

# 1 Samuel 4 Commentary

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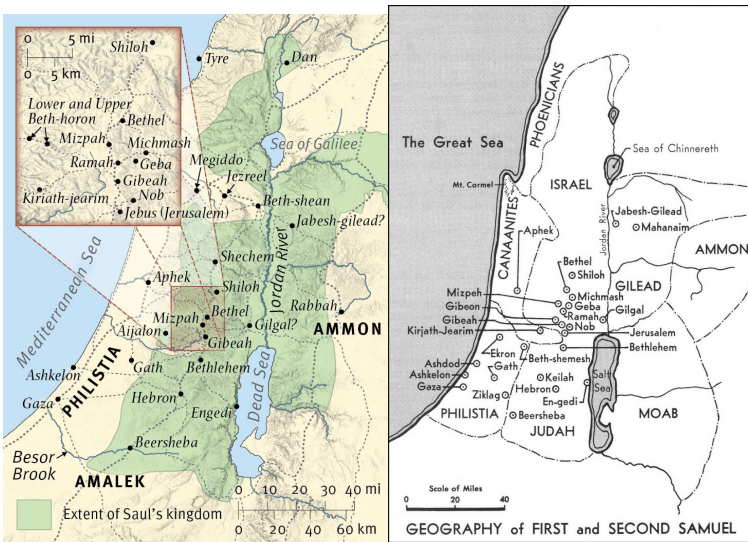
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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission  
[1 Samuel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

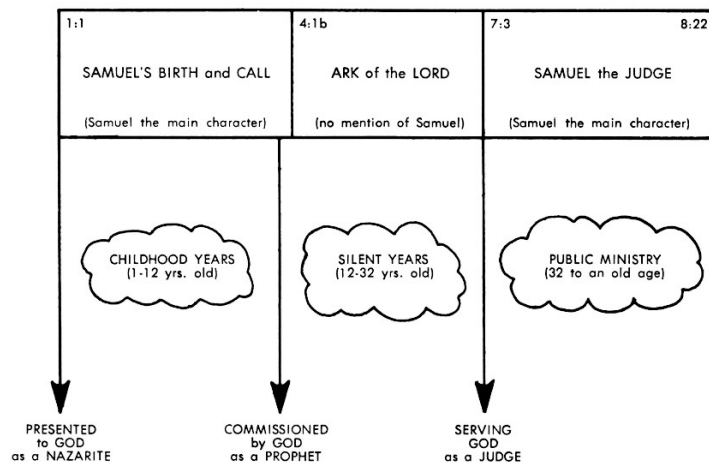
TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1Chr 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		

**Legend:** B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.



Map on Left ESV Global Study Bible, on right Jensen's Survey of the OT  
 CLICK TO ENLARGE

### The Man Samuel in 1 Samuel 1-8



1 Samuel 4:1 Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek.

- **came:** 1Sa 3:11
- **Ebenezer:** That is, the place afterwards so called: See the Parallel Texts. 1Sa 5:1 7:12
- **Aphek:** This Aphek was situated in the tribe of Judah, and is probably the same as Aphekah. Jos 15:53 It must be carefully distinguished from that near Jezreel, and another in Asher. 1Sa 29:1 Jos 19:30 1Ki 20:30



## Aphek 5 mi from Coast W. of Shiloh

**Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel.** - Note that 1Sa 3:21 ends with God's revelation to Samuel of the **word of the LORD** and in the present passage God's Word is clearly equated with **the word of Samuel**, who fulfilled his role as God's prophet. The episode that began with a notice of the rarity of the word of the Lord (1Sa 3:1) concludes with a notice of the change brought by the selection of Samuel to be "a prophet of the Lord" Observe that "the word of the Lord" (1Sa 3:21) has become equivalent to "the word of Samuel." Note that in the context "**word**" is used 3x in these 4 verses (1Sa 3:19, 21 & here) so that this first sentence seems most logically to flow from the preceding context, especially as the next section begins another scene - thus this is a poor chapter division (in my opinion). This clause is rightly connected with the foregoing verse of the previous chapter in the Syriac and Vulgate. Attached to the fourth chapter, it gives a wrong sense, namely, that Samuel gave the command for the assembling of all Israel for battle with the Philistines. Joined to the previous chapter, it gives the true meaning. Because Samuel spake by the **word** of Jehovah, therefore his **word** came to all Israel, that is, it was a binding and authoritative command throughout the whole land.

**Blaikie** - The whole chapter is remarkable for the absence of Samuel's name. What is thus denoted seems to be that Samuel was not consulted either about the war or about the taking of the ark into the battle.

**Now** - This marks a distinctly new section. We say "now and then," and the "then" was the first part of the passage - **Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel.** - Sadly this truth did not pass over to the "NOW" section!

**THOUGHT** - We see several effects of unconfessed sin in a nation's life and in an individual's life. First, and foremost, God's Spirit withholds the Word of Life (cf Dt 32:46, 47+, Php 2:16+, 1Jn 1:1+) and Truth from that nation or that individual (cf 1Sa 3:1+, cf 1Pe 2:1+ with 1Pe 2:2+). Secondly, God allows (and even ordains) powerful enemies to come against and defeat His people. Third, the defeats God allows are not for His people's destruction, but their correction to bring forth the peaceful fruit of righteousness (disciplining - Heb 12:5-10,11+). The embarrassment of defeat should drive His people back to His Person to confess sins and seek His gifts of repentance, restoration and even revival. Even (especially) when when are experiencing defeat, we must recall to mind that His lovingkindnesses are from everlasting to everlasting to those who love Him! (Exodus 20:6+, cf Lam 3:21, 22-23, 24) As Jesus taught "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (Jn 14:15)

**Israel went out to meet the Philistines (pelishti) in battle** - This was not **meet** to greet, but **meet** to defeat (or so Israel thought!) Why did Israel go out to **meet** them to defeat them? Apparently because the Philistines were encroaching on the land that God had given them. In this scene we see the implicit truth that the Lord is sovereign over all peoples, even the pagans outside the covenant and it was God who stirred up the Philistines to come against His covenant people! (See this truth clearly stated in Jer 25:9).

**Guzik** - Israel competed on more equal terms with Moab and Ammon but the Philistines had Greek military equipment (such as helmets, shields, chain mail armor, swords and spears) making the Philistines more formidable opponents. The Philistines were the first people in Canaan to process iron and they made the most of it. This was a difficult period for Israel. "Never did time seem more hopeless than when Samuel arose. The Philistines, strengthened not merely by a constant influx of immigrants, but by the importation of arms from Greece, were fast reducing Israel to the condition of a subject race." (Smith, Pulpit Commentary)

As an anecdotal aside, while this is the first mention of the Philistines in the two books of Samuel, it is far from the last, for this dread enemy will show up 182 more times in 1-2 Samuel (out of a total of 288 uses in the OT)! There are no occurrences of the Philistines in the New Testament (which is very likely a reflection of the prophecy in the last OT use of Philistine - Zechariah 9:6! God always keeps His Word! And even though God used Philistine as His instrument against Israel, He would still hold them accountable for their free-will choices to fight against His Chosen People!)

## Who or what are the Philistines in your life dearly beloved child of God?

**And camped beside Ebenezer (Eben - eben + 'ezer= help) - Ebenezer** was near **Aphek**, in Israelite territory, but the exact location is not known ([see map of possible location](#)). It appears that **Ebenezer** had not as yet received this name (see 1 Sa 7:12+) but one cannot be dogmatic as some writers think the same name refers to different places. (see [Wiersbe's note below](#)). In the use in chapter, Ebenezer is clearly a monument set up in an open plain fit for the purposes of war. **Ebenezer** should have been a good place for Israel to camp because it meant "Stone of Help" (1Sa 5:1+, 1Sa 7:12+) and Jehovah is known as **Jehovah Ezer**, the **The LORD our Helper!** Theoretically, Israel should have been undefeatable because of the name of the place and the presence of the Person (Jehovah)! But as the saying goes, appearances can be deceiving! The first battle at Ebenezer resulted in defeat for Israel. The next battle recorded at Ebenezer resulted in defeat for the Philistines, thus giving rise to the memorial name, Eben-ezer, the Stone of help! (1Sa 7:10-11, 12+)

**Wiersbe** has a note on Ebenezer - Obviously 1 Samuel was written after the events described, so the name "Ebenezer" is used here by anticipation. See 1 Samuel 7:12. **However, it may have been another site with the same name.** (See [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**While the Philistines** ([pelishti](#)) **camped in Aphek** ([see map above](#)) - **Aphek** was about 5 miles from the Mediterranean, 20 miles west of Shiloh and at the northeastern edge of Philistine territory. In short, the Philistines were already "trespassing" on Israel's land! The Philistines, inveterate enemies of Israel during the latter half of the period of the judges and the early years of the Israelite monarchy, are mentioned nearly 150 times in 1-2 Samuel alone. They were so entrenched and dominant in the coastal areas and the foothills of Canaan that they eventually gave their name (Palestine) to the entire land.

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**Eben** (058) (eben) is a feminine noun meaning stone and is used with both literal (most uses are literal) and figurative meanings. Eben is found in the memorial name Eben-ezer 3x in the OT (1Sa 4:1; 1Sa 5:1; 1Sa 7:12)

**Robert Alden** on **eben** - In its first occurrence, 'eben refers to precious stones (Genesis 2:12). The usual meaning of 'eben hashshōham is "onyx stone," although "cornelians" (NEB), lapis lazuli (Torah and NAB), and others appear here and the half dozen other places where these two words come together. Our English word "sapphire" reflects the Hebrew sappîr. This occurs with 'eben in Ezekiel 1:26 and Ezekiel 10:1. An indication that the stone is valuable is the word millu'îm, which basically means "full." But the derived meaning is "consecrated." Notice this combination in Exodus 25:7, where it means a jewelry "setting," and elsewhere. Sometimes yeqârâ meaning "precious" or "costly" modifies it (2 Samuel 12:30 et al.). In 1 Chron. 29:2, which includes several of the above combinations, the modifiers pûk and riqmâ, translated in the KJV as "glistening" and "of diverse colours," appear. Others have "antimony" and "colored" (RSV), "coloured" and "striped" (JB), "carnelian" and "mosaic" (NAB). In Proverbs 17:8 is found the expression 'eben hên, which is literally stone of grace" and is usually rendered "precious" or the like. Isaiah 54:12 has two additional word combinations, 'eben 'eqdâḥ and 'eben ḥêpeṣ: "carbuncles" and "pleasant stones" (KJV), garnet" and "jewels" (NEB), "crystal" and precious stones" (JB). Ezekiel (Ezekiel 28:14, 16) speaks of the "fire stone." From the context (especially Ezekiel 28:13 with its 'eben yeqârâ), this easily translated expression probably refers to a stone which sparkles. Even today diamonds are frequently described as fiery.

A second major category is "stone" used in the natural state. Genesis 11:3 is the first usage of the word as building material. Jacob used a stone pillow (Genesis 28:11) and Moses sat on a stone (Exodus 17:12). Stones were used to cover wells (Genesis 29:2-3) and seal caves (Joshua 10:18). Stones also served as pillars or cairns (Genesis 31:45-46). Naturally, stones were used for throwing (Leviticus 20:2) and slinging (Judges 20:16).

The word "stone" is used as a title for God (Genesis 49:24, cf. šûr "rock"), and for the Messiah (Isaiah 28:16).

Stones were made into tablets for writing, as for the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:1), or into bowls (Exodus 7:19). From stone the images of false deities were carved (Deut. 28:36). The phrase "hewn stone" ('eben gāzîṭ, Exodus 20:25) refers to stones which were dressed or squared off.

The word 'eben is used to denote the characteristics it possesses. Exodus 15:5 refers to its weight and Exodus 15:16 to its motionlessness. Elsewhere its commonness is noted (1 Kings 10:27). Job refers to its strength (Job 6:12) and firmness (Job 41:24 [H 16]). Akin to this last reference is Ezekiel's allusion to a "stony heart" (Job 11:19).

Stones were used for weights (Leviticus 19:36), although the denominations or counterparts are imperfectly known to us. Note the "royal stone" of 2 Samuel 14:26 (KJV "king's weight").

The word refers to "hailstones" (e.g. Joshua 10:11), and to "limestones" (Isaiah 27:9; KJV "chalkstones").

The word "stone" appears in place names. The best known (mostly from the hymn "Come, Thou Fount") is "Eben-ezer" (Heb 'eben hā'ēzer, 1 Samuel 7:12). There is also the "stone of Bohan" (Joshua 15:6, JB, translated "stone of Bohan" in KJV and "Eben-Bohan" in NAB), and the "stone of Zohemoth" (1 Kings 1:9, KJV; translated "Serpent's Stone" in RSV, "Slippery Stone" in the Berkley Version, and "Sliding Stone" in JB). The word azel (1 Samuel 20:19) connected with stone" may be a preposition or adjective, not a proper name.

Note that if an altar was built with stones, they were to be undressed stones, doubtless to make impossible the engraving of idolatrous representations on them (Exodus 20:25; Deut. 27:5). ([TWOT online](#))

Eben - 231v - another(1), charm\*(1), cornerstone\*(1), death(1), differing weights(3), hailstones\*(4), jeweler\*(1), lapis lazuli\*(1), line\*(1), plumb line(1), plumb\*(1), rock(2), rocks(1), slingstones\*(1), stone(106), stonemasons\*(1), stonemasons\*(1), stones(125), weight(4), weights(3). Gen. 2:12; Gen. 11:3; Gen. 28:11; Gen. 28:18; Gen. 28:22; Gen. 29:2; Gen. 29:3; Gen. 29:8; Gen. 29:10; Gen. 31:45; Gen. 31:46; Gen. 35:14; Gen. 49:24; Exod. 7:19; Exod. 15:5; Exod. 15:16; Exod. 17:12; Exod. 20:25; Exod. 21:18; Exod. 24:12; Exod. 25:7; Exod. 26:9; Exod. 26:10; Exod. 26:11; Exod. 26:12; Exod. 26:17; Exod. 26:21; Exod. 31:5; Exod. 31:18; Exod. 34:1; Exod. 34:4; Exod. 35:9; Exod. 35:27; Exod. 35:33; Exod. 39:6; Exod. 39:7; Exod. 39:10; Exod. 39:14; Lev. 14:40; Lev. 14:42; Lev. 14:43; Lev. 14:45; Lev. 19:36; Lev. 20:2; Lev. 20:27; Lev. 24:23; Lev. 26:1; Num. 14:10; Num. 15:35; Num. 15:36; Num. 35:17; Num. 35:23; Deut. 4:13; Deut. 4:28; Deut. 5:22; Deut. 8:9; Deut. 9:9; Deut. 9:10; Deut. 9:11; Deut. 10:1; Deut. 10:3; Deut. 25:13; Deut. 25:15; Deut. 27:2; Deut. 27:4; Deut. 27:5; Deut. 27:6; Deut. 27:8; Deut.

28:36; Deut. 28:64; Deut. 29:17; Jos. 4:3; Jos. 4:5; Jos. 4:6; Jos. 4:7; Jos. 4:8; Jos. 4:9; Jos. 4:20; Jos. 4:21; Jos. 7:25; Jos. 7:26; Jos. 8:29; Jos. 8:31; Jos. 8:32; Jos. 10:11; Jos. 10:18; Jos. 10:27; Jos. 15:6; Jos. 18:17; Jos. 24:26; Jos. 24:27; Jdg. 9:5; Jdg. 9:18; Jdg. 20:16; 1 Sam. 6:14; 1 Sam. 6:15; 1 Sam. 6:18; 1 Sam. 7:12; 1 Sam. 14:33; 1 Sam. 17:40; 1 Sam. 17:49; 1 Sam. 17:50; 1 Sam. 20:19; 1 Sam. 25:37; 2 Sam. 5:11; 2 Sam. 12:30; 2 Sam. 14:26; 2 Sam. 16:6; 2 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 18:17; 2 Sam. 20:8; 1 Ki. 1:9; 1 Ki. 5:17; 1 Ki. 5:18; 1 Ki. 6:7; 1 Ki. 6:18; 1 Ki. 7:9; 1 Ki. 7:10; 1 Ki. 7:11; 1 Ki. 8:9; 1 Ki. 10:2; 1 Ki. 10:10; 1 Ki. 10:11; 1 Ki. 10:27; 1 Ki. 15:22; 1 Ki. 18:31; 1 Ki. 18:32; 1 Ki. 18:38; 1 Ki. 21:13; 2 Ki. 3:19; 2 Ki. 3:25; 2 Ki. 12:12; 2 Ki. 16:17; 2 Ki. 19:18; 2 Ki. 22:6; 1 Chr. 12:2; 1 Chr. 20:2; 1 Chr. 22:2; 1 Chr. 22:14; 1 Chr. 22:15; 1 Chr. 29:2; 1 Chr. 29:8; 2 Chr. 1:15; 2 Chr. 2:14; 2 Chr. 3:6; 2 Chr. 9:1; 2 Chr. 9:9; 2 Chr. 9:10; 2 Chr. 9:27; 2 Chr. 16:6; 2 Chr. 24:21; 2 Chr. 26:14; 2 Chr. 26:15; 2 Chr. 32:27; 2 Chr. 34:11; Neh. 4:2; Neh. 4:3; Neh. 9:11; Job 5:23; Job 6:12; Job 8:17; Job 14:19; Job 28:2; Job 28:3; Job 28:6; Job 38:6; Job 38:30; Job 41:24; Job 41:28; Ps. 91:12; Ps. 102:14; Ps. 118:22; Prov. 11:1; Prov. 16:11; Prov. 17:8; Prov. 20:10; Prov. 20:23; Prov. 24:31; Prov. 26:8; Prov. 26:27; Prov. 27:3; Eccl. 3:5; Eccl. 10:9; Isa. 8:14; Isa. 14:19; Isa. 27:9; Isa. 28:16; Isa. 34:11; Isa. 37:19; Isa. 54:11; Isa. 54:12; Isa. 60:17; Isa. 62:10; Jer. 2:27; Jer. 3:9; Jer. 43:9; Jer. 43:10; Jer. 51:26; Jer. 51:63; Lam. 3:53; Lam. 4:1; Ezek. 1:26; Ezek. 10:1; Ezek. 10:9; Ezek. 11:19; Ezek. 13:11; Ezek. 13:13; Ezek. 20:32; Ezek. 23:47; Ezek. 26:12; Ezek. 27:22; Ezek. 28:13; Ezek. 28:14; Ezek. 28:16; Ezek. 36:26; Ezek. 38:22; Ezek. 40:42; Dan. 11:38; Mic. 1:6; Mic. 6:11; Hab. 2:11; Hab. 2:19; Hag. 2:15; Zech. 3:9; Zech. 4:7; Zech. 4:10; Zech. 5:4; Zech. 5:8; Zech. 9:15; Zech. 9:16; Zech. 12:3

**Ezer** (05828) 'ezer is a masculine noun which means help, support. It can also refer to a helper or one who assists and serves another with what is needed. For example in the first OT use where Moses records "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper" ('ezer: LXX = [boethos](#)) suitable for him." (Ge 2:18) 'Ezer refers to aid or assistance that is given, whether material or immaterial. It is often Jehovah Who helps His people. Jehovah is called the shield or protection of Israel's help ([Dt 33:29](#)). The Septuagint translates this word group most often with [boáo](#), [boetheo](#), [boethos](#), all conveying the general idea of running to the aid of one who cries out for help. The Lord as Israel's chief **Helper** (Ex 18:4; Dt 33:7; Ps 33:20; Ps 115:9, 10, 11). Israel spurns Jehovah's **help** in (Ho 13:9)

**Ezer - 21v - help(18), helper(2), helpers(1).** Gen. 2:18; Gen. 2:20; Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7; Deut. 33:26; Deut. 33:29; Ps. 20:2; Ps. 33:20; Ps. 70:5; Ps. 89:19; Ps. 115:9; Ps. 115:10; Ps. 115:11; Ps. 121:1; Ps. 121:2; Ps. 124:8; Ps. 146:5; Isa. 30:5; Ezek. 12:14; Dan. 11:34; Hos. 13:9

**Philistines** (06430)([pelishti/pelistiy](#) from Petesheth - territory on the southeast coast of Israel. Name of one who belonged to the ethnic group the Philistines who had settled in Philistia ([see map](#)). See [Wikipedia article](#). See [archaeology related to Philistines](#).

