

The Doctrine of the Perizzites

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Preface: There are two basic theories: the Perizzites is a race of people, somewhat like the Canaanites; and the other view is, this is a nonspecific designation to heathen who lived in villages in the Land of Promise.

- The Hebrew word for *Perizzite* is P^{er}izzîy (פְּרִיזִי) [pronounced *p^{er}-ihz-ZEE*], which means *belonging to a village; rural population, rustics*; and is transliterated *Perizzite*. Strong's #6522 BDB #827. Although several identify this as a general term, referring to those who live in villages, as opposed to those who are nomads, ZPEB emphatically disagrees with that assessment.¹
- They are found in the following passages: The Perizzites are found in Gen. 13:7 15:19–20 34:30 Ex. 3:8, 17 23:23 24:11 33:2 34:11 Deut. 7:1 20:17 Joshua 3:10 9:1 11:3 12:8 17:15 24:11 Judges 1:4–5 3:5 1Kings 9:20 2Chron. 8:7 Ezra 9:1 Neh. 9:8
- It is possible that this word is found in three more passages: Deut. 3:5 1Sam. 6:18 Esther 9:18–19. The word here is p^{er}râzîy (פְּרָזִי) [pronounced *p^{er}-raw-ZEE*], which means *country, rural*. It is found only three times in the Old Testament (Deut. 3:5 1Sam. 6:18 Esther 9:19) and each time translated differently in the Authorized Version: *unwalled, country, villages*. It should be translated *country* or *rural*. With the wide application of the word *‘ar*, the change of the English translation of the word is acceptable. Strong's #6521 BDB #826. Since this is so close to the spelling of *Perizzite*, it is possible that this word should be so translated in these passages. Therefore, we will look at it in both ways:
 - In Deut. 3:5, the context is capturing some land east of the Jordan. It reads: *And Jehovah our God also gave Og the king of Bashan into our hands, and all his people. And we struck him until not one survivor was left to him. And we captured all his cities at that time, there not being a city which we did not take from them, sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fortified with high walls, gates and double-leaved doors, besides a great many of the **unwalled** towns* (Deut. 3:3–5). The bolded word is the word in question; obviously, this quote would make little sense if we rendered that word *Perizzite*; furthermore, we are in an area never spoken of as an area of the Perizzites.
 - 1Sam. 6:17–18: *And these were the golden figurines which the Philistines sent back as a guilt offering to Jehovah: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron: and the golden mice, the number of all the cities of the Philistines, for the five rulers, from the fortified city even to the **hamlet** of the villagers, even to the great meadow on which they placed the ark of Jehovah remain until this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.* Again, we are speaking of an area and context far removed from the Perizzites; therefore, it makes little sense for this bolded word to be rendered *Perizzite*.
 - Esther 9:18–19: *But the Jews at Shushan gathered on the thirteenth of it and on the fourteenth of it. And on the fifteenth of the same, they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the **villages**, who lived in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a*

¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 704.

day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and a day of sending portions to one another. Again, replacing *villages* with *Perizzite* makes no sense.

