israelites used the same word for *wine-press*. Whether *Gath* is the transliteration of a Philistine name or whether it was nicknamed *wine-press* by the Jews, we do not know. Strong's #1661 BDB #387.
 - b. We also have the word *Gittite*, which, in the Hebrew, is of Gittiy (גִּתִּי) [pronounced *git-TEE*], and it refers to the people of the city of Gath (see 1Sam. 15:18). Strong's #1663 BDB #388.
2. There are several other *Gath*'s mentioned in Scripture: Gath-hepher (2Kings 14:25), Gath-rimmon (Joshua 19:45 21:24–25 1Sam. 6:69). Usually, these other two cities are hyphenated to distinguish them from the more prominent Gath of Philistia.
3. There are apparently four or five other *Gath*'s mentioned outside of Scripture as well.¹
4. Gath is actually found in quite a number of places in Scripture, primarily in connection with David. These incidents are listed chronologically below:
 - a. What appears to be the first mention of the city of Gath is in 1Chron. 7:20–23, when sons of Ephraim went down to take cattle from the men of Gath. This incident is mentioned only here and there are a number of theories as to when it actually took place. See my exegesis on 1Chron. 7 for more details.
 - b. Gath is mentioned again in connection with some ancestors of Benjamin (they put the men of Gath to flight). This incident is mentioned only here and there are few details. 1Chron. 8:13
 - c. In the past, as it is today, certain cities have a mixture of people living in them. Joshua had fought against the Anakim, who were giants in the Land of Promise (see Num. 13:28 for the **Doctrine of the Anakim**). Joshua 11:22 tells us that there were some Anakim who still lived in Gath and Ashdod. The implication here is that Gath and Ashdod had not been fully conquered by the Israelites.

¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 659. They mention the Amarna Tablets as one example.

- d. Our passage (1Sam. 5:8) is only the second time Gath is mentioned in Scripture. The Ark will be moved to Gath and God will pour out a cursing on Gath. By the way, as a matter of interest, *Gath* is only mentioned once in 1Sam. 5.
- e. The Philistines will return the Ark to Israel with an offering of regret (five golden tumors and five golden mice, one each for each of the Philistine cities). 1Sam. 6:17–18
- f. As a matter of irony, when King David decides to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, one of the men bringing the Ark touched it in order to keep the Ark from falling, and he died. David then temporarily took the Ark to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite (meaning that he had been born in Gath). So, when the Ark was in the city of Gath, it caused great destruction to the people of Gath (i.e., the *Gittites*); however, when placed in the care of Obed-edom the Gittite, his house was greatly prospered.² The gospel can have much the same affect today. To those who respond in faith, it results in great blessing; to those who reject the gospel's content, the result is great cursing. 2Sam. 6:6–11 1Chron. 13:7–14
- g. Israel will go to war with Philistia once more in 1Sam. 7 and soundly defeat them. [And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites](#) (1Sam. 7:14). It is unclear whether Israel took Gath (which does not appear to ever have been under Israel's control) or whether the cities and land in that vicinity were taken back by Israel. It appears as though Israel did take these two cities, which are both inland cities and within Israel's territory.