**Gilbrant** - The Philistines were Israel's greatest enemies during the period of the judges and early monarchy. It appears that they originated from the islands and coastlines of the Aegean Sea. They are also paralleled with the Kerethites, or Cretans, in Ezek. 25:15f and Zeph. 2:4f. Genesis 10:14 indicates that the Philistines descended from the Casluhites from Egypt. It seems likely that the Philistines later were bound in slavery and submission in Caphtor, or Crete, from which God delivered them in the same way He did Israel from Egypt (Amos 9:7). The Table of Nations connects the Philistines with other descendants of Ham, such as the Canaanites (Gen. 10). The Philistines, however, were not a single ethnic group, but rather a conglomeration of several different peoples from different origins and time periods. Thus, the Philistines who originated from the Casluhites were different from the ones who descended from Caphtor.

In extra-biblical sources, the Philistines are first mentioned by Ramses III (1184-1153 b.c.), who engaged in great battles upon the land and sea against people he called "the peoples of the sea." A group called the "Peleset" was known among these people, whom scholars identify as the biblical Philistines. Ramses triumphed over the Sea Peoples and eventually allowed them to settle and dwell in southwestern Canaan, which is precisely where they resided in the Books of Judges and Samuel. Apparently, a primary source of Philistine strength came from their superior ability to work with iron for weapons (cf. 1 Sam. 13:19).

During the time of the patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac encountered the Philistines on many occasions. Abraham told Abimelech, the Philistine king, that Sarah was his sister, instead of his wife, for fear of the repercussions (Gen. 20:2). Disputes between Abraham and the Philistines concerning wells also arose (Gen. 21:22-34), but each of these situations was resolved. Later, Isaac experienced identical difficulties with the Philistines concerning his wife Rebekah and water (Gen. 26:1-33).

The Philistines were the Israelites' primary foe during the time of the judges, most notably, during Samson's rule (Judg. 14-16), although Shamgar had earlier struck down 600 Philistines with an oxgoad (Judg. 3:31). Samson attempted to marry a Philistine and later became enamored with Delilah of Gaza, who betrayed him (Judg. 16). Samson died while killing thousands of Philistines after they had enslaved him and gouged out his eyes. The Book of Judges further explains that the Philistines were "left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the Lord's commands" (Judg. 3:4, NIV).

The Philistines captured the Ark (1 Sam. 4:1-11) and carried it to Ashdod and Ekron, two main Philistine towns (1 Sam. 5). A plague struck the Philistines because of their possession of the Ark, and according to the advice of their diviners and priests, they returned it to Israel with compensatory offerings for Israel's God (1 Sam. 6). The Philistines were aware of Yahweh's power, referring to Israel's exodus from Egyptian slavery (6:6) and the plagues (4:8). Samuel led Israel in routing the Philistines and driving them from the towns captured previously, and relations between the Israelites and Philistines continued without conflict the rest of Samuel's life (1 Sam. 7:7-11).

King Saul battled the Philistines on several occasions. His son Jonathan defeated them in a battle at Gibeath (1 Sam. 13:2ff) and later at Micmash (1 Sam. 14:1-23). David first encountered the Philistines in his confrontation against the mighty warrior Goliath (1 Sam. 17). He killed Goliath, and the Philistines fled to Gath and Ekron. David's success against the Philistines continued (1 Sam. 18:20-30; 19:8; 23:1-6), thus fueling Saul's jealousy and subsequent murder attempts. Twice, David fled to Philistine territory to escape Saul's wrath (21:10-15; 27; 29). Saul was eventually killed by the Philistines, who desecrated his body by cutting off his



head, hanging his body upon the wall of Beth-Shan and hanging his armor in the pagan temple of Ashtoreth (31:8ff).

The conflict between the Philistines and Israel continued into the reign of David, who defeated them on numerous occasions (2 Sam. 5:17-25; 8:1, 12; 21:15, 18-22). David used the Kerethites and Pelethites, people closely associated with the Philistines, as mercenaries, as well as men from the Philistine city of Gath (2 Sam. 15:18). David completely destroyed the Philistine alliance of five cities including Gath, Ekron, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Gaza. Later, the Philistines appeared as adversaries against Hezekiah (2 Ki. 18:8), Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 17:11), Jehoram (2 Chr. 21:16f), Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:6f) and Ahaz (2 Chr. 28:18). But in these instances, the Philistine forces were small and isolated, not bearing nearly the military might of previous times.

The Philistines had their own pantheon of gods, headed by Dagon (Judg. 16:23ff; 1 Sam. 5:1-5; 1 Chr. 10:10). Dagon had his own temple (1 Sam. 5:2) as did the Philistines' primary goddess Ashtoreth (1 Sam. 31:10). A third important Philistine god was Baal-Zebub, a name found in the NT (Beelzebub).

Many of Israel's early leaders gained their reputations by defeating the Philistines who remained Israel's main adversaries for generations. The prophets identified the Philistines as objects of God's wrath (Isa. 11:14; Ezek. 25:15f; Amos 1:6ff; Zeph. 2:4f; Zech. 9:5f), a symbol of wickedness and instruments of punishment by God upon Israel for disobedience (Ezek. 16:27, 57). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Pelishiti - 288x in 243 verses - Gen. 10:14; Gen. 21:32; Gen. 21:34; Gen. 26:1; Gen. 26:8; Gen. 26:14; Gen. 26:15; Gen. 26:18; Exod. 13:17; Exod. 23:31; Jos. 13:2; Jos. 13:3; Jdg. 3:3; Jdg. 3:31; Jdg. 10:6; Jdg. 10:7; Jdg. 10:11; Jdg. 13:1; Jdg. 13:5; Jdg. 14:1; Jdg. 14:2; Jdg. 14:3; Jdg. 14:4; Jdg. 15:3; Jdg. 15:5; Jdg. 15:6; Jdg. 15:9; Jdg. 15:11; Jdg. 15:12; Jdg. 15:14; Jdg. 15:20; Jdg. 16:5; Jdg. 16:8; Jdg. 16:9; Jdg. 16:12; Jdg. 16:14; Jdg. 16:18; Jdg. 16:20; Jdg. 16:21; Jdg. 16:23; Jdg. 16:27; Jdg. 16:28; Jdg. 16:30; 1 Sam. 4:1; 1 Sam. 4:2; 1 Sam. 4:3; 1 Sam. 4:6; 1 Sam. 4:7; 1 Sam. 4:9; 1 Sam. 4:10; 1 Sam. 4:17; 1 Sam. 5:1; 1 Sam. 5:2; 1 Sam. 5:8; 1 Sam. 5:11; 1 Sam. 6:1; 1 Sam. 6:2; 1 Sam. 6:4; 1 Sam. 6:12; 1 Sam. 6:16; 1 Sam. 6:17; 1 Sam. 6:18; 1 Sam. 6:21; 1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Sam. 7:7; 1 Sam. 7:8; 1 Sam. 7:10; 1 Sam. 7:11; 1 Sam. 7:13; 1 Sam. 7:14; 1 Sam. 9:16; 1 Sam. 10:5; 1 Sam. 12:9; 1 Sam. 13:3; 1 Sam. 13:4; 1 Sam. 13:5; 1 Sam. 13:11; 1 Sam. 13:12; 1 Sam. 13:16; 1 Sam. 13:17; 1 Sam. 13:19; 1 Sam. 13:20; 1 Sam. 13:23; 1 Sam. 14:1; 1 Sam. 14:4; 1 Sam. 14:11; 1 Sam. 14:19; 1 Sam. 14:21; 1 Sam. 14:22; 1 Sam. 14:30; 1 Sam. 14:31; 1 Sam. 14:36; 1 Sam. 14:37; 1 Sam. 14:46; 1 Sam. 14:47; 1 Sam. 14:52; 1 Sam. 17:1; 1 Sam. 17:2; 1 Sam. 17:3; 1 Sam. 17:4; 1 Sam. 17:8; 1 Sam. 17:10; 1 Sam. 17:11; 1 Sam. 17:16; 1 Sam. 17:19; 1 Sam. 17:21; 1 Sam. 17:23; 1 Sam. 17:26; 1 Sam. 17:32; 1 Sam. 17:33; 1 Sam. 17:36; 1 Sam. 17:37; 1 Sam. 17:40; 1 Sam. 17:41; 1 Sam. 17:42; 1 Sam. 17:43; 1 Sam. 17:44; 1 Sam. 17:45; 1 Sam. 17:46; 1 Sam. 17:48; 1 Sam. 17:49; 1 Sam. 17:50; 1 Sam. 17:51; 1 Sam. 17:52; 1 Sam. 17:53; 1 Sam. 17:54; 1 Sam. 17:55; 1 Sam. 17:57; 1 Sam. 18:6; 1 Sam. 18:17; 1 Sam. 18:21; 1 Sam. 18:25; 1 Sam. 18:27; 1 Sam. 18:30; 1 Sam. 19:5; 1 Sam. 19:8; 1 Sam. 21:9; 1 Sam. 22:10; 1 Sam. 23:1; 1 Sam. 23:2; 1 Sam. 23:3; 1 Sam. 23:4; 1 Sam. 23:5; 1 Sam. 23:27; 1 Sam. 23:28; 1 Sam. 24:1; 1 Sam. 27:1; 1 Sam. 27:7; 1 Sam. 27:11; 1 Sam. 28:1; 1 Sam. 28:4; 1 Sam. 28:5; 1 Sam. 28:15; 1 Sam. 28:19; 1 Sam. 29:1; 1 Sam. 29:2; 1 Sam. 29:3; 1 Sam. 29:4; 1 Sam. 29:7; 1 Sam. 29:9; 1 Sam. 29:11; 1 Sam. 30:16; 1 Sam. 31:1; 1 Sam. 31:2; 1 Sam. 31:7; 1 Sam. 31:8; 1 Sam. 31:9; 1 Sam. 31:11; 2 Sam. 1:20; 2 Sam. 3:14; 2 Sam. 3:18; 2 Sam. 5:17; 2 Sam. 5:18; 2 Sam. 5:19; 2 Sam. 5:22; 2 Sam. 5:24; 2 Sam. 5:25; 2 Sam. 8:1; 2 Sam. 8:12; 2 Sam. 19:9; 2 Sam. 21:12; 2 Sam. 21:15; 2 Sam. 21:17; 2 Sam. 21:18; 2 Sam. 21:19; 2 Sam. 23:9; 2 Sam. 23:10; 2 Sam. 23:11; 2 Sam. 23:12; 2 Sam. 23:13; 2 Sam. 23:14; 2 Sam. 23:16; 1 Ki. 4:21; 1 Ki. 15:27; 1 Ki. 16:15; 2 Ki. 8:2; 2 Ki. 8:3; 2 Ki. 18:8; 1 Chr. 1:12; 1 Chr. 10:1; 1 Chr. 10:2; 1 Chr. 10:7; 1 Chr. 10:8; 1 Chr. 10:9; 1 Chr. 10:11; 1 Chr. 11:13; 1 Chr. 11:14; 1 Chr. 11:15; 1 Chr. 11:16; 1 Chr. 11:18; 1 Chr. 12:19; 1 Chr. 14:8; 1 Chr. 14:9; 1 Chr. 14:10; 1 Chr. 14:13; 1 Chr. 14:15; 1 Chr. 14:16; 1 Chr. 18:1; 1 Chr. 18:11; 1 Chr. 20:4; 1 Chr. 20:5; 2 Chr. 9:26; 2 Chr. 17:11; 2 Chr. 21:16; 2 Chr. 26:6; 2 Chr. 26:7; 2 Chr. 28:18; Isa. 2:6; Isa. 9:12; Isa. 11:14; Jer. 25:20; Jer. 47:1; Jer. 47:4; Ezek. 16:27; Ezek. 16:57; Ezek. 25:15; Ezek. 25:16; Amos 1:8; Amos 6:2; Amos 9:7; Obad. 1:19; Zeph. 2:5; Zech. 9:6

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## QUESTION - [Who were the Philistines?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Philistines were an aggressive, warmongering people who occupied territory southwest of Israel between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The name "Philistine" comes from the Hebrew word *Philistia*, and the Greek rendering of the name, *palaistinei*, gives us the modern name "Palestine." The Philistines are first recorded in Scripture in the Table of Nations, a list of the patriarchal founders of seventy nations descended from Noah (Genesis 10:14). It is thought that the Philistines originated in Caphtor, the Hebrew name for the island of Crete and the whole Aegean region (Amos 9:7; Jeremiah 47:4). For unknown reasons, they migrated from that region to the Mediterranean coast near [Gaza](#). Because of their maritime history, the Philistines are often associated with the "Sea Peoples." The Bible records that the Philistines had contact with both Abraham and Isaac as early as 2000 B.C. (Genesis 21:32, 34; 26:1, 8).

After Isaac's involvement with the Philistines (Genesis 26:18), they are next mentioned in passing in the book of Exodus shortly after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea: "When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, 'If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt'" (Exodus 13:17).

The "road through the Philistine country" refers to a route later known as the Via Maris or "the Way of the Sea," one of three major trade routes in ancient Israel. This coastal road connected the Nile Delta with Canaan and Syria and beyond, into the Mesopotamian region of southwest Asia.

The Old Testament indicates that around the 13th century B.C., during the days of Samuel and Samson, the Philistines moved inland from the coast of Canaan. There, they built their civilization primarily in five cities: [Gaza](#), Ashkelon, [Ashdod](#), [Gath](#), and Ekron (Joshua 13:3). These cities were each governed by a "king" or "lord" (from the Hebrew word *seren*, also rendered as "tyrant"). These kings apparently formed a coalition of equals. Each king retained autonomous control of his city, such as when Achish, king of Gath, dealt with David (1 Samuel 27:5-7), but they worked in concert in times of national emergency (Judges 16:5).

From the very beginning, the Philistines were either allies or deadly enemies of God's people. They played a pivotal role in the lives of Samson (Judges 13:1; 14:1), Samuel (1 Samuel 4:1), Saul (1 Samuel 13:4), and David (1 Samuel 17:23).

The Philistines were known for their innovative use of iron, which was superior to the bronze used by the Israelites for weapons and implements. Even as late as the time of Saul (1050 - 1010 B.C), the Israelites were forced to rely on the Philistines to sharpen or

repair their iron tools (1 Samuel 13:19-21). With their more advanced armaments and aggressive military policy, the Philistines continually thwarted Israel's development as a nation. For nearly 200 years, the Philistines harassed and oppressed the Israelites, often invading Israel's territory. The children of Israel simply could not deal with the Philistines' overwhelming military might. This only came to an end when Samuel and then David, through the guidance of God, were able to defeat the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:12-14; 2 Samuel 5:22-25).

The Old Testament indicates that the Philistines worshiped three gods: Ashtoreth, Dagon, and Baal-Zebub—each of which had shrines in various cities (Judges 16:23; 1 Samuel 31:10; 2 Kings 1:2). Archaeological findings show that Philistine soldiers carried images of their gods into battle (2 Samuel 5:21). Apparently, they were also a superstitious people who respected the power of Israel's ark of the covenant (1 Samuel 5:1-12).

The Philistines were infamous for their production and consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially beer. Ancient Philistine ruins contain numerous breweries and wineries, as well as countless beer mugs and other drinking vessels. Samson's wedding feast, recorded in the book of Judges, illustrates the Philistine practice of holding week-long drinking parties; the Hebrew word *misteh*, translated "feast" in Judges 14:10, means "drinking feast."

The Israelites frequently referred to the Philistines as "uncircumcised" (Judges 15:18; 1 Samuel 14:6; 2 Samuel 1:20), meaning, at that time, those who had no relationship with God. They were not God's chosen people and were to be strictly avoided as a contaminating evil.

Today, the word *philistine* is used as an epithet to refer to an unrefined, dull person. In truth, the Philistines of history were not unsophisticated or uncultured. They were an advanced seafaring people who, for several generations, were years ahead of Israel.

With the exception of Jeremiah chapter 47, there are very few prophetic references to the Philistines. In the end, the Philistines were assimilated into Canaanite culture. They eventually disappeared from the biblical record and from history altogether, leaving behind the name "Palestine" as a testimony of their existence. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### Related Resources:

- Borrow - K A Kitchens 25 page discussion (with over 100 sources in bibliography) on ["The Philistines" in Peoples of the Old Testament](#) edited by J W Wiseman
- Borrow 344 page book - [The Philistines and their material culture](#) by Dothan, Trude

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#### QUESTION - [Why were the Philistines and the Israelites always at war?](#)

**ANSWER** - It seems that, no matter where you turn in the Old Testament, Israel is fighting the [Philistines](#). While that's a slight exaggeration—there were fights with other nations, too—it is true that Israel and the Philistines had their share of run-ins. The Philistines were an ancient people, listed in the records of those who descended from Noah's son Ham after the time of the flood (Genesis 10:14). Abraham and Isaac interacted with the Philistines in Canaan (Genesis 21:33–34). But it was during the time of the Exodus that the Lord promised that the land of Israel would include the territory of the Philistines (Exodus 23:31); this promise meant that some kind of conflict would have to take place for Israel to displace the Philistines.

When Joshua was old, he mentioned the land of the Philistines as one of the areas that still remained to be defeated by Israel (Joshua 13:1–3). Because the Philistines were not completely removed, Israel faced them as perennial enemies.