- d. I realize that for some, you wonder, *why take this excursion to study the word perazyi, if it does not relate to our study?* There are two reasons: first, this helps to give us an idea as to what *Perizzite* means; and, secondly, we cover all of our bases. One of the reasons I do this, is so that you won't have to.
4. Easton gives us a brief run down of the Perizzites are: *Villagers; dwellers in the open country, the Canaanitish nation inhabiting the fertile regions south and south–west of Carmel. "They were the grazers, farmers, and peasants of the time." They were to be driven out of the land by the descendants of Abraham (Gen. 15:20 Ex. 3:8, 17 23:23 33:2 34:11). They are afterwards named among the conquered tribes (Joshua 24:11). Still lingering in the land, however, they were reduced to servitude by Solomon (1Kings 9:20).*²
5. Fausset tells us: *One of the ten doomed tribes of Canaan (Gen. 15:19–21). Six including Perizzite are enumerated in Ex. 3:8, 17. The Canaanite and Perizzite are joined in Gen. 13:7. From Joshua 11:3 17:15, they seem to have occupied the woods and mountains. Bochart [Phaleg. iv. 36] makes them an agrarian race living in villages only, the name signifying "rustics", pagani. Bezek was their stronghold, and Adoni–bezek their chief (Judges 1:4–5), in the S. of Palestine, also on the western sides of Mount Carmel (Joshua 17:15–18). Reduced to bond service by Solomon (1Kings 9:20 2Chron. 7:7). The Hebrew perezot, "unwalled country villages" or "towns," were inhabited by peasants engaged in agriculture like the Arab fellahs (Deut. 3:5 1Sam. 6:18 Ezek. 38).*³
6. ISBE: per'ī-zī't, pe-riz'ī't (פֶּרִיזִי'ת, p^orizzī' ; Φερεζαίος, Pherezaios): Signifies "a villager," and so corresponds with the Egyptian *fellah*. Hence, the Perizzite is not included among the sons of Canaan in Gen 10, and is also coupled with the Canaanite (Gen. 13:7 34:30 Judges 1:4). We hear, accordingly, of Canaanites and Perizzites at Shechem (Gen. 34:30), at Bezek in Judah (Judges 1:4) and, according to the reading of the Septuagint, at Gezer (Joshua 16:10). In Deut. 3:5 and 1Sam. 6:18, where the King James Version has "unwalled towns" and "country villages," the Septuagint has "Perizzite," the literal translation of the Hebrew being "cities of the Perizzite" or "villager" and "village of the Perizzite." The same expression occurs in Esther 9:19, where it is used of the Jews in Elam. In Joshua 17:15, 18, where the Manassites are instructed to take possession of the forest land of Carmel, "Perizzites and Rephaim" are given as the equivalent of "Canaanite."⁴
7. Finally, Smith writes: *The Perizzite and the Per'izzites. (belonging to a village). One of the nations inhabiting the land of promise before and at the time of its conquest by Israel. (B.C. 1450). They are continually mentioned in the formula so frequently occurring to express the Promised Land (Gen. 15:20; Ex. 3:8, 17 23:23 33:2 34:11). The notice in the book of Judges locates them in the southern part of the Holy Land. The signification of the name is not by any means clear. It possibly meant rustics, dwellers in open, unwalled villages, which are denoted by a similar word.*
8. ZPEB suggests that *Perizzite* is equivalent to *Amorite*; and that Canaanite could refer to western Semitic tribes and Perizzite may refer to eastern Semitic tribes. *Cultural, linguistic, and historical data tend to support this conclusion. Unfortunately, several of the passages in which the name appears are often subjected to extensive emendation that obscures the difficulty. That the Perizzites are set over against the Hittites and not mentioned with the Philistines and Javan (Ionian) supports the judgment that they were not Indo-European but Semitic. The mention of them with the Amorites (Ex. 3:8, 17) probably indicates that they were considered separate from the Amorites because of their more westerly location.*⁵ Let me add to this that we will consider that *Perizzite* refers to a specific group of people; and also has a generalized use (which will be covered in greater detail below).
9. Finally, I cannot help but inject a little humor into this. From Shamah-Elim: *A great deal can be inferred directly from the meaning of the word "Perizzite". As we mentioned in the first article of this series (under the section "The 7 types of evil spirits"), "Perizzite" means, "belonging to a village". Villages have a connotation*

² M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Perizzites.

³ Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Perizzite.

⁴ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; topic: Perizzite.