[<<Return to Topics>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

- h. About 30 years pass before Gath is mentioned again. The Philistines challenge Israel militarily and Goliath, who wants to face any Israelite one-on-one is from Gath (1Sam. 17:4, 23). Goliath is no doubt descended from the Anakim (*giants*) who had remained in Gath since Joshua 11:22. Since there is no mention of Gath in this interim, it is unclear whether Israel lived side-by-side the remaining Philistines in Gath or whether they never took Gath in the first place.³ A third option is that the Philistines took Gath back (if Israel took Gath in the first place). In any case, there is obviously a strong Philistine contingent in Gath at this time, and one of them stands at this time threatening all Israel. After David slays Goliath, Israel pursues the Philistine army, who retreat at the death of Goliath. [And the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the fallen Philistines fell along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron](#) (1Sam. 17:52). The implication here is that the Philistines were in control of Gath and Ekron, but that many of their soldiers died when retreating to those two inland cities.
- i. David, for several of the years prior to becoming king, was pursued by a very jealous King Saul. During one of the particularly intensive searches for David, he found himself in Gath. Achish, the king, was informed that David was in Gath, and David was one of the mortal enemies of the Philistines (the latest hit tune of that time was "Saul has killed his thousands, and David, his tens of thousands"). When David was brought before Achish, he feigned madness and Achish released him. 1Sam. 21:10–15. From this point on, David's dealings with the Philistines appears to be guardedly friendly. It was during this time that David wrote two psalms, Psalm 34 and 56.
- j. Again, Saul pursued David, and David fled to Gath, to the Philistines. This time, he was accompanied by his wives and 600 men. King Achish befriended David and gave David, his wives and his followers safe haven. In fact, he did much more than that. Achish gave David the city of Ziklag. What David did do, however, is convey to Achish that he had attacked various Israeli cities, while he was actually attacking various Canaanite groups and cities. David left not a man, woman or child alive to report to the Philistines differently. 1Sam. 27:1–12

² it is also possible that Obed-edom was from the city of Gath-rimmon, which was a Levitical city. This would have made him a Kohathite Levite. Of course, that would ruin the irony.

³ It is the opinion of ISBE that Gath was probably not taken until the time of David, and recorded in 1Chron. 18:1. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. II; p. 1177.

- k. Although the city of Gath is not mentioned in 1Sam. 29, it is there when David is called upon to fight against Israel. However, the other lords of the Philistines balk at this idea, saying that they did not trust David as an ally against his own people. Therefore, David was allowed to return to Ziklag.
- l. After Saul and his sons are killed in battle by the Philistines, David teaches the sons of Judah a song which commemorated Saul and his son Jonathan. Gath is mentioned, along with Ashkelon, in this song. 2Sam. 1:17–27
- m. David, during the time of his rule, apparently soundly defeated the Philistines and took the city of Gath under the influence of Israel. To be frank, I am having a difficult time weaving this properly into the time of David. I simply placed this incident, in time, as per *The Narrated Bible*. My guess is that this is a summary verse which is actually brought to pass when the four brothers of Goliath are killed (this point will follow shortly). It would have been less likely for David to have gone to war against King Achish of Gath, who appeared to become an ally of David's. 1Chron. 18:1
- n. Neither Gath nor the Philistines are mentioned for a long time, until after David has consolidated his power in Israel, committed his great sin, and then faces Absalom his son in a rebellion. David leaves Jerusalem with his men, which includes 600 men from Gath (compare 2Sam. 15:18 with 1Sam. 23:13 25:13 30:9). David was obviously a man who was a great leader. When exiled from Jerusalem, he gave his Gittite men a chance to return to Gath. After all, they were transplants in a foreign land under the guide of an exiled king; and, given all that, David suggested that they return to Gath. Ittai the Gittite, a great man, spoke for his men, and declined David's offer.⁴ This was the cementing of a great relationship between David and these 600 men of Gath. What cements a great marriage is not the good times and the fun that two people have, but their facing adversity and heartache as a team.
- o. The first war between David and the Philistines after feigning madness in Gath occurs in 2Sam. 21. Goliath's four brothers are killed and the city of Gath is mentioned in the narrative (2Sam. 21:19–22 1Chron. 20:4–8). Gath is not mentioned again in connection with King David. Given David's history with Achish, and given that Achish will be mentioned again while Solomon is ruling, it would be reasonable to guess that the brothers of Goliath had taken over political and/or military control of the city of Gath, which, in part, precipitated the conflict between David's men and Goliath's brothers. Although all four brothers were killed, it is not said that Gath came under the control of Israel. Since Achish is mentioned again as king of Gath while Solomon is consolidating his power (see the next point), one would assume that he resumed control of the city, and possibly as an ally of David's, despite the conflict. Such a relationship is not difficult to imagine, as we, after being at war with Japan, allowed Japan to retain its independence (to some degree), helped to rebuild Japan and soon became allied with Japan. It appears as though we will have a similar relationship with Afghanistan.⁵
- p. When Solomon assumes rule over Judah and Israel, he placed one of his political rivals, Shimei, under house arrest. Shimei was to remain in Jerusalem. Shimei went with that program for about three years, and then left Jerusalem to go to Gath. The reason was that two of his servants ran away to Gath to Achish, King of Gath. Because of this, Solomon had Shimei executed. 2Sam. 2:36–46
- q. Israel appears to have control over Gath during the time of Rehoboam (the king which followed Solomon), as Rehoboam is said to have built (or rebuilt) several cities, including Gath. (2Chron. 11:5–10). It is assumed by some that David destroyed Gath when at war with Goliath's four brothers;⁶ however, it would have made little sense for Shimei to leave Jerusalem to go to Gath and even less sense for him to seek some sort of alliance with the ruler of a destroyed city. Therefore, after Shimei's visit and prior to Rehoboam's building campaign, another foreign power probably went into Gath and destroyed it.
- r. Gath, again, is not mentioned for a long time. Eight rulers over Judah follow Solomon and the city of Gath is mentioned once again under Joash (or, Jehoash), who ruled over Judah circa 835–796 B.C.