During the time of [the judges](#) in Israel, the Philistines were often a thorn in Israel's side. Jephthah, Shamgar, and Samson all fought against Philistia. The battles between Israel and the Philistines continued in the days of Eli and later erupted in the conflict between [David and Goliath](#), a battle fought within a larger Israel-Philistine conflict (1 Samuel 17). David defeated Goliath, initiating a great victory for Israel, yet the history of Israel and the Philistines was not done.

During Solomon's reign in Israel, the Philistines were subdued, yet the later prophets note that the Philistines continued to war against Israel. The Philistines were devastated by the same [Assyrian Kingdom](#) that overtook Israel (2 Kings 18:33–35). Philistia was not completely destroyed until the time of the [Babylonian](#) and [Persian](#) Empires.

From the first Hebrew, Abraham, until the deportation of Judah to Babylon, the Philistines were a constant enemy of Israel. The conflict was over more than land; it involved divergent worldviews. Unlike the Israelites, the Philistines served human-made deities and were known as a violent, warlike people.

Seven major battles between Israel and the Philistines are recorded in the Old Testament. They include the Battle of Shephelah (2 Chronicles 28), the Battle of Aphek (1 Samuel 4), the Battle of Eben-Ezeq (1 Samuel 7:13–14), the battles at Michmash (1 Samuel

14), the battle involving David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17), the battle at Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31), and Hezekiah's defeat of the Philistines (2 Kings 18:5–8).

The Philistines' eventual defeat was not due to Israel's strength or military prowess. As Psalm 44:3 says, "It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them." [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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**QUESTION - [From whom are the modern Palestinians descended?](#)** - Prior to the mid-20th century, the term *Palestinian* was used as regional term, much like referring to residents of parts of the United States as "Southerners." This usage dates back to several centuries before Christ. The word *Palestinian* has its roots in a Hebrew word meaning "Philistine." [CLICK FOR THE FULL ANSWER from GotQuestions.org](#)

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**QUESTION - [What does the term "Ebenezer" mean in the Bible?](#)** ([See possible location](#))

**ANSWER** - Most of us are familiar with the name "Ebenezer" because of the character Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens' novella *A Christmas Carol*. Because of that story, the name "Ebenezer" has taken on the connotation of miserliness and a lack of charity—although, to be fair, Ebenezer Scrooge did become a changed man at the end of the story.

The name "Ebenezer" actually comes from the Bible. In 1 Samuel 7, during the end of the time of the judges, Israel experiences revival under the leadership of Samuel. The nation repents of their sin, destroys their idols, and begins to seek the Lord (1 Samuel 7:2–4). Samuel gathered the people at [Mizpah](#) where they confessed their sin, and Samuel offered a sacrifice on their behalf (verses 5–9).

It was during this time of repentance and renewal that the enemy attacked: "While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle" (1 Samuel 7:10). The Israelites went out to do battle against the invaders, and God sent them supernatural help: "That day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites" (verse 10).

Israel's victory over the Philistines was decisive. Several cities the Philistines had captured were restored to Israel, and it was a long time before the Philistines tried to invade Israel again (1 Samuel 7:13–14). To commemorate the divine victory, "Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the LORD has helped us'" (verse 12).

*Ebenezer* means "stone of help." From then on, every time an Israelite saw the stone erected by Samuel, he would have a tangible reminder of the Lord's power and protection. The "stone of help" marked the spot where the enemy had been routed and God's promise to bless His repentant people had been honored. The Lord had helped them, all the way to Ebenezer. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**1 Samuel 4:2 The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield.**

- put: 1Sa 17:8,21
- they joined battle: Heb. the battle was spread
- Israel: Jos 7:5-8,12 Ps 44:9,10
- and they: Ps 79:7,8 106:40,41 La 3:40

Depiction of the Battle of Eben-Ezer from the [Dura-Europos synagogue](#)

## **IGNOBLE DEFEAT OF ISRAEL BY IDOL WORSHIPPING PEOPLES!**

**The Philistines ([pelishti](#)) drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield - NET** = "in the battle line in the field." To the shock of Israel, their forces were soundly defeated by the powerful pagans. This defeat (as all defeats in our lives should do) would cause Israel to question "Why?" (next verse). Sadly, this defeat would not drive them to their knees (as all defeats should do to us!), to the place of humility and contrition and ultimately to bowing low before Jehovah Himself!

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** on "in the battle line in the field." - The battle took place in open country, probably in the Plain of Sharon, where the Philistines had the advantage with their chariots (1Sa 13:5; 2 Sa 1:6). The Israelites held their ground but suffered



serious loss of men. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

As **William MacDonald** says "God would defend His honor in the midst of the Philistines (chap. 5), but He would not defend the Israelites when He was in their midst because they had ceased to honor Him." (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Kay Arthur** - Do you want to get a sense of how many men that was? Do you want to get a sense of the devastation of that defeat before these uncircumcised Philistines? Stop and think about 9/11 in the year 2001. What happened in that day in the United States of America? Over 3000 people were killed, as the United States of America, the Twin Towers and the Pentagon became a battlefield before the enemy. And we were defeated at that time. We were defeated. We were the ones that lost that unexpected battle....I wonder if America really took a breath and stopped and asked God, God, You're the sovereign ruler of all the universe, You're the one that is the Lord of hosts, that abides above the cherubim, God why 9/11? What are You trying to teach us from this event? Or do we think that God had nothing to do with 9/11, that God was as surprised and as shocked as we were when the terrorists hit those Twin Towers and those thousands of people were killed and when the terrorists hit the Pentagon and those people were killed? We need to stop and see and understand that the things that were written beforehand as Romans 15:4 says were written for our instruction. They were written for our encouragement upon whom the end of the ages has come....What is happening? Well, I think that possibly we could write over our country Ichabod (1Sa 4:21+), the glory has departed from America

**THOUGHT** - Did the event of 9/11 in America prompt the question "Why has the LORD allowed this defeat in America" the nation whose motto is "In God We Trust?" If not it should have. As I write it is now 2023 and America has wandered far from her Christian moorings. Dear fellow believer, we need to intercede diligently and incessantly for the God of Heaven to send a Word centered, Spirit empowered, Christ exalting, God glorifying revival to the "land of the free and the home of the brave", a land that sadly seems to have forgotten some of the [lyrics of full version](#) of Francis Scott Key's [Star Spangled Banner](#) (lyrics you likely have never heard sung!)..

Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand  
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!

**Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.**

**Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,**

**And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."**

**And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave**

**O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!**

(Let it be so Lord God, [Jehovah Ezer](#), show Yourself to be our Ebenezer. Amen)

**1 Samuel 4:3** When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies."

- **Why:** De 29:24 Ps 74:1,11 Isa 50:1 58:3
- **Let us:** 1Sa 14:18 Nu 31:6 Jos 6:4,5 2Sa 15:25 Isa 1:11-15 Jer 7:4,8-15 Mt 3:9,10
- **the ark:** Nu 10:33 De 31:26 Jos 4:7 1Ch 17:1 Jer 3:16 Heb 9:4
- **Deliver us:** Jer 7:8-11 Am 5:21,22 Mt 23:25-28 Ro 2:28,29 1Co 10:1-5 2Ti 3:5 1Pe 3:21 Jude 1:5

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 28:1-2; 7; 25+ "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2"All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God.... 7 "The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.....:25 **"The LORD shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies;** you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

Psalms 78:58-61 **For they provoked Him with their high places And aroused His jealousy with their graven images** (cf 1Sa 7:3-4+). 59 When God heard, He was filled with wrath And greatly abhorred Israel; 60 **So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh,** The tent which He had pitched among men, 61 And gave up His strength to captivity And His glory into the hand of the adversary.

Leviticus 26:17+ 'I will set My face against you (WHY? Lev 26:14-16) so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.

Deuteronomy 29:24+ "All the nations will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?'

Psalm 74:1; 11 A Maskil of Asaph. O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?..... 11 Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand? From within Your bosom, destroy them!

Judges 10:6-7+ (**WHY WAS ISRAEL DEFEATED BY THE PHILISTINES? COMPARE THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES**) Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, **served the Baals and the Ashtaroth**, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him. 7 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and **He sold them into the hands of the Philistines** and into the hands of the sons of Ammon.

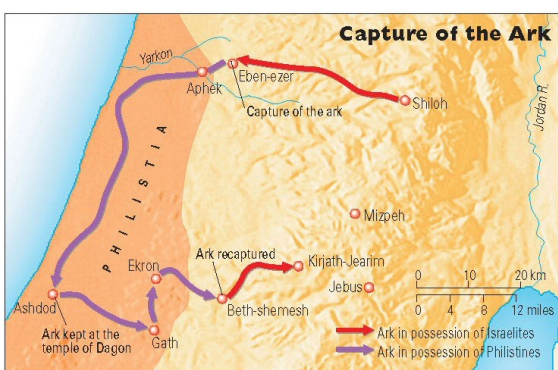
Numbers 14:42+ "Do not go up, or you will be struck down before your enemies, for **the LORD is not among you**.

Deuteronomy 1:42+ "And the LORD said to me, 'Say to them, "Do not go up nor fight, for **I am not among you; otherwise you will be defeated before your enemies.**"'

Joshua 4:7+ (**WHY THEY MIGHT THINK THE ARK ITSELF HAD POWER**) then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before **the ark of the covenant of the LORD**, when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever."

Jeremiah 7:8-11 "Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. 9 "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, 10 then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—that you may do all these abominations? 11 "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," declares the LORD.

Amos 5:21; 22 "I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. 22 "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.



Click to Enlarge

## ISRAEL SEEKS A "RABBIT'S FOOT"

**A rabbit's foot** ([Wikipedia](#)) In some cultures, the **foot of a rabbit** is carried as an [amulet](#) believed to bring [good luck](#). This belief is held by individuals in a great number of places around the world, including Europe, China, Africa, and North and South America. In variations of this [superstition](#), the donor rabbit must possess certain attributes, such as having been killed in a particular place, using a particular method, or by a person possessing particular attributes (e.g., by a [cross-eyed](#) man). As an aside the "rabbit's foot" was not very "lucky" for the rabbit!

**When the people came into the camp** ([machaneh](#)) - See map above for **Red Line** indicating first transfer from Shiloh to camp at Ebenezer. The **camp** was where the army gathered (an encampment), so the context is war not peace. The army is called **the people** because battles were not fought in those days by men specially trained, but by all the inhabitants of the country of the proper

age.

**MacArthur** - The question of the elders reflected their knowledge that the Lord both fought their battles (2:10; 17:47) and allowed their defeat. To be defeated clearly meant that God was not "with" them (Num. 14:42; Deut. 1:42). Instead of inquiring of the Lord for direction, they proceeded to take the matter into their own hands. (BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**The elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated ([nagaph](#) - struck, smote) us today before the Philistines?** - Notice that their theology is not bad! They recognized that their defeat was from Yahweh, not the Philistines! As Pr 21:31 says "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD." And as their future king David said "the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; **for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands.**" (1Sa 17:47) And see the promises and curses regarding Israel's enemies in the passages from Deuteronomy 28 ([see above](#)). And so clearly the elders had some fuzzy memory of the LORD's part in any victory or defeat they would experience. What they failed to see (or remember) was the "pathogenesis" of Israel's defeat. Moses had given Israel clear instructions on how Israel could assure defeat writing...

"The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, IF you listen (VERB LISTEN IMPLIES HEAR AND OBEY) to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully, 14 and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, **to go after other gods to serve them** (THERE IS THE ROOT PROBLEM OF THEIR HEARTS! IDOLATRY AS DESCRIBED IN MORE DETAIL BELOW!) 15 "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: (Dt 28:13-15+)

**Wiersbe's** answer to why Israel was defeated - If the elders had recalled the terms of God's covenant, they would have realized that this shameful defeat was caused by Israel's disobedience to God's law (Lev. 26:39; Deut. 28:25). The Lord had clearly told them how to fight their wars (Deut. 20), but instead of searching their hearts and confessing their sins, the people decided to imitate Moses and Joshua and take the Ark of the Covenant into the battle with them. (See Num. 10:33-36; Josh. 3-4 and 6.) But this approach was merely "using God" to accomplish their own purposes. Unlike Moses and Joshua, they didn't seek the will of the Lord, they weren't walking by faith, and they certainly weren't seeking to glorify God. Even worse, the two wicked priests Hophni and Phinehas would be carrying the holy Ark of God! How could God bless two sinful men whom He had already consigned to judgment? (1 Sam. 2:29, 34-4:4, 17) But Israel's hope was that the presence of the Ark would save the Jews from the hand of their enemies. (See [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

When was another time in Israel's history that she was puzzled as to **why the LORD had defeated them?** It was after their first great victory of Jericho Joshua 6:27+ describing the fact that the LORD was with Joshua, and then the very next verse beginning with a crucial "hinge word" **BUT**, which says "the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban (Achan was the chief culprit)" (Joshua 7:1+). The LORD defeated Israel (Joshua 7:4-5), Joshua grieves and asks "Why?" and Yahweh speaks to Joshua and explains "Israel has sinned." (Joshua 7:10-11+).

**Bergen** - Consistent with the biblical perspective presented elsewhere in the Former Prophets, the elders interpreted Israel's defeat at the hands of the Philistines as a judgment from the Lord (cf. Jdg 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 1 Sam 12:9). (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**So why did Jehovah allow Israel to be defeated by the Philistines?**The answer is that Israel had sinned! Notice carefully that the elders of Israel do not go to the man Samuel that **all Israel** had come to recognize as a prophet of the LORD (1Sa 3:19-21+), the one who could have easily answered their question! In fact, the tragedy is that Samuel, the prophet of the LORD, **falls off the radar** (so to speak) for the next 20 years (1Sa 7:2+)! Another observation that supports the premise that Israel's defeat was because there was **"sin in the camp"** (so to speak) is seen in the first recorded words (in 20 years!) from God's prophet Samuel in 1Sa 7:3+ **"THEN (WHEN? CONTEXT = "ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL LAMENTED AFTER THE LORD" - 1Sa 7:2!)** Samuel spoke to **all the house of Israel**, saying (**NOTE THESE ARE SAMUEL'S FIRST RECORDED WORDS IN 20 YEARS!**), "If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." So what was the great sin of Israel that brought painful defeat at the hands of the Philistines? One word, SIN. SIN, in the form of IDOLATRY (**Ashtaroth** and **Baals** - 1Sa 7:4+). In addition, notice that when Israel repented and removed the idolary, Yahweh again gave them victory! (1Sa 7:10-11+)! Now you know the answer to the question of the elders - "Why has the LORD defeated us today?!" This [axiomatic](#) principle was true for the nation of Israel and it is true for each of us in our personal lives! And beloved, sadly, it is true for America, the nation who once held to the motto "In God We Trust!" [Revive us again](#) O Lord! Amen

**THOUGHT** - Is there sin in your camp? Is there some secret sin you cling to as your idol in place of Yahweh? Is there some sin you refuse to remove? If there is, why are you surprised that you have been experiencing so

many defeats from the "Philistines" in your life, your [inveterate](#), [intractable](#) mortal enemies, the the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#)? Paul gives ALL OF US, three good commands coupled with a sure promise in 2Cor 6:17 "Therefore, **COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,**" says the Lord. "AND **DO NOT TOUCH** WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you." Three commands, the first two [aorist imperative](#) (idea is "JUST DO IT!") and the third [present imperative with a negative](#) (idea is STOP TOUCHING OR DON'T START TOUCHING). We can only obey these 3 commands by continually [depending on the Holy Spirit!](#) But if we are to experience victory over the "Philistines" in our life, we must obey these commands enabled by the Spirit of the Living God!!! There is simply no shortcut and no alternative path to the so-called "victorious Christian life," the "abundant life" in Christ (Jn 10:10b).

**Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the Ark([aron](#)) of the covenant ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) of the LORD, that (TERM OF PURPOSE) it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.**"Their words reflect "superstitious" belief, focusing on the object (a "box"), not the God Who was symbolized by the Ark! So yes, the ark symbolized the presence and power of the Lord. Yet, as our title "rabbit's foot" indicates, Israel treated the Ark like a good-luck charm, which would ensure them victory over the Philistines. They were correct in one sense. As alluded to earlier, they knew that victory or defeat depended upon the Lord's presence, but they confused the symbol of His presence with the certainty of His presence. In this way, their understanding of God resembled that of the pagan Philistines (1Sa 4:8).

**MacArthur** - The ark symbolized the presence and power of the Lord. Yet, Israel treated it like a good-luck charm, which would ensure them victory over the Philistines. Knowing that victory or defeat depended upon the Lord's presence, they confused the symbol of His presence with His actual presence. In this way, their understanding of God resembled that of the Philistines (1Sa 4:8). (BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) )

The Ark is clearly a key word in this section for 36 of 61 uses of Ark in First and Second Samuel occur in these pivotal chapters (1Sa 4:1-7:2). Why might the Israelites be tempted to regard the Ark as a good luck piece or magic charm? Recall that their ancestors likely told them the story of how they had seen the Jordan part with the Ark leading the way. God's presence cannot be separated from His character. The priests, sinful Hophni and Phinehas who did not know God, had continually sinned against God in feeding their gastric appetites with God's sacrificial portions and in their godless sexual appetites by laying with the temple women. The holy Ark led by unholy priests could cause God to violate His character (Isa 59:2).

[Guzik](#) points out that "The ark went into battle before. The ark went in front of the marchers around the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:6-8). Moses told the priests to lead the ark into battle against the Midianites (Numbers 31:6). Later, Saul brought the ark into battle (1 Samuel 14:18), as did David (2 Samuel 11:11).

**Young** on why Israel would seek to use the **Ark** in battle - The ark preceded Israel at the crossing of the Jordan and at the battle of Jericho. It symbolized the presence and power of Jehovah, and the elders believed that **apostasy** could be rectified by the presence of the **divine symbol**. They could not distinguish between the ark as the symbol of God's presence and the actual presence of God. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**That it may come among us and deliver ([yasha](#); Lxx [sozo](#) = save, deliver, rescue) us from the power of our enemies:** NET - "When it is with us, it will save us from the hand of our enemies." Note power is Hebrew kaph, which is literally the palm or hollow part of the hand. To be in the hand of an enemy was to be under their power and authority. This wish by the elders smacks of an Old Testament example of the aberrant teaching "Let go, let God," we'll let go and let the Ark deliver us! What they needed to do was "let go" of their idols (cf 1Sa 7:3, 4+) and then the LORD would deliver them as He does some 20 years later (1Sa 7:11+). Notice they use the word "**IT**" referring to an inanimate object instead of "**HE**" referring to the Living God! The Ark where God would meet with man had been reduced to an [amulet](#) or [talisman](#) (see [list of lucky symbols](#))! How dangerous it is to focus on the shadow and miss the greater truth the shadow is pointing to. To say it was the Ark that would **deliver** was essentially giving it almost miraculous qualities.

