The Philistine, Israelite Wars.

What did they fight about?

A visit to the land of Israel usually begins at Ben Gurion airport.

In Biblical times, some 3000 years ago, the enemies of the Israelites, the

Philistines, lived here. The Ben Gurion airport is located here for the

same reason that the Philistines lived here, namely it's flat, ideal for

chariots. Where airplanes land today the Philistines once raced their war

chariots.

This part of Israel is known as the "Shephelah" and it lies between the Mts.

of Jerusalem and Judea in the East and the Mediterranean coast in the West.

Both the Israelites and Philistines settled here in the 12th century.

The Philistines in the flat "Shefela" the Israelites in the mountainous areas

to the East.

This division was the result of a technological gap between

the two nations.

Let me explain what I mean by "technological gap".

The Philistines were a technologically advanced nation who had come from

the Greek islands with the knowledge of how to make iron, a hard metal

necessary for the manufacture of chariots. The Israelites, on the other

hand were somewhat "retarded" technologically and only knew how to make

bronze, a soft metal, good for making short daggers and arrowheads but not

for making chariots, swords or spears.

The Israelite, daggers and arrows, weren't any match for Philistine chariots. The Philistines conquered the flat "Shefela" and theIsraelites were left in control of the mountain areas, where chariots were useless.

Only in the reigns of David and Solomon did they learn how to make

Iron, manufactured chariots, acquired horses. The Philistines had lost the technical advantage and the Israelites conquered the "Shefela", from the Philistines.

All the battles mentioned in the Bible, from the time of the Judges to the

days of king Solomon were fought over these two areas: The Philistines

wanted to conquer the mountains because that would give them strategic

control over the entire land: the Jordan valley to the East and the Shefela

to the West. The Israelites wanted to conquer the "Shefela" for its

economic advantages; the main international highway, the "Via Maris" (Way of

the Sea) connecting Egypt with Babylon, passed through here, the harbors

were here; Jaffa (Joppa) Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza and others.

The first book of Samuel is replete with these mammoth struggles; David and

Goliath, The Battle of Aphek, where the Ark of the Lord was taken, and the

two sons of Eli were killed, David's battles with the Philistines in the

Valley of Rephaim and one of the great Philistine victories, the Battle of

Bet Shean, where Saul took his own life.

By the time Solomon came to the throne of Israel, however, the game was

over for the Philistines, because the Israelites had caught up to them,

technologically; they had mastered the use of the chariot and the horse.

The Philistines left the Land of Canaan. Only a few traces of their culture

have been found; Tel Kasile, in Tel Aviv, Ashdod, Ashkelon