⁴ Ittai is also mentioned in 2Sam. 18:2 as one of David's three generals who supported him against Absalom.

⁵ I am writing this February 5, 2002, not long after the Taliban was overthrown in Afghanistan and very soon after George bush Jr's state of the union address, which was attended by several heads of the new Afghan government.

⁶ For instance, H. Porter in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. II; p. 1177. It is also possible that I misread Porter and that he simply stated that Gath was destroyed sometime after David's capture of the city.

Around this time, Hazael, the king of Syria, attacked and defeated the people of Gath, allowing him to consolidate his power against Israel. 2Kings 12:17–18

- s. Jehoash, king of Israel (not Judah)⁷ recaptured the cities taken by the Hazael from Hazael's son, Ben-hadad. 2Kings 13:24–25
 - t. Azzariah (also known as Uzziah) (king over Judah circa 767–732 B.C.) warred against the Philistines, taking down the walls of several of their cities, including Gath. 2Chron. 26:6–7.
 - u. The city of Gath is only mentioned by two prophets. Amos suggests that the people of Zion, before becoming too complacent, to examine their enemies in Gath (among other places). Amos wrote in the 8th century B.C. Amos 6:2
 - i. This prophecy of Amos is rather complex. As we will see further on down in this study, it will appear as though Gath's existence was ended around 715 B.C. (this is conjecture). However, the book begins with Amos telling us that he was a prophet during the days of Uzziah, king of Judah (circa 767–740 B.C.) and Jeroboam ben Joash, king of Israel (circa 782–753 B.C.).
 - ii. Amos promises judgement to come upon Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron, but Gath is conspicuously absent (Amos 1:7–8).
 - iii. And in Amos 6:2, he suggests that those who are enjoying prosperity in Samaria should take a look at previously prosperous cities, and Gath is listed there.
 - iv. What this would indicate is that Amos spoke after Uzziah's attack of Gath (and Ashdod); apparently, Uzziah caused much more damage to the city of Gath, probably leaving it in ruin. Even though he also attacked Ashdod and tore down its walls, he built up the area around it, suggesting that he probably was not as destructive of Ashdod. 2Chron. 26:6–7
 - v. Micah also mentions the city of Gath. Judah and Israel have reached a point of no return where their doom is imminent. They are told not to go to Gath for sympathy. Micah also wrote in the 8th century B.C. Micah 1:9–10
 - w. It is unclear whether Amos or Micah taught before or after King Uzziah. In any case, Gath is not mentioned again in Scripture, nor in the apocrypha. This would indicate that it had faded as any sort of power by that time and had probably been completely destroyed. Although Scripture does not indicate that Uzziah completely destroyed Gath, it would not be out of the question for a different foreign power to step in and destroy Gath in the aftermath of its conflict with Uzziah.
5. In approximately 715 B.C., Sargon II, the king of Assyria, came into Palestine to crush a growing rebellion against him which had its beginnings in Ashdod. It appeared as though there was a possible growing alliance between parts of Philistia, Judah, Edom and Moab (it is unclear as to how much Judah participated in this alliance). Egypt promised to back them against the Assyrians. Although Sargon II is only mentioned once in Scripture, this proposed dependence upon Egypt brought about several spirited sermons concerning Judah's dependence upon Egypt (e.g., Isa. 20). Although we do not know whether this attack of Sargon's ended the existence of Gath, we no longer find Gath listed with the Philistine cities after this attack.
 - a. We have explained why Gath is missing from Amos' list of judged cities in a previous point.
 - b. Zephaniah wrote during the time of King Josiah of Judah (circa 640–608 B.C.), and he prophesies against Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron—however, Gath is not mentioned. This very likely indicates that Sargon's crushing of the revolt also eliminated Gath as a city.
 - c. Jeremiah also ministered during the time of King Josiah, and he prophesies against Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and the remnant of Ashdod, but does not mention Gath (Jer. 25:20), which again indicates that, by his time, Gath was possibly just a mound of dirt and destroyed buildings.
 - d. Zechariah prophesied after the exile and then return of Judah (circa 520–518 B.C.), and he also mentions Gaza, Ekron, Ashkelon and Ashdod in his prophesies, but does not mention Gath (Zech. 9:5–6). Again, this would confirm that Gath is a heap by the time of Zechariah.
 - e. What we would expect is that the actual location of the city of Gath should be very difficult to ascertain, given that it was apparently destroyed very early on in human history (715 B.C.).
 6. We do not know exactly where Gath was. Several archeological sites have been suggested as its location, but nothing yet has confirmed any of them. From Scripture, we know that Gath was located in the Shephelah,