Jeremiah's warning would have been apropos for the elders of Israel...

"Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. 9 "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal, and walk after other gods that you have not known, 10 then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'-- that you may do all these abominations? 11 "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 7:8-11)

**William Blaikie** on taking the Ark of God - The first was, that the elders had no legitimate control over the ark. The custody of it belonged to the priests and the Levites, and Eli was the high priest. If the rulers of the nation at any time desired to remove the ark (as David afterwards did when he placed it on Mount Zion), that could only be done after clear indications that the step was in accordance with the will of God, and with the full consent of the priests. There is no reason to suppose that any means were taken



to find out whether its removal to the camp was in accordance with the will of God; and as to the mind of the priests, Eli was probably passed over as too old and too blind to be consulted, and Hophni and Phinehas would be restrained by no scruples from an act which every one seemed to approve. The second great objection to the step was that it was a superstitious and irreverent use of the symbol of God's presence. Evidently the people ascribed to the symbol the glorious properties that belonged only to the reality. They expected that the symbol of God's presence would do for them all that might be done by His presence itself. And doubtless there had been occasions when the symbol and the reality went together. In the wilderness, in the days of Moses, "It came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee" (Num. 10:35). But these were occasions determined by the cloud rising and going before the host, an unmistakable indication of the will of God (Num. 9:15–22). God's real presence accompanied the ark on these occasions, and all that was expressed in the symbol was actually enjoyed by the people. There was no essential or inherent connection between the two; the actual connection was determined merely by the good pleasure of God. It pleased Him to connect them, and connected they were. But the ignorant and superstitious elders forgot that the connection between the symbol and the reality was of this nature; they believed it to be inherent and essential. In their unthinking and unreasoning minds the symbol might be relied on to produce all the effect of the reality. If only the ark of God were carried into the battle, the same effect would take place as when Moses said in the wilderness, "Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered." ([1 Samuel 4](#))

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**Defeated** (struck, smote) ([05062](#)) [nagaph](#) means to give a blow, usually from God and either fatal or disastrous (Ex 8:2, Passover - Ex 12:23, 27, smiting Israel after making a golden calf). Prophecy to Israel she would be struck down because of her disobedience (Lev 26:17). Moses warning Israel would be struck down if they went against their enemies after refusing to go into the promised land (Nu 14:42). Lord causes defeat of Israel's enemies if they obey (Dt 28:7) but defeat (striking down) of Israel if they disobey (Dt 28:25)> Striking one's foot (figuratively speaking) is prevented by walking in wisdom (Pr 3:23).

**Camp** ([04264](#))([machaneh](#) from [hanah](#) = to encamp) means an encampment and is often translated "army." Baker writes "The basic idea of this word is that of a multitude of people who have gathered together (Ezek. 1:24). This word is often used within the context of travel, like the wandering Israelites (Ex. 14:19, 20; Num. 4:5); or within the context of war (1 Sam. 17:1; 2 Ki. 6:24; 19:35). This word is most often used of Israel but is also used to describe foreign nations (Josh. 10:5; Judg. 7:8-11, 13-15; 1 Sam. 29:1); or even God's encampment (Gen. 32:2[3]; 1 Chr. 12:22[23]).([The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament.](#))

**Victor Hamilton** adds - In the OT a "**camp**" is a temporary (never permanent) protective enclosure for a tribe or army. It is derived from the verb [ḥānā](#) "to bend, curve," and hence it may be that the Hebrew camp (or the ancient semitic camp, since the word was not limited to the Hebrews) was originally circular in layout. Possibly such a circular camp, i.e., tents erected in a protective circle around the cattle, may derive from early semi-nomadic days. Or the word may derive from the circular lines of a besieging force.

A glance, however, at the camp described in the early chapters of Numbers (Numbers 1:47—2:34; Numbers 3:14-16; Numbers 10:11-28) reveals that the Israelite camp is set up in a square around the tent of meeting tabernacle. In a schematic arrangement three tribes, each with their own insignia, were stationed on the four sides of the tabernacle, with special positioning for the Levites.

To choose a campsite when one is or expects to be continually hounded by antagonistic forces is not easy. The Bible indicates that at least two factors were in mind when a camp site was chosen: (1) the availability of water (Joshua 11:5; Judges 7:1, and hence the advantage to camping at an oasis rather than at a site dependent on the flow of a river); and (2) lines of natural defense which formed a barricade (1 Samuel 17:3; 1 Samuel 26:3).

Most important, the camp, as described in the Pentateuch, assumes its significance simply because it is adjacent to the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God's presence. As a result certain conditions must be observed and maintained. For one thing, cleanliness in the camp is imperative (Numbers 5:1-4; Deut. 23:10-14). The dead were buried outside the camp (Leviticus 10:4-5). The lepers were banished from the camp (Leviticus 13:46). For coming in contact with anything dead the penalty was exclusion from the camp for seven days (Numbers 31:19). Criminals were executed outside the camp (Leviticus 24:23, and cf. Hebrews 13:12, "Jesus also suffered outside the gate"). The camp is too close to God's presence to allow sin or impurity to intrude. The idea of "God's camp" is also applied to the permanent temple as seen in 2 Chron. 31:2.

The LXX translation for [maḥāneh](#), [parembole](#), is also applied in the NT to the church (Rev. 20:9), "the camp of the saints." (See [TWOT](#) online)

**Machaneh** - 189v - **armies(6), army(27), army camp(1), camp(158), camps(12), companies(3), company(5), fight(2), host(1)**. Gen. 32:2; Gen. 32:7; Gen. 32:8; Gen. 32:10; Gen. 32:21; Gen. 33:8; Gen. 50:9; Exod. 14:19; Exod. 14:20; Exod. 14:24; Exod. 16:13; Exod. 19:16; Exod. 19:17; Exod. 29:14; Exod. 32:17; Exod. 32:19; Exod. 32:26; Exod. 32:27; Exod. 33:7; Exod. 33:11; Exod. 36:6; Lev. 4:12; Lev. 4:21; Lev. 6:11; Lev. 8:17; Lev. 9:11; Lev. 10:4; Lev. 10:5; Lev. 13:46; Lev. 14:3; Lev. 14:8; Lev. 16:26; Lev. 16:27; Lev.



16:28; Lev. 17:3; Lev. 24:10; Lev. 24:14; Lev. 24:23; Num. 1:52; Num. 2:3; Num. 2:9; Num. 2:10; Num. 2:16; Num. 2:17; Num. 2:18; Num. 2:24; Num. 2:25; Num. 2:31; Num. 2:32; Num. 4:5; Num. 4:15; Num. 5:2; Num. 5:3; Num. 5:4; Num. 10:2; Num. 10:5; Num. 10:6; Num. 10:14; Num. 10:18; Num. 10:22; Num. 10:25; Num. 10:34; Num. 11:1; Num. 11:9; Num. 11:26; Num. 11:27; Num. 11:30; Num. 11:31; Num. 11:32; Num. 12:14; Num. 12:15; Num. 13:19; Num. 14:44; Num. 15:35; Num. 15:36; Num. 19:3; Num. 19:7; Num. 19:9; Num. 31:12; Num. 31:13; Num. 31:19; Num. 31:24; Deut. 2:14; Deut. 2:15; Deut. 23:9; Deut. 23:10; Deut. 23:11; Deut. 23:12; Deut. 23:14; Deut. 29:11; Jos. 1:11; Jos. 3:2; Jos. 5:8; Jos. 6:11; Jos. 6:14; Jos. 6:18; Jos. 6:23; Jos. 8:13; Jos. 9:6; Jos. 10:5; Jos. 10:6; Jos. 10:15; Jos. 10:21; Jos. 10:43; Jos. 11:4; Jos. 18:9; Jdg. 4:15; Jdg. 4:16; Jdg. 7:1; Jdg. 7:8; Jdg. 7:9; Jdg. 7:10; Jdg. 7:11; Jdg. 7:13; Jdg. 7:14; Jdg. 7:15; Jdg. 7:17; Jdg. 7:18; Jdg. 7:19; Jdg. 7:21; Jdg. 7:22; Jdg. 8:10; Jdg. 8:11; Jdg. 8:12; Jdg. 21:8; Jdg. 21:12; 1 Sam. 4:3; 1 Sam. 4:5; 1 Sam. 4:6; 1 Sam. 4:7; 1 Sam. 11:11; 1 Sam. 13:17; 1 Sam. 14:15; 1 Sam. 14:19; 1 Sam. 14:21; 1 Sam. 17:1; 1 Sam. 17:4; 1 Sam. 17:17; 1 Sam. 17:46; 1 Sam. 17:53; 1 Sam. 26:6; 1 Sam. 28:1; 1 Sam. 28:5; 1 Sam. 28:19; 1 Sam. 29:1; 1 Sam. 29:6; 2 Sam. 1:2; 2 Sam. 1:3; 2 Sam. 5:24; 2 Sam. 23:16; 1 Ki. 16:16; 1 Ki. 22:34; 1 Ki. 22:36; 2 Ki. 3:9; 2 Ki. 3:24; 2 Ki. 5:15; 2 Ki. 6:24; 2 Ki. 7:4; 2 Ki. 7:5; 2 Ki. 7:6; 2 Ki. 7:7; 2 Ki. 7:8; 2 Ki. 7:10; 2 Ki. 7:12; 2 Ki. 7:14; 2 Ki. 7:16; 2 Ki. 19:35; 1 Chr. 9:18; 1 Chr. 9:19; 1 Chr. 11:15; 1 Chr. 11:18; 1 Chr. 12:22; 1 Chr. 14:15; 1 Chr. 14:16; 2 Chr. 14:13; 2 Chr. 18:33; 2 Chr. 22:1; 2 Chr. 31:2; 2 Chr. 32:21; Ps. 27:3; Ps. 78:28; Ps. 106:16; Cant. 6:13; Isa. 37:36; Ezek. 1:24; Ezek. 4:2; Joel 2:11; Amos 4:10; Zech. 14:15

**Ark** (0727) (**aron** means a chest, a box (first use was coffin for Joseph's body - Ge 50:26), a container for funds to repair the Temple in (2 Ki 12:10-11, 2 Chr 24:8, 10-11). It is used most often of the Ark in the Holy of Holies and is first called the Ark of the Covenant in Nu 10:33.

**Jack Lewis** on **aron** - As described in Exodus, Bezaleel made the ark of acacia wood. There were gold rings on the corners through which staves were placed for carrying it (Exodus 25:10-21; Exodus 37:1-9). In size the ark was 2 1/2 by 1 1/2 by 1 1/2 cubits, and was overlaid inside and out with gold (Exodus 25:11). It was surmounted by the mercy seat (kappōret) and cherubim with outstretched wings. The ark contained the tables of stone with the law (Deut. 10:1-5; Exodus 40:20), a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod which budded (Hebrews 9:4). The Damascus Document, fragments of which were found at Qumran, has the peculiar tradition that a copy of the Law was in the ark and it was sealed, which explains why David had not read it! (C.D.C. 5, 3). The ark was set in the most holy place in the tabernacle.

In the wilderness the ark was carried by the Levites (Deut. 10:8) before the line of march. A liturgical formula was recited when it was transported (Numbers 10:35-36). The ark was prominent at the crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 3-4) and in the capture of Jericho (Joshua 6-7). It was at Gilgal (Joshua 7:6), Shechem (Joshua 8:33), Bethel (Judges 20:27-28), and later Shiloh (1 Samuel 3:3). It was carried into battle against the Philistines at Aphek. They captured it (1 Samuel 4:3-11) but it caused plagues in the Philistine cities (1 Samuel 6:3-4). It was returned to Israel and for twenty years remained in the house of Abinadab at Kiriathjearim. Finally David brought it up to Jerusalem (1 Samuel 7:1-2; 2 Samuel 6:1ff.; Psalm 132:18). Helping move the ark, Uzzah fell dead for touching it (2 Samuel 6:6-11). After that incident, it remained three months at the house of Obed edom. Later it was carried on a military expedition against the Ammonites (on one interpretation of 2 Samuel 11:11), but it remained in Jerusalem at Absalom's revolt (2 Samuel 15:24f.). Solomon placed it in the holy of holies of the temple (1 Kings 8). The ultimate fate of the ark is a mystery. Jeremiah 3:16-17 may imply its existence as late as the time of Nebuchadnezzar. It was the subject of later Jewish legend (2 Macc. 2:4f.; T. Sota 13:1; The Lives of the Prophets, ed. Torrey, I, p. 36). There was no ark in either Zerubbabel's or Herod's temple (cf. Josephus, Wars 5.5.5).

Often designated "the ark" (hā-'ārôn), it is also "the ark of the Lord" (Joshua 4:11, etc.) and "the ark of God" (1 Samuel 3:3, etc.). It is called "the ark of the God of Israel" by the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:2-11, etc.). The ark is most often "the ark of the covenant" ('ārôn habberîṭ, Numbers 10:33, etc., 184 times), "the ark of the testimony" ('ārôn ha-'ēdūt, Exodus 25:22, etc.; 13 times); "the ark of thy might" (Psalm 132:8), and once "the holy ark" ('ārôn haqqōdesh; 2 Chron. 35:3). (Borrow [the TWOT](#))

**Deliver** (save, help) (03467) **yasha'** (cf **yeshua** gives us "Jesus") means to help, to save, to deliver. The root in Arabic is "make wide" which underscores the main thought of yasha' as to bring to a place of safety or broad pasture in contrast to a narrow strait which symbolizes distress or danger. **Yasha'** connotes protection that produces freedom from a present danger (2Sa 22:3, Job 5:4), salvation or deliverance in a religious sense (Ps 51:12), a title of God (Savior - 2Sa 22:47; 1Chr 16:35; Ps 18:46; Ps 24:5; Ps 25:5; Ps 27:9; Ps 65:5; Ps 79:9; Ps 85:4; Isa 17:10; 62:11; Mic 7:7 Hab 3:18), victory as an act or a result of conquering (2Sa 22:36; Ps 18:35) It is notable that almost 20% of the uses of yasha' are found during the dark days of Judges (dominated by the

heart attitude of Jdg 21:25), which surely speaks of the undeserved lovingkindness of God!

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#### **QUESTION - [What is the ark of the testimony?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The first mention of the ark of the testimony is in Exodus 25:10. God gave Moses specific instructions for building a tabernacle as they traveled in the wilderness. The tabernacle would be the place where the glory of God would dwell among His people (Exodus 25:8–9). Among hundreds of other descriptive instructions for this tabernacle, God told Moses to build an ark of the testimony, also called the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:21–22). The words *testimony* and *covenant* both refer to the conditional agreement made between God and the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. An ark is, literally, a box or chest. So the ark of the testimony is the “box of the agreement.”

The ark of the testimony was a wooden box, covered in gold inside and out. It had four exterior rings through which poles could be attached for carrying. No one but the high priest could touch the ark (Numbers 4:15). To do so would result in instant death, as happened with a man named Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:1–7). God was beginning to teach His people about His holiness and their unworthiness. He demonstrated to them that His commands were not suggestions to be negotiated. He wanted to teach them to obey Him in all things, whether or not they understood the reason for the rules.

The lid of the ark was also made of gold and formed a seat between two cherubim, called the mercy seat. It was there that God would meet with His people (Exodus 25:22). Inside the ark of the testimony, Moses placed the tablets of the Law that God gave him on the mountain. The ark was placed inside the tabernacle in the most holy place, where only the high priest could go once a year (Exodus 26:34). Through it all, God was painting a picture to help us understand what is required for sinful man to come into the presence of a holy God.

The ark of the testimony got its name from the fact that it would be the housing for God’s testimony to His people. His Law was not only verbal, but written, etched in stone (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 5:22), so there could be no excuse for disobedience. Hebrews 9:4 tells us that, later, the Israelites added to the stone tablets within the ark of the testimony a jar of manna (Exodus 16:32–33) and Aaron’s rod that budded (Numbers 17:8–10).

The ark of the testimony represented the presence of God with His people, and His power went with them wherever they took the ark (Joshua 3:6; Numbers 10:33–35). The enemies of Israel, the Philistines, stole the ark once (1 Samuel 5:1), hoping its power would help them. They set it in their idol’s temple and waited for the good luck it would bring. But calamity broke out among the Philistines, until they begged their leaders to send the ark back to Israel (1 Samuel 5:4, 6, 9, 11–12). God demonstrated that He was not a good-luck charm whose power could be had by whoever captured His ark. The power was not in the ark of the testimony itself; the ark only represented the presence of God with His people.

Since the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 14:9), God no longer uses an ark of the testimony to dwell with His people. We are under a [new testament or covenant](#). At Pentecost, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell every believer (Acts 2:1–4, 38–39). We become His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). When we have been born again by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:3, 16), we take God with us everywhere we go. It did the Philistines no good to harbor the ark, because the ark had no power in itself if God was not on their side. Likewise, we do not need physical items—crosses, images, holy relics—to carry the power of God with us because He already abides in us. That awareness of His presence, called the [fear of the Lord](#) (Psalm 19:19; Proverbs 15:33), helps us make decisions that honor Him.

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#### **QUESTION - [What happened to the Ark of the Covenant?](#)**

**ANSWER** - What happened to the [Ark of the Covenant](#) is a question that has fascinated theologians, Bible students, and archeologists for centuries. In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah of Judah ordered the caretakers of the Ark of the Covenant to return it to the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 35:1-6; cf. 2 Kings 23:21-23). That is the last time the ark’s location is mentioned in the Scriptures. Forty years later, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Jerusalem and raided the temple. Less than ten years after that, he returned, took what was left in the temple, and then burnt it and the city to the ground. So what happened to the ark? Was it taken by Nebuchadnezzar? Was it destroyed with the city? Or was it removed and hidden safely away, as evidently happened when Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt raided the temple during the reign of Solomon’s son Rehoboam? (“Evidently” because, if Shishak had managed to take the Ark, why did Josiah ask the Levites to return it? If the Ark was in Egypt—à la the plotline of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*—the Levites would not have possessed it and therefore could not have returned it.)

Interestingly, Revelation 11:19 mentions the ark as being in heaven: “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.” This verse has led some to speculate that the ark was taken up to heaven to be preserved there. But the ark that John sees in his vision of heaven is probably not the same ark that Moses constructed. We know that the articles in the tabernacle

were “copies of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 9:23) and that the sanctuary itself was but “a copy and shadow of what is in heaven” (Hebrews 8:5). Revelation 11 deals with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which ushers in a final round of judgments upon the earth. John’s glimpse of the ark is probably meant as a reminder that God has not forgotten His people, that He is present with them, and that true worship will soon be restored.