⁵ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 704.

of "smallness". People who grow up in villages are exposed to very limited opportunities for growth; educational, cultural, and entertainment opportunities are scarce. If not careful, people who grow up in villages can develop a very limited vision of life. Dreams are easily spawned in an environment that stimulates people with options and opportunities; since these are limited in a village, villagers are very likely not to dream of great things, and the few who do, dream of making it out of the village in order to succeed in the big cities. Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" song, therefore, would be an example of an "anti-Perizzite" song [and then he quotes the song New York, New York].⁶

10. There is only one possible extra-Biblical mention of the Perizzites is the unidentified *Pirati* who are found in an Egyptian vocabulary lists and there is a remote possibility that the Perizzites may be found in a fragment from the Amarna.⁷
11. The Perizzites are not mentioned in the table of nations in Gen. 10; the first time we hear of them is Gen. 13:7, when Abram and Lot are having disagreements about their cattle. God the Holy Spirit tells us that, at that time, **the Perizzite and the Canaanite are in the land** (Gen. 13:7). Rather than list all of the various people who live in the land, only these two are given. We find this pairing again in Gen. 34. Simeon and Levi reacted to the rape of their sister with mental attitude sins and revenge motivation, and killed many men who were not responsible for the rape. Their father Jacob was concerned that his family would be **odious to the Canaanite and the Perizzite in the land**. This suggests one of several possibilities:

- These are the primary two groups of people in the land.
- These two represent the list of 6 or 7 groups who are in the land.
- This is a shorthand way of referring to the nomads (the Canaanites) and those who live in villages (the Perizzites).

This would mean that both of these proper names to have generalized meanings as well.

d. This is a shorthand way of referring to those from the table of nations enumerated in Gen. 10 (the Canaanite) and those who are not listed, but later formed as possibly an amalgamation (the Perizzite). Today's *American* would be an example of a people who formed as a result of an amalgamation.

e. As already mentioned, one theory is that Canaanites refer to western Semitic tribes and Perizzite (or Amorite) refers to eastern Semitic tribes (when used apart from naming the other groups of heathen in the land).

12. We are given the general location of the various heathen during the time that Israel first spied out the land (and the location of the Perizzites is not mentioned); and later after Joshua had invaded the land (where the location of the Perizzites is mentioned):

- During the initial spying out of the land, we are told: **"Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and**



From <http://www.bible-history.com/map-israel-joshua/index.html> The Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon, in the land of Mizpeh (Joshua 11:3).

⁶ Taken from <http://shamah-elim.info/perizzite.htm>; however, I only quoted the first paragraph. The author (Shamah-Elim?) spends a great deal of time going into great details about the weirdest things, not unlike a meth-amphetamine-induced train of thought.

⁷ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 704.

by the side of the Jordan.” (Num. 13:29).