⁷ Compare 2Kings 12:1 13:1, 9, 25. I've got to admit that when Joash was assassinated in 2Kings 12:20–21 and then later when Joash defeated Ben-hadad, I was somewhat perplexed.

on the border of Philistia and Hebrew territory, and relatively close to Ekron in norther Philistia. Possible sites include:

- a. Tell es-Safi, 12 miles north of Ashdod.
- b. Tell Sheikh Ahmed el-'Areini, which is near 'Araq el-Menshiyeh, which is 15 miles east of Ashkelon and seven miles south of Tell es-Safi.⁸

[Return to Top of Page](#)

[Charts](#)

1. *Gath* is actually Gath (גַּת) [pronounced *gath*]. The Israelites used the same word for *wine-press*. Whether *Gath* is the transliteration of a Philistine name or whether it was nicknamed *wine-press* by the Jews, we do not know. Strong's #1661 BDB #387. We also have the word *Gittite*, which, in the Hebrew, is of Gittîy (גִּתִּי) [pronounced *git-TEE*], and it refers to the people of the city of Gath (see 1Sam. 15:18). Strong's #1663 BDB #388.
2. There are several other *Gath's* mentioned in Scripture: Gath-hepher (2Kings 14:25), Gath-rimmon (Joshua 19:45 21:24–25 1Sam. 6:69). Usually, these other two cities are hyphenated to distinguish them from the more prominent Gath of Philistia.
3. There are apparently four or five other *Gath's* mentioned outside of Scripture as well.¹
4. Gath is actually found in quite a number of places in Scripture, primarily in connection with David. These incidents are listed chronologically below:
 - a. What appears to be the first mention of the city of Gath is in 1Chron. 7:20–23, when sons of Ephraim went down to take cattle from the men of Gath. See my exegesis on 1Chron. 7 for more details.
 - b. Gath is mentioned again in connection with some ancestors of Benjamin (they put the men of Gath to flight). This incident is mentioned only here and there are few details. 1Chron. 8:13
 - c. In the past, as it is today, certain cities have a mixture of people living in them. Joshua had fought against the Anakim, who were giants in the Land of Promise. Joshua 11:22 tells us that there were some Anakim who still lived in Gath and Ashdod. This means that Gath and Ashdod had not been fully conquered by the Israelites.
 - d. The Ark will be moved to Gath and God will pour out a cursing on Gath. 1Sam. 5
 - e. The Philistines will return the Ark to Israel with an offering of regret (five golden tumors and five golden mice, one each for each of the Philistine cities). 1Sam. 6:17–18
 - f. As a matter of irony, when King David decides to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, one of the men bringing the Ark touched it in order to keep the Ark from falling, and he died. David then temporarily took the Ark to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite (meaning that he had been born in Gath). So, when the Ark was in the city of Gath, it caused great destruction to the people of Gath (i.e., the *Gittites*); however, when placed in the care of Obed-edom the Gittite, his house was greatly prospered.² The gospel can have much the same affect today. To those who respond in faith, it results in great blessing; to those who reject the gospel's content, the result is great cursing. 2Sam. 6:6–11 1Chron. 13:7–14
 - g. Israel will go to war with Philistia once more in 1Sam. 7 and soundly defeat them. *And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites* (1Sam. 7:14). It is unclear whether Israel took Gath (which does not appear to ever have been under Israel's control) or whether the cities and land in that vicinity were taken back by Israel. It appears as though Israel did take these two cities, which are both inland cities and within Israel's territory.
 - h. About 30 years pass before Gath is mentioned again. The Philistines challenge Israel militarily and Goliath, who wants to face any Israelite one-on-one is from Gath (1Sam. 17:4, 23). Goliath is no