The non-canonical book of 2 Maccabees reports that just prior to the Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah, “following a divine revelation, ordered that the tabernacle and the ark should accompany him and...he went off to the mountain which Moses climbed to see God’s inheritance [i.e., Mt. Nebo; cf. Deuteronomy 34:1]. When Jeremiah arrived there, he found a room in a cave in which he put the tent, the ark, and the altar of incense; then he blocked up the entrance” (2:4-5). However, “Some of those who followed him came up intending to mark the path, but they could not find it. When Jeremiah heard of this, he reproved them: ‘The place is to remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows them mercy. Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord will be seen in the cloud, just as it appeared in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the Temple might be gloriously sanctified’” (2:6-8). It is not known if this secondhand (see 2:1) account is accurate; even if it is, we will not know until the Lord comes back, as the account itself claims.

Other theories concerning the whereabouts of the lost ark include Rabbis Shlomo Goren and Yehuda Getz’s claim that it is hidden beneath the temple mount, having been buried there before Nebuchadnezzar could steal it away. Unfortunately, the temple mount is now home to the Dome of the Rock, an Islamic holy site, and the local Muslim community refuses to allow it to be excavated. So we cannot know if Rabbis Goren and Getz are correct.

Explorer Vendyl Jones, among others, believes that an artifact found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the enigmatic “Copper Scroll” of Qumran Cave 3, is actually a treasure map of sorts detailing the location of a number of precious treasures taken from the temple before the Babylonians arrived, among them the lost Ark of the Covenant. Whether or not this is true remains to be seen, as no one has yet been able to locate all of the necessary geographical landmarks listed on the scroll. Interestingly, some scholars speculate that the Copper Scroll may actually be the record referred to in 2 Maccabees 2:1 and 4, which describes Jeremiah hiding the ark. While this is an interesting speculation, it remains unsubstantiated.

Former East African correspondent for “The Economist,” Graham Hancock, published a book in 1992 entitled *The Sign and the Seal: The Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant*, in which he argued that the ark had been stowed away in Saint Mary of Zion’s Church in Aksum, an ancient city of Ethiopia. Explorer Robert Cornuke of the B.A.S.E. Institute, also believes the Ark may now reside in Aksum. However, no one has yet found it there. Similarly, archaeologist Michael Sanders believes the ark is hidden away in an ancient Egyptian temple in the Israeli village of Djaharya, but he has yet to actually find it there.

A doubtful Irish tradition maintains that the Ark is buried under the Hill of Tara in Ireland. Some scholars believe that this is the source of the Irish “pot of gold at the end of the rainbow” legend. Even less believable are the claims of Ron Wyatt and Tom Crotser, Wyatt claiming to actually have seen the lost Ark of the Covenant buried under Mt. Calvary and Crotser claiming to have seen it on Mt. Pisgah near Mt. Nebo. Both of these men are held in low esteem by the archaeological community, and neither has been able to substantiate the wild claims with any evidence.

In the end, the ark remains lost to all but God. Interesting theories like the ones presented above continue to be offered, but the ark has yet to be found. The writer of 2 Maccabees may very well be right; we may not find out what happened to the lost Ark of the Covenant until the Lord Himself returns. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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## **ARK OF THE COVENANT** - from online source [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#)

The ark of the covenant was a wooden box, covered with gold and fitted with rings through which carrying rods could be placed. The wood was expensive acacia wood, and the gold, of course, was precious. But the physical size of the ark was not impressive, being only about three and three-quarters feet long and two and one-quarter feet wide and high (see Ex 25:10–22).

The functional purpose of the ark was as a simple container for holy objects. The various names of the ark, “ark of the covenant” (e.g., Josh 3:11) and “ark p 43 of the testimony” (e.g., Ex 25:16), are references to the fact that the tablets containing the Ten Commandments were placed inside it (Deut 10:1–5). Other notable items included in the ark were a sample of the manna of the wilderness and Aaron’s budding staff (see Heb 9:4–5; see Aaron’s Rod).

Though small, this box-like container was one of the most potent images of God’s presence during the early OT period. The materials used (acacia wood and pure gold) were also used in the construction of the tabernacle, God’s symbolic home on earth. Indeed, the ark was an integral part of the tabernacle structure and was normally kept in the most holy place (Ex 40:3).

In the tabernacle the ark was understood to be the throne or the footstool to the throne of God (2 Kings 19:15). Above the ark were placed two cherubim with outstretched wings and downcast eyes. God was envisioned as enthroned on the wings. The ark was the

symbol of God's very presence on earth.

Being small and provided with carrying poles, the ark was mobile. Thus the ark served two important purposes during the history of early Israel. During the wilderness wanderings, when the people of God were on the march, the tabernacle was packed away and the ark led the way, representing God's leadership of the tribes as they made their way toward the land of promise (Num 10:35–36). This use of the ark is closely tied with the second purpose. The ark was often taken by the army as it engaged in battle with foreign foes. It represented the presence of the divine warrior with the army. The famous battle of Jericho is one of the more notable examples of the ark symbolizing God's presence and power with the army of Israel (Josh 6).

The ark is rarely mentioned in the literature of later Israel, leading to speculation that the original ark was captured or destroyed sometime soon after Solomon's reign (possibly during Shishak's invasion, cf. 1 Kings 14:25–29). However, the ark appears twice in the NT. In Hebrews 9:4–5 the ark is mentioned in a description of the OT cult, which is marvelously replaced by Jesus Christ who fulfills it. We no longer need a tabernacle or ark because Jesus Christ "tabernacles" among us (Jn 1:14) and is the very presence of God. In Revelation 11:15–19 the events surrounding the blowing of the seventh trumpet are given. This is the time for the "judging of the dead" (v. 18). At the climactic moment God's heavenly temple appears, and within it is seen the ark of the covenant, God's mobile battle standard. This vision is accompanied by convulsions of nature associated with the appearance of the divine warrior.

See also DIVINE WARRIOR; TABERNACLE.

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#### **F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - 1 Samuel 4:3 Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord.**

Israel had been defeated with great loss. Their only hope of being able to hold their own against the Philistines and the people of the land was in the protection and help vouchsafed to them by God. They knew this, and thought that they would be secured, if only the Ark of the covenant were on the field. They forgot that it was only the material symbol of a spiritual relationship; that it was useless unless that relationship was in living force; and that the bending forms of the cherubim, emblematic of the Divine protection, would not avail if their fellowship with the God of the cherubim had been ruptured by black-sliding.

There is a sense in which we are always sending for the Ark. The reliance on outward rites, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, on the part of those who are alienated from the life of God; the maintenance of the forms of prayer and Scripture-reading which no longer express the passionate love of the soul; the habit of church-going, which so many practice, not because they love God, but because they think that it will in some way secure His alliance in life's battle— all these are forms in which we still fetch the Ark of the covenant, whilst our hearts are wrong with the God of the covenant.

It should never be forgotten that nothing can afford to us protection and succor but vital union with Christ. We must hide in His secret place if we would abide under His shadow. We must dwell in the most holy place if we would be shadowed by the wings of the Shekinah. There must be nothing between us and God, if we are to walk together, and enjoy fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

**1 Samuel 4:4 So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.**

- **Who sits:** 2Sa 6:2 2Ki 19:15 Ps 80:1 99:1
- **the cherubim:** Ex 25:18-22 Nu 7:89
- **Hophni:** 1Sa 2:12-17,22 Ps 50:16,17 Mal 1:9 Ac 19:15,16
- **with the ark:** Nu 4:5,15

Note the "[Shekinah Glory](#)" over the Ark

**So the people sent to Shiloh ([shiloh](#))** - The people follow the advice of the elders, showing the importance of godly leadership in difficult times. The idea that the Ark would lead them into victory may have come from the remembrance of the fact that this tactic had proved successful earlier in Israel's history (cf. Nu 10:33–36; Josh 3:3–7; Josh 4:1–18; Josh 6:6–21).

**Bergen** notes that "Biblical evidence suggests that bringing deity images and/or thrones of deities onto the battlefield was a common practice in Ancient Near East societies (cf. Josh 6:7–8; 2 Sam 5:21; Ezek 21:21)." (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American](#)

## [Commentary](#))

**And from there they carried the Ark ([aron](#)) of the covenant of the LORD of hosts Who sits above** (NIV, ESV "enthroned on") **the cherubim ([kerub](#))** - The ark of the covenant is first described in Ex 25:18-22 with the synonym the "[Ark of Testimony](#)." The ark symbolized the Throne of Yahweh ([see verses below](#)) What was **above the cherubim**? The [Shekinah glory cloud](#) symbolizing the presence of Yahweh, although the specific name Shekinah is not found in the Bible. This text uses the same great name first used by Hannah (1Sa 1:11+), [Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts \(of armies\)](#), which speaks of His sovereign majesty and His rule over the hosts of heaven. One has to wonder where Samuel was at this time, for surely he would have objected to moving the Ark and treating it like a "good luck charm!"

**MacArthur** - dwells between the cherubim.- A repeated phrase used to describe the Lord (see 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kin. 19:15; 1 Chr. 13:6; Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Is. 37:16). It spoke of His sovereign majesty.(BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) )

**LORD of hosts** (239x in 229v) - Uses in 1-2 Samuel - 1 Sam. 1:3; 1 Sam. 1:11; 1 Sam. 4:4; 1 Sam. 15:2; 1 Sam. 17:45; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Sam. 6:18; 2 Sam. 7:8; 2 Sam. 7:26; 2 Sam. 7:27;

**Above the cherubim** is a picture of Yahweh reigning as Sovereign King on His Throne as described in

2 Samuel 6:2 And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of **the LORD of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim**.

Psalm 80:1 For the choir director; set to El Shoshannim; Eduth. A Psalm of Asaph. Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; **You who are enthroned above the cherubim**, shine forth!

Psalm 99:1 The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; **He is enthroned above the cherubim**, let the earth shake!

**And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.**(1Sa 2:12) - These were the two wicked sons of Eli (1Sa 2:12-17,27-37), of whom it was said that they "did not know the Lord" (1Sa 2:12) and who soon would die together (1Sa 2:34). As in the case of the sin of Achan (Josh 7:1-27), all Israel would have to suffer because of sin in the camp, specifically sin in the priests!

**Spurgeon** - Instead of attempting to get right with God, these Israelites set about devising superstitious means of securing the victory over their foes. In this respect most of us have imitated them. We think of a thousand inventions; but we neglect the one thing needful ... They forget the main matter, which is to enthrone God in the life, and to seek to do His will by faith in Christ Jesus.

**Maclaren** adds "There are plenty of Christians, like these elders, who, when they find themselves beaten by the world and the devil, puzzle their brains to invent all sorts of reasons for God's smiting, except the true one,—their own departure from Him."

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## QUESTION - [What is the Ark of the Covenant?](#)

**ANSWER** - God made a covenant (a conditional covenant) with the children of Israel through His servant Moses. He promised good to them and their children for generations if they obeyed Him and His laws; but He always warned of despair, punishment, and dispersion if they were to disobey. As a sign of His covenant He had the Israelites make a box according to His own design, in which to place the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments. This box, or chest, was called an "ark" and was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The Ark was to be housed in the inner sanctum of the tabernacle in the desert and eventually in the Temple when it was built in Jerusalem. This chest is known as the Ark of the Covenant.

The real significance of the Ark of the Covenant was what took place involving the lid of the box, known as the "Mercy Seat." The term 'mercy seat' comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to cover, placate, appease, cleanse, cancel or make atonement for." It was here that the high priest, only once a year (Leviticus 16), entered the Holy of Holies where the Ark was kept and atoned for his sins and the sins of the Israelites. The priest sprinkled blood of a sacrificed animal onto the Mercy Seat to appease the wrath and anger of God for past sins committed. This was the only place in the world where this atonement could take place.

The Mercy Seat on the Ark was a symbolic foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice for all sin—the blood of Christ shed on the cross for the remission of sins. The Apostle Paul, a former Pharisee and one familiar with the Old Testament, knew this concept quite well when he wrote about Christ being our covering for sin in Romans 3:24-25: "...and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." Just as there was only one place for atonement of sins in the Old Testament—the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant—so there is also only one place for atonement in the New Testament and current times—the cross of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we no longer look to the Ark but to the Lord Jesus Himself as the propitiation and atonement for our sins. [GotQuestions.org](#)



## Related Resources:

- [What was inside the ark of the covenant? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What happened to the Ark of the Covenant? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the ark of the testimony? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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## God's Plan, Not Ours

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust." — Psalm 91:2

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 4:1-11

Everybody was wrong about the ark of the covenant (an item in the tabernacle that represented the throne of God). After losing a battle to the Philistines, Israel sent messengers to Shiloh to ask that the ark be hauled to Ebenezer, the site of their army camp.

When the ark arrived, the Israelites celebrated so loudly the enemy heard them all the way over in Aphek. The ark's arrival caused the Philistines to fear and the Israelites to have courage.

They were both wrong. The Israelites took the ark into battle and were again clobbered by the Philistines, who captured the ark. Another mistake. The Philistines got sick and their false gods were destroyed.

We can understand the Philistines' error—they were idol-worshippers. But the Israelites should have known better. They failed to consult God about using the ark. While they knew that the ark was earlier carried in battle (Josh. 6), they didn't consider that God's plan, not the ark's involvement, allowed Israel to defeat Jericho.

No matter our resources, we will fail unless we use them according to God's plan. Let's study the Word, pray for God's direction, and trust His leading (Ps. 91:2) before we step out in any venture of faith. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

My times are in my Father's hand;  
How could I wish or ask for more?  
For He who has my pathway planned  
Will guide me till my journey's o'er.  
—Fraser

We see in part; God sees the whole.

**1 Samuel 4:5 As the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded.**

- **all Israel:** They vainly supposed that the ark would save them, when the God of it had departed from them because of their wickedness. Jud 15:14 Job 20:5 Jer 7:4 Am 6:3 Mic 2:11

## SHOUTS OF JOY AT ARRIVAL OF ARK

**As the Ark ([aron](#)) of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp,**The elders must have had some understanding that if God was not "with" them, defeat was inevitable (Nu 14:42; Dt 1:42). They mistakenly assumed, however, that wherever the Ark was, the LORD was. What Israel had done was make the Ark an idol! The irony is that the very thing that symbolized God, the Ark, was revered more than the God it symbolized!

**THOUGHT-** Beware! Good things can become idols if they take the place of God in our life.

**All Israel shouted with a great shout, so that** (term of purpose/result) **the earth resounded** ([hum/him](#):Lxx - [echeo](#) - make a loud sound). - NET = "that the ground shook." The arrival of the **Ark of the covenant** was greeted with shouts of exhilaration that caused "the earth" to shake. So great was the commotion in the Israelite camp that the Philistines heard it two miles away. They should have been shouting for joy at the presence of Jehovah, not the presence of a box. Israel did not understand that God is not

like a "genie in a bottle" but is the God Who says "Those who honor Me, I will honor and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed." (1Sa 2:30). This prophetic promise proved true in the case of Israel! Shouts of joy would soon become cries from distress upon their defeat.

**Fred Young** - This may have been the war cry of Num 10:35—"Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

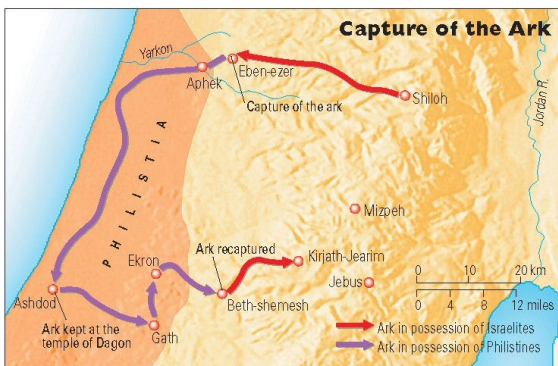
**Spurgeon** - "Now, beloved, when you are worshipping God, shout if you are filled with holy gladness. If the shout comes from your heart, I would not ask you to restrain it. God forbid that we should judge any man's worship! But do not be so foolish as to suppose that because there is loud noise there must also be faith. Faith is a still water, it flows deep. True faith in God may express itself with leaping and with shouting; and it is a happy thing when it does: but it can also sit still before the Lord, and that perhaps is a happier thing still."

**Guzik** makes a great point "All the noise and excitement meant nothing because it wasn't grounded in God's truth." Is this not like some churches where there is a great noise (great singing for example), but the Word of God is not proclaimed?

**Resounded** (01949) [hum/him](#) means to murmur, roar, rouse, be moved, ring again, make a (great) noise, shake, stir, confuse. It is a rare word denoting loud sound, such as ringing. The basic meaning of this root seems to be a severe disturbance, i.e. "to disturb greatly," "stir," "discomfit." In Dt 7:23 God as greatly disturbing (afflicting, confusing) the enemies until they are destroyed. Some uses emphasize the audible effects of the rousing as when Solomon was anointed King "so that the city (was) in an **uproar**." (1Ki 1:45) The verb means "shake, stir up" as with excitement in the city in (Ru 1:19 and 1Ki 1:45) or in the camp (1Sa 4:5). The Hiphil may be translated "stir," "make a disturbance" (Ps 55:2; Mic 2:12), but opinion on how to translate these passages, is divided.

## The Journey of the Ark of the Covenant 1–2 Samuel

Adapted from ESV Study Bible



### Journey of First 8 Stop of the Ark

- 1 Sam. 3:3 The Lord calls to Samuel who is sleeping in the tent of meeting, "where the ark of God was"
- 1 Samuel 4 Philistines capture the ark (for seven months: 1 Sam. 6:1)
- 1 Sam. 5:1–7 Philistines bring the ark to Ashdod, setting it up next to the idol Dagon
- 1 Sam. 5:8–9 Philistines bring the ark to Gath
- 1 Sam. 5:10–12 Philistines send the ark to Ekron
- 1 Sam. 6:10–15 Philistines return the ark with guilt offering to Beth-shemesh
- 1 Sam. 6:19–21 The Lord strikes 70 men for looking upon the ark
- 1 Sam. 7:1–2 Men of Kiriath-jearim take the ark to the house of Abinadab (where it stays for 20 years)
- 1 Sam. 14:18 Saul commands Ahijah to bring the ark to the war camp
- 2 Sam. 6:2–5 David begins to move the ark to Jerusalem on a cart
- 2 Sam. 6:6–7 The Lord strikes Uzzah dead for holding on to the ark
- 2 Sam. 6:10–11 David takes the ark to the house of Obed-edom, where it stays for three months
- 2 Sam. 6:12–17 David brings the ark to Jerusalem, and places it inside the tent he pitched for it
- 2 Sam. 15:24–25 Zadok brings the ark to David, who commands him to carry it back to Jerusalem
- 2 Sam. 15:29 Zadok and Abiathar carry the ark back to Jerusalem

1 Samuel 4:6 When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp.

- What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean Ex 32:17,18

## NOISE IN ISRAELITES CAMP AROUSSES THE PHILISTINES

When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews ([ibri/ivri](#)) mean?" In Ge 14:13, the name "Hebrew" applied to Abram. Consequently, the name came to refer to the physical descendants of Abraham. It was used to distinguish them as a class of people distinct from the foreigners around them. It means that Abram was a descendant of Eber in the line of Shem (cf. 1Sa 10:25; 11:14-16).