- b. Their locations are given us during the time of Joshua’s invasion: [The Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon, in the land of Mizpeh](#) (Joshua 11:3).
 - c. In Judges 1:4–5, we find that the Perizzites are living in a city called Bezek, which city’s location we do not know, apart from it being in Judah.
 - d. The mountains of Ephraim extend down into Judah and it is reasonable that the Perizzites lived in this area throughout most of their tenure in the Land of Promise.
13. God told Abraham that He would give him the land of the [Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Girschite and the Jebusite](#) (Gen. 15:19–21).
- a. From the table of nations in Gen. 10, **Canaan**, a son of Ham, is said to be the father of the **Hittites** (Heth), the **Jebusites**, the **Amorites** and the **Girschites**.
 - b. The term **Kenite** possibly means *metalworkers* or *smiths* and it could be a descriptive term rather than a family name. The sons of Lamech were involved in these activities and they might be the Kenites (Gen. 4:19–22). However, the first mention of this grouping by name is in this passage. The Kenites were descended from the Midianites (Num. 10:29 Judges 1:16 4:11). Like many races, there were good (I Sam. 15:6) and bad (Num. 24:21–22) among them. Moses father-in-law was a Kenite (Judges 1:16). With the several references throughout the Old Testament, it is obvious that the Kenites broke up into many separate families and nomadic groups. Some even became Scribes (I Chron. 2:55) after the exile. There are only a few things that we can probably state about the Kenites: they were a loose group of nomadic peoples who probably worked with metals and were originally associated with and possibly related to the Midianites. Although they first settled in Midian (insofar as we know), some of them moved into Judah and then later into the Galilee area. Their relations with Israel appear to have always been peaceful and congenial. Even though they are said to be given into the hands of Abram back in Gen. 15:18–19, their subjugation to Israel appears to be voluntary and not in the sense of being enslaved to the Israelites. There is nothing in the phrasing of Genesis 15 to indicate that Israel would militarily conquer this people.
 - c. This **Kenizzites** are descended from Eliphaz, the oldest son of Esau (Gen. 36:11,15,42). Even though the implication from this passage is that they were to be evicted from the land by Israel, some of them were evangelized and became great believers, such as Caleb (Num. 32:12).
 - d. The **Kadmonites** are found only here, Gen. 15, by this name. However, their name is identical to the adjective which means eastern, so it is possible that they are also found in Job 1:3 (this means that Job was possibly a Kadmonite; which would help fix a date on Job as somewhere during this time period). The sons of the east are mentioned in 1Kings 4:30–31 (where their wisdom is compared to Solomon’s).
 - e. The **Rephaim** are one of the groups of peoples who had been defeated by Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:5). They seemed to live in a rather large area, just east of the Salt Sea, and their name is translated *giants* by the LXX. In later Scripture, their name is identified with the dead and with Sheol (Psalm 88:10 Prov. 2:18 9:18 Isa. 14:9 26:14). It is possible that we simply do not know the origins of this people and that they are simply identified as giants. In fact, it is even reasonable that this name could apply to any group of particularly tall people. The proximity of *Perizzites* in this passage may indicate that the Perizzites originally lived east of the Jordan.⁸
14. In fact, we find several laundry lists of the people in the Land of Promise which includes the Perizzites:
- a. The Perizzites are listed again with those who occupy the land which God would give to the Jew. Those listed are [the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite](#). Ex. 3:8 (see also Ex. 3:17)
 - i. The addition of the Hivites is simply another tribe descended from Canaan (Gen. 10:17).
 - b. There is a similar passage to be found in Ex. 23:23: [“For My angel will go before you and bring you in to a land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and](#)

⁸ The other speculation is that the Rephaim might be located west of the Jordan (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 704); and all of this is predicated on their proximity in this verse indicates that they are near to one another.

I will completely destroy them.” The addition of the final phrase is much stronger than what he have seen before. You will note that not all of the groups originally mentioned are found here. These are the groups which God would remove from this earth entirely.

- c. God again tells Israel that He will send an angel and drive out the following tribes: [the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite](#) (Ex. 33:2b). This is repeated in Ex. 34:11.
- d. Moses, when speaking to the children of Israel prior to entering the Land of Promise, said, [“When Jehovah your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and He will clear away many nations before you: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—seven nations greater and stronger than you.”](#) (Deut. 7:1). The continual inclusion of the Perizzites in lists like these, and calling them a *nation* seems to indicate that this is more than simply a name of a general group of people.
- e. Moses also tells the Jews that they will [utterly destroy the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, as God commands them](#) (Deut. 20:17b).
- f. The [...And Joshua said to the sons of Israel, Come here and hear the Words of Jehovah your God. And Joshua said, By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites](#) (Joshua 3:9–10).
- g. We find these tribes mentioned again in Joshua 9:1–2: [And it happened, when all the kings who were on this side Jordan, in the hills and in the valleys, and in all the coast of the great sea over against Lebanon heard, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, they all, with one mind, gathered themselves to fight with Joshua and with Israel.](#)
- h. Who Joshua conquered is given in Joshua 12:7–8: [And these are the kings of the land which Joshua and the sons of Israel struck on this side Jordan, on the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even to the mount Halak that goes up to Seir, which Joshua gave to the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions; in the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south country; the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites](#) (the passage goes on the name these kings individually). The Perizzites are given in another shopping list in a portion of one of Joshua’s final messages (this is Joshua speaking to the elders of Israel): [“And you went over Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I delivered them into your hand.”](#) (Joshua 24:11).
- i. The Perizzites appear to be located in a city in Judah, as Judah defeats them soon after Joshua’s general invasion into the land: [And Judah went up. And Jehovah delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand. And they killed ten thousand men of them in Bezek. And they found Adonibezek in Bezek. And, they fought against him, and they killed the Canaanites and the Perizzites](#) (Judges 1:4–5).
- j. However, this did not wipe out the Perizzites, as we later read: [And the sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods](#) (Judges 3:5–6).
- k. The Perizzites are not mentioned during the time of Saul or David. They are mentioned again in another laundry list in 1Kings 9:20–21: [And all the people who were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who were not of the sons of Israel, their sons who were left after them in the land, whom the sons of Israel also were not able to destroy completely, on those Solomon laid a tribute of bond-service to this day.](#) (2Chron. 8:7–8 is the parallel passage).
- l. Even to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people of Israel were still intermingling with the peoples of the land: [And at the end of these things, the rulers came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands. But they are doing according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons. So the holy seed has mixed themselves with the people of those lands. Yes, the hand of the leaders and overseers has been chief in this sin](#) (Ezra 9:1–2).