⁸ The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 659.

doubt descended from the Anakim (*giants*) who had remained in Gath since Joshua 11:22. Since there is no mention of Gath in this interim, it is unclear whether Israel lived side-by-side the remaining Philistines in Gath or whether they never took Gath in the first place.³ A third option is that the Philistines took Gath back (if Israel took Gath in the first place). In any case, there is obviously a strong Philistine contingent in Gath at this time, and one of them stands at this time threatening all Israel. After David slays Goliath, Israel pursues the Philistine army, who retreat at the death of Goliath. *And the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the fallen Philistines fell along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron* (1Sam. 17:52). The implication here is that the Philistines were in control of Gath and Ekron, but that many of their soldiers died when retreating to those two inland cities.

- i. David, for several of the years prior to becoming king, was pursued by a very jealous King Saul. During one of the particularly intensive searches for David, he found himself in Gath. Achish, the king, was informed that David was in Gath, and David was one of the mortal enemies of the Philistines (the latest hit tune of that time was “Saul has killed his thousands, and David, his tens of thousands”). When David was brought before Achish, he feigned madness and Achish released him. 1Sam. 21:10–15. From this point on, David’s dealings with the Philistines appears to be guardedly friendly. It was during this time that David wrote two psalms, Psalm 34 and 56.
- j. Again, Saul pursued David, and David fled to Gath, to the Philistines. This time, he was accompanied by his wives and 600 men. King Achish befriended David and gave David, his wives and his followers safe haven. In fact, he did much more than that. Achish gave David the city of Ziklag. What David did do, however, is convey to Achish that he had attacked various Israeli cities, while he was actually attacking various Canaanite groups and cities. David left not a man, woman or child alive to report to the Philistines differently. 1Sam. 27:1–12
- k. Although the city of Gath is not mentioned in 1Sam. 29, it is there when David is called upon to fight against Israel. However, the other lords of the Philistines balk at this idea, saying that they did not trust David as an ally against his own people. Therefore, David was allowed to return to Ziklag.
- l. After Saul and his sons are killed in battle by the Philistines, David teaches the sons of Judah a song which commemorated Saul and his son Jonathan. Gath is mentioned, along with Ashkelon, in this song. 2Sam. 1:17–27
- m. David, during the time of his rule, apparently soundly defeated the Philistines and took the city of Gath under the influence of Israel. To be frank, I am having a difficult time weaving this properly into the time of David. I simply placed this incident, in time, as per *The Narrated Bible*. My guess is that this is a summary verse which is actually brought to pass when the four brothers of Goliath are killed (this point will follow shortly). It would have been less likely for David to have gone to war against King Achish of Gath, who appeared to become an ally of David’s. 1Chron. 18:1
- n. Neither Gath nor the Philistines are mentioned for a long time, until after David has consolidated his power in Israel, committed his great sin, and then faces Absalom his son in a rebellion. David leaves Jerusalem with his men, which includes 600 men from Gath (compare 2Sam. 15:18 with 1Sam. 23:13 25:13 30:9). David was obviously a man who was a great leader. When exiled from Jerusalem, he gave his Gittite men a chance to return to Gath. After all, they were transplants in a foreign land under the guide of an exiled king; and, given all that, David suggested that they return to Gath. Ittai the Gittite, a great man, spoke for his men, and declined David’s offer.⁴ This was the cementing of a great relationship between David and these 600 men of Gath. What cements a great marriage is not the good times and the fun that two people have, but their facing adversity and heartache as a team.
- o. The first war between David and the Philistines after feigning madness in Gath occurs in 2Sam. 21. Goliath’s four brothers are killed and the city of Gath is mentioned in the narrative (2Sam. 21:19–22 1Chron. 20:4–8). Gath is not mentioned again in connection with King David. Given David’s history with Achish, and given that Achish will be mentioned again while Solomon is ruling, it would be reasonable to guess that the brothers of Goliath had taken over political and/or military control of the