Then (marks progression in narrative) they understood that the Ark of the LORD had come into the camp- The text does not tell us how the Philistines knew the Ark had arrived. Did they have spies? That is certainly likely.

**Hebrews** (05680)(ibri/ivri) is a term used of Israel most often in a context that includes non-Israelites either as speakers (e.g., Ge 39:14; Exod 2:11; 1 Sam 13:19) or auditors (e.g., Gen 40:15; Exod 10:3; Jonah 1:9). The origin may be from ʿēber, "beyond," originally applied to Abraham as coming from beyond the Euphrates (Josh 24:2ff.). Or it may be a patronymic from Eber (Gen 10:21, 24), signifying the descendants of Eber.

**MacArthur** on the term **Hebrews** - In Gen. 14:13, the name "Hebrew" was applied to Abram. Consequently, the name came to refer to the physical descendants of Abraham. It was used to distinguish them as a class of people distinct from the foreigners around them. It means that Abram was a descendant of Eber in the line of Shem (cf. 10:25; 11:14-16). (BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) )

**Gilbrant** - Used mostly in the Pentateuch and 1 Samuel, ʿivri is a proper noun meaning "Hebrew." Potiphar's wife accused Joseph, "a Hebrew man," of forcing himself on her (Gen. 39:14; see v. 17 where she identifies him as a "Hebrew slave"). Moses tried to protect a Hebrew man from an Egyptian only to find two Hebrew men fighting each other (Exo. 2:11, 13). Exodus 21:2-11 gives rules regarding the proper treatment of Hebrew slaves (cf. Deut. 15:12; Jer. 34:8-20).

Hebrews are often referred to as Hebrews by foreigners: the Egyptians in Gen. 37-50 and Exo. 1-15 and the Philistines in 1 Sam. 4, 13, 14. Thus, "Hebrew" is used to distinguish the nationality of a person or persons, male or female (cf. Exo. 1:15, a Hebrew midwife). Jonah 1:9 is the only text in which a person describes himself as a Hebrew.

The etymology of the word is difficult to trace. It may be derived from an Akkadian term habiru. This word likely referred to a group of fugitives. If this connection is valid, then some transformation of the meaning must have occurred in the Hebrew adoption of this term. With the exception of the specific reference to Hebrew slaves in Exo. 21, this term is not a social distinction as it was in Akkadian. Throughout its use in the OT, it is a designation for the whole ethnic population of the Israelites. Nevertheless, since "Hebrew" is a designation often ascribed to the Israelites in refuge (especially in Genesis and Exodus), a derogatory nuance may remain from its Akkadian origin.

In postexilic and pre-Hellenistic times, "Hebrew" was not commonly used as a general designation for Israelites. In the NT, only three passages use the term "Hebrew." In Acts 6:1, "Hebrew" is used to designate the Jewish Christian congregation. Paul called himself a Hebrew to show that he was a Hebrew-speaking Jew rather than a Greek-speaking Jew (2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Ibri - 34x in 32v - Hebrew(9), Hebrew man(2), Hebrew man...woman(1), Hebrew woman(1), Hebrew women(3), Hebrews(17), Hebrews'(1).** Gen. 14:13; Gen. 39:14; Gen. 39:17; Gen. 40:15; Gen. 41:12; Gen. 43:32; Exod. 1:15; Exod. 1:16; Exod. 1:19; Exod. 2:6; Exod. 2:7; Exod. 2:11; Exod. 2:13; Exod. 3:18; Exod. 5:3; Exod. 7:16; Exod. 9:1; Exod. 9:13; Exod. 10:3; Exod. 21:2; Deut. 15:12; 1 Sam. 4:6; 1 Sam. 4:9; 1 Sam. 13:3; 1 Sam. 13:7; 1 Sam. 13:19; 1 Sam. 14:11; 1 Sam. 14:21; 1 Sam. 29:3; Jer. 34:9; Jer. 34:14; Jon. 1:9

### Related Resource:

- [Hebrews article in Wikipedia](#)

**1 Samuel 4:7 The Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before.**

BGT 1 Samuel 4:7 κα φοβησαν ο λλ φυλοι κα επον ο τοι ο θεο κασιν πρ ς α το ς ε ς τ ν παρεμβολ ν ο α μ ν ξελο μ ς κ ρι ε σ μερον τι ο γ γονεν τοια τη χθ ς κα τρ την

KJV 1 Samuel 4:7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

NET 1 Samuel 4:7 The Philistines were scared because they thought that gods had come to the camp. They said, "Too bad for us! We've never seen anything like this!

CSB 1 Samuel 4:7 they panicked. "The gods have entered their camp!" they said. "Woe to us, nothing like this has happened before.

ESV 1 Samuel 4:7 the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "A god has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before.

NIV 1 Samuel 4:7 the Philistines were afraid. "A god has come into the camp," they said. "We're in trouble! Nothing like this has happened before.

NLT 1 Samuel 4:7 they panicked. "The gods have come into their camp!" they cried. "This is a disaster! We have never had to face anything like this before!

NRS 1 Samuel 4:7 the Philistines were afraid; for they said, "Gods have come into the camp." They also said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before.

RSV 1 Samuel 4:7 the Philistines were afraid; for they said, "A god has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before.

YLT 1 Samuel 4:7 And the Philistines are afraid, for they said, 'God hath come in unto the camp;' and they say, 'Woe to us, for there hath not been like this heretofore.

- **were afraid:** Ex 14:25 15:14-16 De 32:30

## **PHILISTINE CONCLUSION ISRAEL GOD IN THEIR CAMP**

**The Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before** - To the idol worshipping Philistines the symbol (be it a statue like Dagon in chapter 5, or the Ark of the Covenant) was considered to be the literal dwelling place of the deity (clearly they had no concept of omnipresence!) It follows from this pagan logic, that where the symbol is there is the deity! Thus their woeful reaction because as they go on to state, they clearly had some fuzzy knowledge of Israel's Deity and His role in defeating the Egyptians. NAS is not best rendering as they used the Hebrew word [elohim](#) which literally is "gods." And note the irony -- the pagans don't say the Ark has come into the camp, but that "gods" ([elohim](#)) had come into the camp of the Israelites, whereas the Israelites had said an "IT" had come into the camp! The Ark, to the superstitious Philistines, was thought to be the actual dwelling place of Israel's deity, for they had no concept of omnipresence. This believes explains why when Israel brought the ark into the camp, the Philistines concluded that Israel's God was present.

**1 Samuel 4:8 "Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.**

BGT 1 Samuel 4:8 ο α μ ν τ ς ξελεται μ ς κ χειρ ς τ ν θε ν τ ν στερε ν το των ο τοι ο θεο ο πατ ξαντες τ ν Α γυπτον ν π σ πληγ κα ν τ ρ μ

KJV 1 Samuel 4:8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

NET 1 Samuel 4:8 Too bad for us! Who can deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all sorts of plagues in the desert!

CSB 1 Samuel 4:8 Woe to us, who will rescue us from the hand of these magnificent gods? These are the gods that slaughtered the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.

ESV 1 Samuel 4:8 Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.

NIV 1 Samuel 4:8 Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the desert.

NLT 1 Samuel 4:8 Help! Who can save us from these mighty gods of Israel? They are the same gods who destroyed the Egyptians with plagues when Israel was in the wilderness.

NRS 1 Samuel 4:8 Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.

RSV 1 Samuel 4:8 Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.

YLT 1 Samuel 4:8 Woe to us, who doth deliver us out of the hand of these honourable gods? these are the gods who are smiting the Egyptians with every plague in the wilderness.

- **smote:** Ex 7:5 9:14 Ps 78:43-51

## ISRAEL'S WITNESS SUGGESTED THEY WERE POLYTHEISTS

**Woe to us! Who shall deliver** ([natsal](#); Lxx [exaireo](#) - rescue) **us from the hand** ([yad](#) - hand is keyword in 1Sa 4-7 = 13x/13v) **of these mighty gods?** - If Yahweh had been present in the midst of Israel, the woe of the Philistines would have been warranted. Now we see the bad theology of the Philistines believed that the Israelites were polytheists, not monotheists. Why would the Philistines believe Israelites were polytheists? Clearly, because Israel was living like they were polytheists! In their idolatry, they were living like "functional polytheists!" The truth is that Israel had served idols for over 300 years in the period of the Judges (Jdg 2:12, 17, 19; Jdg 3:6; Jdg 6:10; Jdg 10:6, 13–14; Jdg 18:14–24). and they are continuing to worship other gods! (see 1Sa 7:4). **From the hand** is the ancient way of describing from the power of another, because the **hand** was figuratively seen as the source of power.

**The hand of these mighty gods** - Note that **hand** symbolizing power is a keyword chapters 4-7 occurring some 13x in 13v (1 Sam 4:8 1 Sam 5:4 1 Sam 5:6 1 Sam 5:7 1 Sam 5:9 1 Sam 5:11 1 Sam 6:3 1 Sam 6:5 1 Sam 6:9 1 Sam 7:3 1 Sam 7:8 1 Sam 7:13 1 Sam 7:14)

**These are the gods** ([elohim](#)) **who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness** (desert) - It is ironic that the Philistines in saying these are **gods**, used the word [elohim](#) (plural) which is also used of the one true God. The difference is that when Scripture uses [elohim](#) for the one true God, the associated verb is always in the singular. Some writers see the plural noun [elohim](#) as an allusion to the doctrine of the Trinity. While [elohim](#) certainly is compatible with the Trinity, it is not the best defense of that doctrine. Notice also the Philistines are not entirely accurate because the Egyptians were not smitten in the **wilderness** (desert).

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**Hand** ([03027](#)) [yad](#) is a feminine noun meaning hand and figuratively meaning strength. **Hand is "the terminal part of the arm used to perform functions of man's will."** [Yad](#) is employed literally of man's hand which does normal work functions (Genesis 5:29), good or bad (Genesis 4:11). The law of *lex talionis* ("hand for a hand") is a penalty involving destruction of bodily parts for bodily parts harmed by another

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.

The metaphorical use of [yad](#), [טַ](#) covers a wide range of the concept of "power." In this respect there is no essential difference whether the word is related to God or humankind. [טַ](#) is used about 200x in connection with God, in most cases combined with the name Yahweh, and rarely combined (about 13x) with a form of El or Elohim (1 Sam 4:8; 5:11; 2 Chron 30:12; Ezra 7:9; 8:18, 22, 31; Neh 2:8, 18; Job 19:21; 27:11; Ps 10:12; Eccl 2:24; 9:1). The theological metaphor of God's hand (comp. arm) seems to have its roots in Israel's experience of God's redeeming them from slavery in Egypt. In the Exodus reports the outstretched arm of God and of Moses play a decisive role (Exod 3:20; 4:17; 6:1 [2x]; 7:19; 13:3). [טַ](#) can be used metonymically to describe God's mighty acts, either for the salvation or for the judgment of his people: "the great power ([הַגְּדֹלָהּ הַיְדֵי](#)) [of] the LORD" (Exod 14:31; cf. Deut 34:12 with Moses as subj.; Ps 78:42). "God's good hand" protected the Israelites returning from the Exile (cf. Ezra 7:9; 8:22; Neh 2:18). But God also swings his hand of judgment over his people or over other peoples ([יָדוּ](#) hi., e.g., Isa 19:16; Zech 2:9 [13]), lifts up his hand ([רָם](#) hi., [עָלָה יָדוֹ](#), Isa 49:22; to swear, Deut 32:40; Ezek 20:5) or stretches out his hand ([נָטָה](#)



לַיָּד, Exod 7:5; Isa 14:26–27; Jer 6:12; הַיָּד only being used in a negative connotation). His punishing hand is heavy on Israel's enemies (1 Sam 5:6, 11). "The work of his hands" testifies to God's creating power (Ps 19:1; Isa 48:13; 64:8).

- See article The Hand of the LORD

**Ralph Alexander** has a helpful discussion of hand as used idiomatically -

**Significant theologically is the manifold way in which the word "hand" is employed idiomatically** These idioms arise from the versatility of the hand. The phrase "into (or "under") someone's hand" conveys authority involving responsibility, care, and dominion over someone or something. One may be under the custody of this authority. In the Amarna letters, the Canaanite gloss ba-di-ú means "in his hand." Mankind is to have the rest of creation "under his dominion" (Genesis 9:2). Sarah's authority over Hagar (Genesis 16:6, 9), Joseph's over Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:3-8), that of Moses and Aaron over Israel (Numbers 33:1), and David over Aram (1 Chron. 18:3) are all expressed by this phrase. Yahweh is to have authority over our lives. We place our hearts and spirits into his care, sovereignty, and judgment (Psalm 31:5, 15; [H 6, 16]; 2 Samuel 24:14). Moreover, this idiom portrays "victory over someone" when one is "delivered into one's hands." Deliverance, on the contrary, is described as being "delivered out of one's hands." Often Yahweh promised Israel that he would "deliver her enemies into her hands" (Genesis 49:8; Joshua 6:2) and that he would deliver Israel "out of her enemies' hands" (Exodus 3:8). Refuge cities provided "deliverance" for the innocent slayer "from the hand" of the revenger of blood (Numbers 35:15).

**The hand symbolized "power" or "strength"** (Deut. 8:17). Deut. 32:36 described Israel's loss of power by saying "their hands were gone." Moses' hand was poignantly used to portray power in the plagues against Egypt (Exodus 10:12-25). The most notable use of this metaphor is its conveyance of God's power. 1 Chron. 29:12 declares that in Yahweh's hand is power and might (cf. Psalm 89:13 [H 14]). His hand is not "short" (or "weak") (Isaiah 59:1), but mighty. A predominant demonstration of his power was his deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 13:3-16; Numbers 33:3). All the world witnessed Yahweh's power through this event (Joshua 4:24). His hand created the world (Psalm 8:6; Psalm 95:5) and works truth and justice (Psalm 111:7). He upholds and guides the righteous with his hand (Psalm 37:24; Psalm 139:10). He continually lifts up his hand on our behalf (Psalm 10:12). A corollary idea is that of "ability" to accomplish a task. The phrases "hand reaches" or "hand finds" denote the ability to do or obtain something (Leviticus 14:21-32).

**"Possession" is a common function of the hand.** Therefore, "in one's hands" often bears that connotation. The Ishmaelites had Joseph in their possession ("hands," Genesis 39:1). Yahweh declared that he would take David's kingdom from his son (1 Kings 11:12, 31-35).

**"Submission" is indicated by the phrase "to give one's hands under" someone else.** Solomon's officials "submitted" to him (1 Chron. 29:24). Yahweh exhorted Israel to "submit" to him and not rebel.

**"To stretch out the hand" conveys two ideas.** It expresses the "attacking" of an object (Joshua 8:19, 26); second, it describes the psalmist's yearning for the Lord (Psalm 143:6).

**"Putting one's hand to" something expresses "work" and the activity in which that person is involved (Deut. 2:7; Deut. 30:9).** "Strengthening the hands" is helping someone (cf. Jonathan helping David, 1 Samuel 23:16).

**Obstinate rebellion is described by the phrase "high hand" (Numbers 15:30).** Contrarily, the same expression conveyed God's mighty deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 14:8). "Shaking the hand" symbolized God's warning and destruction of judgment (Isaiah 10:32; Isaiah 19:16). Contempt is likewise visualized by this symbol (Zeph. 2:15).

**"Laying hands on" has four basic connotations.** First, this phrase was employed to depict killing (Genesis 37:22, 27). Second, it was used in the ritual ceremony of blessing (cf. Genesis 48:17). Third, commissioning for a specific office or task was normally accompanied by the laying on of hands (cf. Moses' inauguration of Joshua and Acts 13:1-3). Fourth, the important theological concept of substitution was continually portrayed through the laying of hands upon a sacrificial animal. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest transferred the nation's sins to the goat ("substitution"), by laying his hands upon the goat. Individuals depicted their sins as transferred to and borne by the sacrificial animal through this expression (Exodus 29:10-19; Leviticus 1:4). Ultimately this figure was fulfilled in Christ's bearing of our sins upon the cross (Col. 2:14).

**The "uplifted hand" expressed several nuances.** First, it symbolized prayer as one lifted up his hands toward the sanctuary (Psalm 28:2). Second, the uplifted hand periodically accompanied a public blessing (Leviticus 9:22). Third, it was common for one to lift up his hand in an oath. When Abram vowed not to take spoils of war, he lifted up his hand to the king of Sodom. Another means of expressing a vow was to place the hand under the thigh of the other person as Abram's servant did when swearing that he would be faithful to Abram's charge (Genesis 24:2, 9). The most significant vows of scripture are those anthropomorphically made by God. The oath most remembered in the scripture by this accompanying sign is God's unconditional and eternal covenant

promise to make a nation from Abram and bless the world through that nation, Israel (Genesis 12:1-3; cf. Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30). God also swore to avenge the blood of his servants (Deut. 32:40).

**Consecration was depicted by the idiom "fill the hands."** Some suggest that the sense of filling means the hands were full and had no time for other business, though others think that "filling" was with a sacrificial portion since this phrase was predominately used in the commissioning of priests (Exodus 29:9-35; Exodus 16:32). Ritual cleansing was portrayed by "washing the hands" (Leviticus 5:11), making the person ritually righteous (2 Samuel 22:21). This symbolic action also denoted "absolution from guilt" (Deut. 21:6-7; cf. Matthew 27:24).

**To give to one was to "open the hand"** (Deut. 15:8, 11), whereas to "shut the hand" was to withhold (Deut. 15:7). God opens his hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing (Psalm 145:16).

**One who "slacks his hand" (or withdraws his hand) "gives up" (Joshua 10:6);** the slothful "buries his hand in a dish" (Proverbs 19:24). The silent places the "hand to the mouth" (Proverbs 30:32).

**"Hand" is interestingly employed to mean an "ordinance" (Ezra 3:10) or a "monument"** (cf. ritual stelae at Hazor) used perhaps to establish a covenant or as religious commemorations (1 Samuel 15:12; Isaiah 56:5). The Law was symbolically placed on the hand of the Israelite to remind him of its centrality in life (Deut. 6:8). The instrumentality of giving ordinances and God's word was expressed with "by the hand of."

