



ASHKELON NATIONAL PARK

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon... (2 Sam 1:20)



Location: on the Mediterranean coast, S of Ashkelon, Route 4.

Best season: year-round

Length of visit: 1 hour

Tel. (park office): 08-6711768, 08-6739660

Tel. (ticket office): 08-6736444

Fax: 08-6734227

Entrance fee

Accessibility Rating



The origin of the word “Ashkelon” is apparently derived from the word *shekel*, an appropriate name for a city which was over the centuries an *entrepot* (commercial port).

The National Park is situated to the south of the city on an ancient tel, where antiquities from all periods were exposed. The quantity of standing and strewn pillars is immense and if one takes into consideration the number of pillars removed from the ancient city, one gets a good idea of its former greatness.

HISTORY

The city has a rich history from its very beginnings thousands of years ago. The rampart that served as a wall for the

Canaanite city is about 4,000 years old and approximately at this period it is mentioned by name in the Egyptian Execration Texts. Because of its location on the *Via Maris* leading from Egypt northward, it was an important location for invaders and rulers. Thus, it was conquered many times, and rebuilt just as often.

Ashkelon is mentioned in the Book of Joshua as part of “the land that remained” that the Israelites did not conquer. However, it was conquered after the death of Joshua, then retaken by the Philistines and became one of their five principal cities. On the death of Saul and his son, Jonathan, in their battle against the Philistines, David lamented:



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*Thy beauty, O Israel, upon thy high places is slain!
How are the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon.* (2 Sam 1:19–20)

During the period of the Judges, Samson’s exploits took him to Ashkelon. Samson paid off a bet by killing 30 local men, stripping them of their garments and giving them to the Philistines who had answered his riddle. When Philistia came under Assyrian sovereignty beginning in 734 BCE, the king of Ashkelon, Sidqa, joined Hezekiah, king of Judah, in an alliance against

Assyria. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city to its very foundations, but it was re-established and flourished in the Persian period.

Alexander the Great turned it into a Hellenistic city, and it became a center of independent Greek culture, even though Jews and other ethnic communities dwelled there. The city maintained its independence throughout the Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties. During the Great Revolt against the Romans, there were fierce battles between the Jews and Gentiles.