city of Gath, which, in part, precipitated the conflict between David's men and Goliath's brothers. Although all four brothers were killed, it is not said that Gath came under the control of Israel. Since Achish is mentioned again as king of Gath while Solomon is consolidating his power (see the next point), one would assume that he resumed control of the city, and possibly as an ally of David's, despite the conflict. Such a relationship is not difficult to imagine, as we, after being at war with Japan, allowed Japan to retain its independence (to some degree), helped to rebuild Japan and soon became allied with Japan. It appears as though we will have a similar relationship with Afghanistan.⁵

- p. When Solomon assumes rule over Judah and Israel, he placed one of his political rivals, Shimei, under house arrest. Shimei was to remain in Jerusalem. Shimei went with that program for about three years, and then left Jerusalem to go to Gath. The reason was that two of his servants ran away to Gath to Achish, King of Gath. Because of this, Solomon had Shimei executed. 2Sam. 2:36–46
 - q. Israel appears to have control over Gath during the time of Rehoboam (the king which followed Solomon), as Rehoboam is said to have built (or rebuilt) several cities, including Gath. (2Chron. 11:5–10). It is assumed by some that David destroyed Gath when at war with Goliath's four brothers;⁶ however, it would have made little sense for Shimei to leave Jerusalem to go to Gath and even less sense for him to seek some sort of alliance with the ruler of a destroyed city. Therefore, after Shimei's visit and prior to Rehoboam's building campaign, another foreign power probably went into Gath and destroyed it.
 - r. Gath, again, is not mentioned for a long time. Eight rulers over Judah follow Solomon and the city of Gath is mentioned once again under Joash (or, Jehoash), who ruled over Judah circa 835–796 B.C. Around this time, Hazael, the king of Syria, attacked and defeated the people of Gath, allowing him to consolidate his power against Israel. 2Kings 12:17–18
 - s. Jehoash, king of Israel (not Judah)⁷ recaptured the cities taken by the Hazael from Hazael's son, Ben-hadad. 2Kings 13:24–25
 - t. Azzariah (also known as Uzziah) (king over Judah circa 767–732 B.C.) warred against the Philistines, taking down the walls of several of their cities, including Gath. 2Chron. 26:6–7.
 - u. The city of Gath is only mentioned by two prophets. Amos suggests that the people of Zion, before becoming too complacent, to examine their enemies in Gath (among other places). Amos wrote in the 8th century B.C. Amos 6:2
 - i. This prophecy of Amos is rather complex. As we will see further on down in this study, it will appear as though Gath's existence was ended around 715 B.C. (this is conjecture). However, the book begins with Amos telling us that he was a prophet during the days of Uzziah, king of Judah (circa 767–740 B.C.) and Jeroboam ben Joash, king of Israel (circa 782–753 B.C.).
 - ii. Amos promises judgement to come upon Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron, but Gath is conspicuously absent (Amos 1:7–8).
 - iii. And in Amos 6:2, he suggests that those who are enjoying prosperity in Samaria should take a look at previously prosperous cities, and Gath is listed there.
 - iv. What this would indicate is that Amos spoke after Uzziah's attack of Gath (and Ashdod); apparently, Uzziah caused much more damage to the city of Gath, probably leaving it in ruin. Even though he also attacked Ashdod and tore down its walls, he built up the area around it, suggesting that he probably was not as destructive of Ashdod. 2Chron. 26:6–7
 - v. Micah also mentions the city of Gath. Judah and Israel have reached a point of no return where their doom is imminent. They are told not to go to Gath for sympathy. Micah also wrote in the 8th century B.C. Micah 1:9–10
 - w. It is unclear whether Amos or Micah taught before or after King Uzziah. In any case, Gath is not mentioned again in Scripture, nor in the apocrypha. This would indicate that it had faded as any sort of power by that time and had probably been completely destroyed. Although Scripture does not indicate that Uzziah completely destroyed Gath, it would not be out of the question for a different foreign power to step in and destroy Gath in the aftermath of its conflict with Uzziah.
5. In approximately 715 B.C., Sargon II, the king of Assyria, came into Palestine to crush a growing rebellion