Perhaps the joining of hands led to the use of *yād* to denote "axles" which held the wheels of the molten sea together (1 Kings 7:32-33) and the "stays" (tenons) to fasten the boards of the tabernacle or temple (Exodus 26:17-19; 1 Kings 7:35-36). The hand hanging at the side most likely precipitated the use of *yād* for "side, coast, or border" (Exodus 2:5; Numbers 2:17; Numbers 34:3). The spreading of the hands denoted "space" (Genesis 34:21), while "hand" also meant "part" or "time" (Genesis 43:34; Genesis 47:24). A different root, *ydd*, "to love," may be the basis for translating *yād* "penis" in the context of Isaiah 57:8, 10 (cf. UG 19: no. 1072). (From [TWOT](#) online)

**Over 1400 uses in OT - here are the uses in First Samuel - Note that "hand" is a keyword in 1 Samuel 4-7** - 1 Sam. 2:13; 1 Sam. 4:8; 1 Sam. 4:18; 1 Sam. 5:4; 1 Sam. 5:6; 1 Sam. 5:7; 1 Sam. 5:9; 1 Sam. 5:11; 1 Sam. 6:3; 1 Sam. 6:5; 1 Sam. 6:9; 1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Sam. 7:8; 1 Sam. 7:13; 1 Sam. 7:14; 1 Sam. 9:8; 1 Sam. 9:16; 1 Sam. 10:4; 1 Sam. 10:7; 1 Sam. 10:18; 1 Sam. 11:7; 1 Sam. 12:3; 1 Sam. 12:4; 1 Sam. 12:5; 1 Sam. 12:9; 1 Sam. 12:10; 1 Sam. 12:11; 1 Sam. 12:15; 1 Sam. 13:22; 1 Sam. 14:10; 1 Sam. 14:12; 1 Sam. 14:13; 1 Sam. 14:19; 1 Sam. 14:26; 1 Sam. 14:27; 1 Sam. 14:37; 1 Sam. 14:43; 1 Sam. 14:48; 1 Sam. 15:12; 1 Sam. 16:16; 1 Sam. 16:23; 1 Sam. 17:22; 1 Sam. 17:37; 1 Sam. 17:40; 1 Sam. 17:46; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 Sam. 17:49; 1 Sam. 17:50; 1 Sam. 17:57; 1 Sam. 18:10; 1 Sam. 18:17; 1 Sam. 18:21; 1 Sam. 18:25; 1 Sam. 19:3; 1 Sam. 19:9; 1 Sam. 20:16; 1 Sam. 21:3; 1 Sam. 21:4; 1 Sam. 21:8; 1 Sam. 21:13; 1 Sam. 22:6; 1 Sam. 22:17; 1 Sam. 23:4; 1 Sam. 23:6; 1 Sam. 23:7; 1 Sam. 23:11; 1 Sam. 23:12; 1 Sam. 23:14; 1 Sam. 23:16; 1 Sam. 23:17; 1 Sam. 23:20; 1 Sam. 24:4; 1 Sam. 24:6; 1 Sam. 24:10; 1 Sam. 24:11; 1 Sam. 24:12; 1 Sam. 24:13; 1 Sam. 24:15; 1 Sam. 24:18; 1 Sam. 24:20; 1 Sam. 25:8; 1 Sam. 25:26; 1 Sam. 25:33; 1 Sam. 25:35; 1 Sam. 25:39; 1 Sam. 26:8; 1 Sam. 26:9; 1 Sam. 26:11; 1 Sam. 26:18; 1 Sam. 26:23; 1 Sam. 27:1; 1 Sam. 28:15; 1 Sam. 28:17; 1 Sam. 28:19; 1 Sam. 30:15; 1 Sam. 30:23;

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#### **HAND - from [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (online)**

The term hand evokes images of both power and grace, blessing and curse. The literal referent is the body part at the end of the arm (Gen 3:22; Mt 5:30; Mk 3:1), although occasionally hand can refer to the entire arm (2 Kings 5:18) or to parts of the hand, such as the fingers or wrist. To wear rings or bracelets "on the hand" means to wear them on the fingers (Gen 41:42; Jer 22:24; Lk 15:22) or wrist (Ezek 23:42).

#### **Literal Use of Hand.**

The word hand occurs approximately 1,800 times in the English Bible. One third of the occurrences refer to the physical entity. The hand enables a person to do tasks (Judg 5:26; Lk 6:1), to hold tools and weapons (Num 35:18; Lk 9:52) and to take and possess objects (Ezek 39:9; Rev 7:9). What a person makes or crafts is often called "the work of the hands" (Deut 28:12; 31:29; Ps 90:17; Lam 4:2 NIV).

The hands are used in various symbolic acts. To clasp or shake hands is to consummate an agreement (Is 2:6). Celebration (Ps 47:1) or derision (Job 27:23) is expressed by clapping the hands. To put a hand over the mouth indicates silence (Job 21:5) and upon the head, grief (2 Sam 13:19). Washing the hands is for cleansing (Mt 15:2) but also announces innocence (Mt 27:24). To kiss one's own hands is to express pride (Job 31:27), and to lift "holy hands" is an act of worship (1 Tim 2:8).

## **Figurative Use of Hand.**

Approximately two-thirds of the occurrences of hand in the Bible are used in a figurative or metaphorical way. Five primary ideas seem to be associated with this image.

### **Power and strength.**

Moses warns God's people not to assume that the power of their hands will be the reason for their prosperity (Deut 8:17). In the pivotal redemptive event of the exodus, God informs Moses that only a "mighty hand" will compel Pharaoh to liberate the Israelites (Ex 3:19–20; 6:1; 7:4–5; 13:9, 14, 16; Deut 9:26). God's "outstretched hand" will fight against his people in judgment (Jer 21:5), but it will also be the agency of redemption and restoration (Ezek 20:33–34). To be engraved on the hands of God was to be at the center of his power and control of history (Is 49:16). Zechariah sings of Messiah's power (hand) to save his people from their enemies (Lk 1:71, 74), and John points to the keeping power of the "hand" of Christ (Jn 3:35; 13:3).

In a particularly poignant text the psalmist celebrates the joy of sins forgiven and then testifies to the consequences of God's hand "heavy upon me" (Ps 32:4 NIV). Images of power in both judgment and grace are evoked. While the consequences of unconfessed sin are painful, the faithful presence of God was something to celebrate.

Several idioms using hand also relate to strength or power. To "strengthen the hands" of someone was to enable someone who needed help (Is 35:3; Jer 23:14). To "slack one's hand" was to give up and not to show the power and strength possible (Josh 1:6). Isaiah describes the Assyrians as "drained of power" (literally, "small of hand," 2 Kings 19:26; Is 37:27).

In a related image of power, agency is often implied. God speaks "by the hand of" the prophets (1 Sam 28:15; Ezek 38:17; cf. Jer 37:2), and a person can be commissioned or ordered "by the hand of" a superior (1 Kings 2:25; Jer 39:11).

### **Authority, control or possession.**

The "hand" of Israel grew steadily stronger against Jabin (Judg 4:24). And in a military image the hand on the neck indicated victory and authority over one's enemies (Gen 49:8). Christians are assured that no one is able to pluck them out of God's hand (Jn 10:29).

The idiom "**given into the hand of**" is used to speak of exercising authority. All of creation is "given into the hand of" humankind to rule (Gen 9:6, cf. 1:26–28). The nation of Israel was given "into the hands of Moses and Aaron" (Num 33:1). Joshua declares that the Lord has delivered "into the hand of" the Israelites all the land of Canaan (Josh 2:24; cf. 6:2; 8:1; Judg 3:28). To "open the hand" (Deut 15:8, 11) or "shut the hand" (Deut 15:7) expresses action of giving or withholding blessing. God "opens his hand" to satisfy the desires of his creation (Ps 145:16).

### **Right hand.**

In these occurrences different terms for hand are used that emphasize the right side (Heb. *yāmīn*, Gr. *dexios*). Two domains of imagery emerge. The first is one of prominence or favored position. Aaron and his sons were to be sprinkled with blood on their right ear, thumb and big toe (Ex 29:19–20; cf. Lev 8:23–26; 14:14–28). To be seated at the right hand is to occupy a position of recognition and prestige. Solomon's mother was given a throne at the right hand of the king (1 Kings 2:19). The messianic king is ordered to be seated at the right hand of the Lord, a position of conquest and rule (Ps 110:1; cf. Mt 22:44). Jesus announced his destiny to be seated at the right hand of God (Mk 14:62; Lk 22:69). Finally, to have extended the right hand was an indication of specification and favor (Gal 2:9; Rev 1:17). On several occasions both right and left hand are combined to indicate such a favored position (cf. Prov 3:16; Mt 20:21).

The second domain of "right hand" portrays an image of intense power and strength. Most frequently it is used by the psalmists of the Lord as a God who rescues and sustains by means of his mighty "right hand" (Ps 17:7; 18:35; 21:8; 118:15b–16; 138:7; cf. Ex 15:6, 12). It is recorded of Jael that "her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer" (Judg 5:26, emphasis added). The conquering Jesus is portrayed as holding the seven stars in his "right hand" (Rev 1:16; cf. 1:20; 2:1). The accuser stands at the right hand (Ps 109:6), as does a friend to protect (Ps 16:8).

A left-handed person was sometimes described as "restricted/bound in his right hand" (e.g., Ehud, cf. Judg 3:15; 20:16; note the play on words with Benjamin, "son of my right hand"). The symbolic significance of the right and left hands are evidenced in Joseph's attempt to change his father's deliberate crossing of his hands in the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 48:13–18). At the judgment the 362 rejected goats are sent to the left (Mt 25:31). And Qoheleth states that the heart of the fool inclines to the left (Eccles 10:2).

### **Consecration and designation.**

The idiom "lay hands on" occurs frequently in Scripture. Hands were laid on people for designation of both blessing (Gen 48:13–17;

Mt 19:13) and judgment (Lev 24:14). The laying on of hands signified commissioning for a special task or office. By such a symbolic act Joshua was commissioned to don the mantle of Moses' leadership (Num 27:18), Saul and Barnabas were appointed as kingdom emissaries (Acts 13:1–3), and leaders in the church were recognized (1 Tim 4:14; 5:22).

Hands were laid upon animals in the various sacrifices for atonement and other cultic functions (e.g., Ex 29:10, 15; Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 16:21). Whether the laying on of hands is an act of transfer is unclear. Leviticus 16:21–22 explicitly describes transfer, and it appears to be the image carried forward by the NT (1 Pet 2:24; Heb 13:11–12). The act seems to be primarily one of designation.

A related idiom is to “fill the hand.” Throughout Exodus 29:9–35 (cf. Ex 16:32), Moses is told to “fill the hand” of Aaron and his sons. While the actual point of the idiom is unclear, it indicated a designation, or perhaps empowerment, of these people to their priestly tasks.

### Side, coast or border.

The bank of a river is designated by the term hand (e.g., Nile, Ex 2:5; Jordan, Num 13:29). To be “at the hand” of someone is to be at that person's side (1 Sam 19:3). The side projections or sockets in the frame of the tabernacle are “hands” (Ex 26:17, 19), and in 1 Kings 7:32 the axles of a chariot are called “hands,” presumably referring to a side mount of the wheel. In Ezekiel 21:19 “hand” refers to a signpost on the road for the king of Babylon, indicating a direction either to the right or left side in the fork of the road.

### Summary.

While the hand is a body part at the end of the arm, it is much more than this in biblical imagery. Whether in performing tasks, expressing power and authority, or designating purpose and function, the hand is a pervasive picture reflecting the wishes and will of the entire person.

See also ARM; FINGER; FOOT; GESTURES; HANDS, LAYING ON; HANDS, WASHING OF; LEFT, LEFT-HANDED; LEG; RIGHT, RIGHT-HANDED.

1 Samuel 4:9 **"Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight."**

- **Take courage** : 2Sa 10:12 1Co 16:13 Eph 6:10,11
- **as they have:** De 28:47,48 Jdg 10:7 13:1 Isa 14:2 33:1

## A LEADER ENCOURAGES THE PAGAN ARMY

**Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews** - Even pagans can demonstrate wisdom and this wise leader used the fear of becoming slave to the Hebrews to motivate them to "man up" and **fight**. This pagan call to **take courage** and **be men** was similar to Paul's commands to the Corinthians (PREPARING FOR SPIRITUAL BATTLE, NOT A LITERAL BATTLE) to **"Be on the alert, stand firm** in the faith, **act like men, be strong**. 4 Let all that you do **be done in love**. " (1 Cor 16:13-14+)

It is ironic that the presence of the Ark Israel thought would assure victory actually had the opposite effect for it motivated the Philistines to fight even harder against Israel!

**MacArthur** - Israel's failure to uproot all the inhabitants of Canaan (see Jdg 1:28+) caused them to fall under the judgment of God. As a consequence of this judgment, Israel was enslaved to Philistine oppression (see Jdg 10, Jdg 13–16). The Philistines feared was that they would become servants of the Hebrews..(BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

The term “Hebrew” in its variant forms occurs 36x in the OT. In the overwhelming majority of occurrences it is employed in a context that includes non-Israelites either as speakers (e.g., Ge39:14; Ex2:11; 1Sa3:19) or auditors (e.g., Ge40:15; Ex10:3; Jon1:9). The term may be derived from the early patriarch Eber (cf. Ge10:21); or it may be a derivative of the noun meaning “the region beyond,” or a pan-Semitic term for a nomadic alien living on the fringes of settled areas.

**As they have been slaves to you;** (Dt 28:47-48, Jdg 10:7, 13:1 cf 2Pe 2:19):**MacArthur** explains that "Israel's failure to uproot all the inhabitants of Canaan (see Jdg 1:28+) caused them to fall under the judgment of God. As a consequence of this judgment, Israel was enslaved to Philistine oppression (see Jdg 10, Jdg 13–16). The Philistines feared was that they would become servants of the Hebrews."(BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) )

**Therefore, be men and fight** - Or was we say today (2022) "MAN UP!" An unnamed Philistine leader motivated the soldiers with the fear of the consequences of enslavement if they lost to the Hebrews and this energized the Philistines to battlefield bravery.

**1 Samuel 4:10 So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers.**

- **Israel:** 1Sa 4:2 Lev 26:17 De 28:25 Ps 78:9,60-64
- **every man:** 2Sa 20:1 1Ki 12:16 22:36 2Ki 14:12
- **a very great:** 2Sa 18:7 2Ch 13:17 28:5,6 Isa 10:3-6

## GREAT DEFEAT FOR ISRAEL

**So** - This term of conclusion is based upon the motivational speech of the persuasive leader to his pagan soldiers to pursue victory at all costs.

**The Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent** - Every man fled is clearly describing the fearful retreat of the Israelite forces. Israel's fleeing in retreat was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses who warned "The LORD shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, **but you will flee seven ways before them**, and you will be an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth." (Dt 28:25+) **To flee seven ways** before their enemy was the way to describe a complete route by the enemy!

**ESV Study** note on **every man fled to his tent** - Literally, "every man to his tent." This is a common cliché for disbanding an army, either by decision (Jdg. 20:8; 1 Sam. 13:2; 2 Sam. 20:1, 22; 1 Kings 12:16) or because of defeat (2 Sam. 18:17; 19:8; 2 Chron. 25:22). (Borrow [ESV Study Bible](#))

**And the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers**- This "body count" was one of the greatest defeats of Israel up to this time. Tragically, in the civil war in Jdg 20:35 25,100 men of Benjamin were killed by the confederacy of the other tribes. Note the bitter irony that they lost more with the Ark than they had lost without the Ark (4000)!

**Guzik** has an interesting note - In the late 1970's, a five-line inscription was found on a grain silo in the ruins of Izbet Sarteh. When deciphered, it was found to contain a Philistine account of this battle, the capture of the ark, even specifically mentioning the priest Hophni. This is the earliest known extra-biblical reference to an Old Testament event.

**1 Samuel 4:11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.**

- **the ark:** 1Sa 2:32 Ps 78:61
- **the two sons:** 1Sa 2:34 Ps 78:64 Isa 3:11

### Related Passages:

1 Samuel 2:34+ (**THE MAN OF GOD'S PROPHECY WAS LITERALLY FULFILLED**) 'This will be the **sign** to you (ELI) which will come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: **on the same day both of them will die.**

Psalm 78:64 **His priests fell by the sword**, And His widows could not weep.

1 Samuel 3:11-12+ The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle." "In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.

Psalm 78:60-61 So that **He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh**, The tent which He had pitched among men, 61 And gave up His strength to captivity And His glory into the hand of the adversary.



## ARK TAKEN AND ITS CARETAKERS SLAIN

**And the Ark (aron) of God was taken** - Keep in mind that these pagans thought that the Ark was God's house and the fact that they were able to capture it would be evidence to them that Israel's God was not as powerful as their god, but they would soon (Chapter 5-6) make an about face regarding their false pagan theology! An event as astonishing as it was disastrous, the loss of the ark must surely have made "both ears... tingle" (1Sa 3:11). While the actual symbol of God was captured, God was not captured! God is greater than the Ark! Everything that was transpiring was still under His sovereign control, including the capturing of the Ark! Note the repeated emphasis on the fact that the Ark was taken (1Sa 4:11, 17, 19, 21, 22)

**Wiersbe** quips "God put the Ark into pagan hands, but Eli's two sons had lived like pagans while ministering before the Ark, so what was the difference? God would use the Ark to teach both the Jews and the Philistines some important lessons." (See [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**MacArthur** - In spite of their hopes to manipulate God into giving them the victory, Israel was defeated and the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. The view of having the ark of God being equivalent to having control of God, possessed both by Israel and then the Philistines, is to be contrasted with the power and providence of God in the remaining narrative. (BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Bergen** - As staggering as the loss of human life was, it was dwarfed by the losses dealt to Israelite culture. For the first time in history Israel's most sacred material possession was now in the hands of pagans, and its two most powerful active priests had died at the hands of infidels. (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died** - Thus God's prophetic Word was fulfilled exactly as it had been predicted (AS IT ALWAYS IS!) - Eli's sons both died on the same day, which was the **sign** to Eli (1Sa 2:34+). Judgment would begin in the house of the LORD (cf 1Pe 4:17+), as the priests, who violated God's covenant, would experience God's wrath first. As staggering as the loss of human life was, it was dwarfed by the losses dealt to Israelite culture. For the first time in history Israel's most sacred material possession was now in the hands of pagans, and its two most powerful (not spiritually speaking, but only in title) active priests had died at the hands of pagans.

**Wiersbe** - God had been long-suffering with Hophni and Phinehas as they desecrated His sacrifices and defiled His people, but now their time was up and their sins had found them out (Nu 32:23+). (See [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

Paul described the law of sowing and reaping...

**Do not be deceived** ([present imperative with a negative](#) = stop being deceived!), God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. **For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption**, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8+)

**Blaikie** - And now the battle rages. The hope of misguided Israel turns out an illusion. They find, to their consternation, that the symbol does not carry the reality. It pleases God to allow the ark with which His name is so intimately associated to be seized by the enemy.