- m. The final time the Perizzites are mentioned are in another laundry list where the people of Israel confess their sins: “You are Jehovah, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name of Abraham, and found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite, and the Girgashite, to give it to his seed. And You have performed Your words, for You are righteous” (Neh. 9:7–8).
15. There is an interesting exchange between the sons of Joseph and Joshua in Joshua 17: Ephraim and Manasseh are given their territories and they complain that they did not receive enough, given their large populations. Joshua 17:14–15: The sons of Joseph spoke to Joshua saying, “Why have you given me one lot and one portion to inherit, since I am a great people, because Jehovah has blessed me until now? And Joshua answered them, If you are a great people, and if mount Ephraim is too narrow for you, get up to the forest and cut down more for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants.” At this point, we are no longer dealing with a shopping list, but with the Perizzites living specifically in the heavy forests of Ephraim.
16. Conclusions:
- We can conclude that the Perizzites were indeed an actual, specific people who lived in the Land of Promise for many generations, from the time of Abram even to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, the time during which they were mostly at odds with Israel seems to be the time of Joshua into the early period of the Judges. It appears as though a peace between Israel and the Perizzites eventually came to pass, with intermarriage as well as religious conversion to idolatry as being part of the peace.
 - The Perizzites primarily lived in the hills of Judah and Ephraim.
 - Their racial background and origins are unknown to us.
 - It is possible that their *name* had a generalized application: that is, it either referred to those who lived in villages (as opposed to being nomadic); or it referred to those whose origins were unknown; or Perizzite may refer to an amalgamation of several people.

To be inserted whenever the Perizzites are mentioned.

Brief Summary of the Perizzites

- We can conclude that the Perizzites were indeed an actual, specific people who lived in the Land of Promise for many generations, from the time of Abram (Gen. 13:7) even to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9:1–2). However, the time during which they were mostly at odds with Israel seems to be the time of Joshua into the early period of the Judges. It appears as though a peace between Israel and the Perizzites eventually came to pass, with intermarriage as well as religious conversion to idolatry as being part of the peace (Judges 3:5-6 Ezra 9:1-2).
- The Perizzites primarily lived in the hills of Judah and Ephraim (Joshua 11:3 17:14-15).
- Their racial background and origins are unknown to us.
- It is possible that their *name* had a generalized application: that is, it either referred to those who lived in villages (as opposed to being nomadic); or it referred to those whose origins were unknown; or Perizzite may refer to an amalgamation of several peoples.

These points are expanded, discussed in much more detail, and substantiated in the actual Doctrine of the Perizzites (Deut. 7:1).

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