against him which had its beginnings in Ashdod. It appeared as though there was a possible growing alliance between parts of Philistia, Judah, Edom and Moab (it is unclear as to how much Judah participated in this alliance). Egypt promised to back them against the Assyrians. Although Sargon II is only mentioned once in Scripture, this proposed dependence upon Egypt brought about several spirited sermons concerning Judah's dependence upon Egypt (e.g., Isa. 20). Although we do not know whether this attack of Sargon's ended the existence of Gath, we no longer find Gath listed with the Philistine cities after this attack.

- a. We have explained why Gath is missing from Amos' list of judged cities in a previous point.
- b. Zephaniah wrote during the time of King Josiah of Judah (circa 640–608 B.C.), and he prophesies against Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron—however, Gath is not mentioned. This very likely indicates that Sargon's crushing of the revolt also eliminated Gath as a city.
- c. Jeremiah also ministered during the time of King Josiah, and he prophesies against Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and the remnant of Ashdod, but does not mention Gath (Jer. 25:20), which again indicates that, by his time, Gath was possibly just a mound of dirt and destroyed buildings.
- d. Zechariah prophesied after the exile and then return of Judah (circa 520–518 B.C.), and he also mentions Gaza, Ekron, Ashkelon and Ashdod in his prophesies, but does not mention Gath (Zech. 9:5–6). Again, this would confirm that Gath is a heap by the time of Zechariah.
- e. What we would expect is that the actual location of the city of Gath should be very difficult to ascertain, given that it was apparently destroyed very early on in human history (715 B.C.).
6. We do not know exactly where Gath was. Several archeological sites have been suggested as its location, but nothing yet has confirmed any of them. From Scripture, we know that Gath was located in the Shephelah, on the border of Philistia and Hebrew territory, and relatively close to Ekron in northern Philistia. Possible sites include:
 - a. Tell es-Safi, 12 miles north of Ashdod.
 - b. Tell Sheikh Ahmed el-'Areini, which is near 'Araq el-Menshiyeh, which is 15 miles east of Ashkelon and seven miles south of Tell es-Safi.⁸

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

1. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 659. They mention the Amarna Tablets as one example.

2. it is also possible that Obed-edom was from the city of Gath-rimmon, which was a Levitical city. This would have made him a Kohathite Levite. Of course, that would ruin the irony.

3. It is the opinion of ISBE that Gath was probably not taken until the time of David, and recorded in 1Chron. 18:1. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. II; p. 1177.

4. Ittai is also mentioned in 2Sam. 18:2 as one of David's three generals who supported him against Absalom.

5. I am writing this February 5, 2002, not long after the Taliban was overthrown in Afghanistan and very soon after George Bush Jr's state of the union address, which was attended by several heads of the new Afghan government.

6. For instance, H. Porter in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. II; p. 1177. It is also possible that I misread Porter and that he simply stated that Gath was destroyed sometime after David's capture of the city.

7. Compare 2Kings 12:1 13:1, 9, 25. I've got to admit that when Joash was assassinated in 2Kings 12:20–21 and the temple was destroyed they did not build it back, but they did build a new temple, Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 659.