**Bergen** on the fate of **Shiloh** ([shiloh](#)) - The sanctuary at Shiloh seems to have been destroyed by the Philistines shortly after this time. Four textual reasons can be cited in support of this conclusion: (1) never again in 1, 2 Samuel is the city mentioned as a worship center for Israel; (2) the ark was not returned to Shiloh following its reacquisition by Israel (cf. 1Sa 7:1-2); (3) Samuel moved the center of his activities back to his hometown of Ramah (cf. 1Sa 7:17); and (4) references in the Books of Psalms (Ps 78:60) and Jeremiah (Jer 7:12-14; 26:6, 9) explicitly mention its destruction. Taken together, these facts suggest the possibility that the city—or at least its sanctuary—was violently ransacked during this period of hostility. Archaeological excavations conducted by I. Finkelstein at the site confirm that Shiloh was destroyed by fire in the mid-eleventh century b.c. (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

Biblical evidence outside of 1 Samuel also suggests that the Philistines may have ransacked the city at this time....

Psalm 78:60-64 So that **He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh**, The tent which He had pitched among men, 61 And gave up His strength to captivity And His glory into the hand of the adversary (PHILISTINES). 62 He also delivered His people to the sword, And was filled with wrath at His inheritance. 63 Fire devoured His young men, And His virgins had no wedding songs. 64 His priests fell by the sword (HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS), And His widows could not weep.

Jeremiah 7:12 "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and

see **what I did to it** because (EXPLAINS WHY GOD DESTROYED IT) of the wickedness (WICKED PRIESTS, WICKED IDOL WORSHIPPING PEOPLE) of My people Israel.

Jeremiah 26:9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD saying, 'This house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate, without inhabitant'?" And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

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## James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE LOSS OF THE ARK OF GOD 1 Samuel 4:1–11

"Yet the Power appears to-morrow  
That to-day seems wholly lost,  
And the reproductive sorrow  
Is a treasure worth the cost."

—HOUGHTON.

The capture of the Ark of God by the Philistines was the sorest blow that had ever fallen upon the nation of Israel. The corrupt state of the priesthood was to blame for this national failure and disgrace. There is a closer connection between holy living and national prosperity than many in these days seem to think. The Philistines, as the enemies of the Lord's people, are always aggressive when Israel is in a backsliding condition. The lusts of the flesh are sure to prevail when the soul gets out of communion with God.

### I. What the Ark signifies.

It was the symbol of the presence of God. It was the throne on which the Lord sat, and from which He ruled and taught His people (Exod. 25:22). It was also the mercy-seat, the medium through which He communed with Israel. What the Ark was to them Christ is to us, the resting-place, the medium of communion, and the channel of revelation and blessing.

### II. When the Ark was brought out.

After they had been smitten before their enemies they said, "Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out: it may save us" (v. 3). It is good to fall back on God in the day of defeat, but is the favour and help of God only to be sought after we have done our best to succeed without Him? "Man's extremity may be God's opportunity," but why should God's opportunity only come after we have persistently ignored Him till we are dead beat?

### III. The Dread of the Philistines at the Ark.

"When they understood that the Ark of the Lord was come into the camp they were afraid" (vv. 6–8). So well they might, if that Ark represents the presence of that Almighty God who smote the Egyptians with plagues, and wrought such miracles in the wilderness on their behalf (v. 8). If this is so, then in battling against the people of God they will be found fighting against God Himself. Alas! how often we Christians forget what the men of the world remember, that if Christ is with us mighty works should show themselves, and that the more closely we are identified with Him in our work and warfare the more difficult and desperate does their own condition appear. The ungodly still dread a man full of the Holy Ghost. Well do they know that to oppose such they need to screw up their courage and "quit themselves like men" (v. 9; Luke 16:8).

### IV. The Faith of Israel in the Ark.

"It may save us out of the hands of our enemies" (v. 3). It is quite clear that their faith in the invisible God had withered up into a superstitious reverence for the material Ark. They worshipped the form, but denied the power. The God-deserted Ark (Psa. 78:60) was everything, while He who inhabiteth eternity had no place in their hearts. Instead of saying, "Let us fetch the Ark," had they said, "Let us confess our sins and return to the Lord," He would doubtless have saved them. Multiplying forms in religious services will afford no security against the inroads of the enemy. The Gospel that is not in the power of the Spirit of God is only the Ark with the glory departed. The Philistines of to-day are in great force against the people of God. Let us fetch out the Gospel of God, but let us see that our faith is not in the mere form of words, but in the God of the Gospel. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20).

### V. The Capture of the Ark.

"The Ark of God was taken" (v. 11). The object of their confidence was taken from them, that their faith might be in God only.

Let us learn from this—

1. THAT UNGODLY MEN CANNOT PRESERVE THE POWER OF RELIGION. The dissolute and licentious sons of Eli had charge of the Ark of the Covenant (v. 4). What a God-dishonouring association. Is it any wonder that the cause of God is turned into ridicule when self-seeking and unprincipled men have charge of the holy things? They must be clean that bare the vessels of the

Lord.

2. THAT THE LORD WILL NOT PROTECT FORMS WHEN THE SPIRIT IS GONE. There is nothing in an empty dish to satisfy either God or man. The Pharisaic spirit is always ready to contend for the outward and the formal, because it is blind to the spiritual and the eternal.

3. THAT SIN ALWAYS BRINGS DEFEAT. If we regard iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear. The secret sin of Achan brought open shame in Israel. The disobedience of Saul led to the departure of God from Him. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

**1 Samuel 4:12 Now a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head.**

- with his clothes rent: These, as we have already remarked, were the general signs of sorrow and distress. 2Sa 1:2
- with earth: Jos 7:6 2Sa 13:19 15:32 Ne 9:1 Job 2:12

#### Related Passages:

2 Samuel 1:2 On the third day, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes torn and dust on his head. And it came about when he came to David that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself.

Joshua 7:6 Then **Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the Ark ([aron](#)) of the LORD** until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and **they put dust on their heads**.

2 Samuel 15:32 (SIGNS OF MOURNING OR NATIONAL CALAMITY) It happened as David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, that behold, Hushai the Archite met him with his **coat torn and dust on his head**.

### DUST AND ASHES SIGNALLED DEFEAT

**Now a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh ([shiloh](#)) the same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head** - This **man of Benjamin** was filled with "fight or flight" hormones, for he ran for almost 20 miles (almost a marathon) after apparently engaging in battle! **Torn** clothes and **dust** upon the head (cf. Ge 37:29, 34; 44:13; 2Sa 1:2) were common signs of mourning (cf. Jos 7:6). The torn **clothes** could have symbolized a rent heart or unrestrained grief. This event in Israel should have led to a national "broken and a contrite heart," (Ps 51:17), but that would not happen until 20 years later!

There is a strange, unsupported rabbinic tradition that this **man of Benjamin** was Saul (who was a Benjaminite) and that he rescued the tables of the Law from Goliath, who in turn walked off with the ark of the Lord.

[Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) on **clothes torn** - tearing of clothes was a ritual gesture of grief or as an act of uncontrollable rage. Indeed, one of the best indices to the emotionalism of the ancient Hebrews is the frequency with which we read about people tearing their garments in a display of strong feeling. To cite just three specimens, Reuben tears his clothes when he returns to the pit and finds Joseph missing (Gen 37:29), Ezra rends his garments when he learns about the Israelites' intermarriage (Ezra 9:3), and King Hezekiah tears his clothes when he receives the threatening letter from the Assyrian king (Is 37:1). If we trace the three dozen explicit references to people's tearing their clothing, we find four main categories of crisis-grief or mourning over the loss of something or someone, sorrow for sin in an act of repentance, fear or alarm and anger or frustration.

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**Shiloh** ([07887](#)) **Shiloh** (related to Hebrew word meaning rest or tranquil) ([Map of location of Shiloh](#)) is famous for being the location of the ark of the covenant and the House of God (the Tabernacle Tent) had been set up at **Shiloh**, some twenty miles north of Jerusalem, by Joshua ([Josh 18:1](#)); and the site continued as a religious center during the period of Judges (cf [Josh. 18:1-22:12](#); [Jdg. 18:31-21:21](#)). **Shiloh** was located in the hill country of Ephraim almost in the middle between [Shechem \(on the North\) and Bethel \(on the South\)](#) ([Jdg. 21:12-21](#)). Eli and Samuel both served at **Shiloh** ([1Sa 2:14; 14:3](#)) and prophets also gathered there ([1Ki. 14:1-4](#)). **Shiloh** received notoriety when Yahweh deserted the House of God at the time the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant ([1Sa 4:3-12](#)) After that **Shiloh** was spoken of as a warning to Israel, Jeremiah quoting Yahweh's words ([Jeremiah 7:12-14](#))

In the KJV a related Hebrew word is used in [Ge 49:10](#) "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until **Shiloh** come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." See related resources below.

**Shiloh** - 30v - [Jos. 18:1](#); [Jos. 18:8](#); [Jos. 18:9](#); [Jos. 18:10](#); [Jos. 19:51](#); [Jos. 21:2](#); [Jos. 22:9](#); [Jos. 22:12](#); [Jdg.](#)

18:31; Jdg. 21:12; Jdg. 21:19; Jdg. 21:21; 1 Sam. 1:3; 1 Sam. 1:9; 1 Sam. 1:24; 1 Sam. 2:14; 1 Sam. 3:21; 1 Sam. 4:3; 1 Sam. 4:4; 1 Sam. 4:12; 1 Sam. 14:3; 1 Ki. 2:27; 1 Ki. 14:2; 1 Ki. 14:4; Ps. 78:60; Jer. 7:12; Jer. 7:14; Jer. 26:6; Jer. 26:9; Jer. 41:5

#### Related Resources:

- [Shiloh: The Place Where God Once Dwelt](#) - youtube video
- [See several dictionary articles](#) on Shiloh
- [What is the meaning of the term "Shiloh"? Is it a Messianic prophecy? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### ASHES - from [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (online)

The Bible makes use of ashes in both narrative and prophetic descriptions of cities and peoples under God's wrath. In the background lies the ancient military practice of burning enemy cities, so that the association of ashes with death is common, as in Jeremiah's picture of a "whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes" (Jer 31:40 RSV).

In keeping with the biblical motif of God as warrior, the prophetic visions sometimes picture God's fire as consuming a wicked person or nation. Examples include the prophecy against Tyre, where God's fire turned it "to ashes upon the earth" (Ezek 28:18), and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which God "condemned to extinction" by turning them "to ashes" (2 Pet 2:6). In an apocalyptic passage those who fear God "shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts" (Mal 4:3).

Since the word ashes is literally an image of complete waste, it also lends itself to use as a metaphor for weakness, ephemerality and emptiness: "your maxims are proverbs of ashes" (Job 13:12; also Ps 142:6; Is 44:20). This same connotation underlies the use of ashes in expressions of intense grief and loss. The often repeated phrase "in sackcloth and ashes" paints a vivid picture of mourning women and men in torn clothing, lying or kneeling on the ground as they heap ashes and dust upon themselves (2 Sam 13:19; Esther 4:1, 3; Is 58:5, 61:3; Jer 6:26, 25:34; Ezek 27:30). In addition to this visible, physical ritual, the psalmist speaks figuratively of eating "ashes like bread" to symbolize his suffering (Ps 102:9; compare Ps 80:2). The theme of reversal in Lamentations 4:5 effectively contrasts the royal purple with ashes: "Those nurtured in purple now lie on ash heaps."

Perhaps the most familiar biblical use of ashes imagery is in expressions of repentance. The association of ashes with images of destruction and grief makes it an appropriate symbol of human mortality and consequently of the humility required of human beings before their Creator and Judge. Job's initial cry of mourning, "I have become like dust and ashes," later becomes a prayer of confession, "I repent in dust and ashes" (Job 30:19; 42:6). In other biblical prayers of both confession in "sackcloth and ashes" (Dan 9:3-5; Jn 3:6; Mt 11:21; Lk 10:13) and petition (Gen 18:27), the image of ashes is a moving reminder of the human position before God. It is no coincidence that the marking of foreheads with ashes in Ash Wednesday services is accompanied by the words "Remember, man, that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return."

In this context the ceremonial use of ashes in the OT has great significance. Having been swept from the altar and taken to "a clean place" (Ex 27:3; Lev 1:16, 4:12, 6:10-11; Num 4:13; 2 Kings 23:3), the ashes from the burned sacrifices are later used under certain circumstances in purification rituals to wash those who are unclean (Num 19:9-10, 17; Heb 9:13). "How much more," explains the author of Hebrews, "shall the blood of Christ ... purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:14). Though the biblical use of ashes imagery centers primarily on the fragility of life, this aspect of sacrificial cleansing transforms that emphasis from one of potential pessimism into one of humble hope.

See also ALTAR; FIRE; MOURN, MOURNING.

**1 Samuel 4:13 When he came, behold, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road eagerly watching, because his heart was trembling for the ark of God. So the man came to tell it in the city, and all the city cried out.**

BGT 1 Samuel 4:13 κα λθεν κα δο Ηλι κθητο π το δφρου παρ τν πλην σκοπεων τν δν τι ν καρδαατο ξεστηκυαπερ τς κιβωτο το θεο κα νθρωπος εσ λθεν ες τν πλιν παγγελοι κα νεβησεν πλις

KJV 1 Samuel 4:13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out.

NET 1 Samuel 4:13 When he arrived in Shiloh, Eli was sitting in his chair watching by the side of the road, for

he was very worried about the ark of God. As the man entered the city to give his report, the whole city cried out.

CSB 1 Samuel 4:13 When he arrived, there was Eli sitting on his chair beside the road watching, because he was anxious about the ark of God. When the man entered the city to give a report, the entire city cried out.

ESV 1 Samuel 4:13 When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out.

NIV 1 Samuel 4:13 When he arrived, there was Eli sitting on his chair by the side of the road, watching, because his heart feared for the ark of God. When the man entered the town and told what had happened, the whole town sent up a cry.

NLT 1 Samuel 4:13 Eli was waiting beside the road to hear the news of the battle, for his heart trembled for the safety of the Ark of God. When the messenger arrived and told what had happened, an outcry resounded throughout the town.

NRS 1 Samuel 4:13 When he arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out.

RSV 1 Samuel 4:13 When he arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out.

YLT 1 Samuel 4:13 and he cometh in, and lo, Eli is sitting on the throne by the side of the way, watching, for his heart hath been trembling for the ark of God, and the man hath come in to declare it in the city, and all the city crieth out.

- **sitting:** 1Sa 1:9
- **his heart:** Jos 7:9 Ne 1:3,4 Ps 26:8 79:1-8 137:4-6

## **ELI WORRIED ABOUT ARK NOT SONS!**

**When he came, behold, Eli was sitting on his seat**([kisse](#)) **by the road eagerly watching, because his heart was trembling** ([chared](#) - same verb Isa 66:2) **for the Ark** ([aron](#)) **of God - NET** = "he was very worried about the ark of God." Eli's concern for the Ark stands in stark contrast to his earlier actions of honoring his two sons and dishonoring the Lord (1Sa 2:29, 30; cf. 1Sa 4:17, 18). This suggests he was more concerned over the loss of the Ark, then he was over the loss of God's presence and power! One wishes the text had stated "his heart was trembling for the God of the Ark!" Had that been the case the words of Isaiah 66:2 might have transpired...

For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. **'But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles** ([chared](#)) **at My word.**

**Young** - Eli had gone to the gate of the city to wait for news of the battle. The messenger, in his anxiety to bring the news, hastened past the blind old man at the city gate and had to return to him to render an account of the battle (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#) )

**So the man came to tell it in the city, and all the city cried out**([za'aq](#): Lxx = anaboao from [boao](#) = cry for help) - NLT = "an outcry resounded throughout the town". The man ran right past Eli (who was sitting at the city gate, the point of entrance into Shiloh) to first tell the townspeople (undoubtedly many hundreds to thousands of wives who had now become widows.

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**Seat** (03678)([kisse](#) כִּסֵּי) occurs 135 times in the OT and is most often translated as throne, and also usually speaks of a seat of honor (cf Ehud Jdg 3:20+). The NIV translates some uses as "seat of honor". The **seat** marked a place of authority (as with Eli in 1Sa 1:9). It seems that it was more usual for people to sit on mats or on the earth itself, so that sitting above ground level implied the possession of authority. Excavations from this time have uncovered large stone benches without backs, which were often beside the city gates.

**Kisse in 1Sa - 2Chr** - 1 Sam. 1:9; 1 Sam. 2:8; 1 Sam. 4:13; 1 Sam. 4:18; 2 Sam. 3:10; 2 Sam. 7:13; 2 Sam. 7:16; 2 Sam. 14:9; 1 Ki. 1:13; 1 Ki. 1:17; 1 Ki. 1:20; 1 Ki. 1:24; 1 Ki. 1:27; 1 Ki. 1:30; 1 Ki. 1:35; 1 Ki. 1:37; 1 Ki. 1:46; 1 Ki. 1:47; 1 Ki. 1:48; 1 Ki. 2:4; 1 Ki. 2:12; 1 Ki. 2:19; 1 Ki. 2:24; 1 Ki. 2:33; 1 Ki. 2:45; 1 Ki. 3:6; 1 Ki. 5:5; 1 Ki. 7:7; 1 Ki. 8:20; 1 Ki. 8:25; 1 Ki. 9:5; 1 Ki. 10:9; 1 Ki. 10:18; 1 Ki. 10:19; 1 Ki. 16:11; 1 Ki. 22:10; 1 Ki. 22:19; 2 Ki. 4:10; 2 Ki. 10:3; 2 Ki. 10:30; 2 Ki. 11:19; 2 Ki. 13:13; 2 Ki. 15:12; 2 Ki. 25:28; 1 Chr. 17:12; 1 Chr.



17:14; 1 Chr. 22:10; 1 Chr. 28:5; 1 Chr. 29:23; 2 Chr. 6:10; 2 Chr. 6:16; 2 Chr. 7:18; 2 Chr. 9:8; 2 Chr. 9:17; 2 Chr. 9:18; 2 Chr. 18:9; 2 Chr. 18:18; 2 Chr. 23:20;

**Trembling** (startled, frightened, make afraid, terrified) ([02730](#)) (chared from [charad](#) = human trembling before some strange or fearsome event) means fearful, afraid, but in a number of the uses (see below) speaks more of a reverential reaction (usually to God or His Word).

**Chared** - tremble(1), trembled(1), trembling(2), who tremble(1), who trembles(1). Jdg. 7:3; 1Sa 4:13 = "his heart was **trembling** for the ark of God"; Ezr. 9:4 = "everyone who **trembled** at the words of the God of Israel"; Ezr. 10:3 = "those who tremble at the commandment of our God"; Isa. 66:2 = "To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who **trembles** at My word."; Isa. 66:5 = "you who **tremble** at His word."

**Cried out** ([02199](#)) [za'aq](#) means to cry out, to call out for help (especially when in distress), to appeal (even making public sounds of physical and/or emotional anguish - Ex 2:23, 2Chr 20:9, Job 35:9). **Za'aq** can be summoned in the sense of to be assembled (Jos 8:16; Jdg 6:34, 35; 18:22, 23) Finally, **za'aq** can mean to issue a proclamation by sending out an official written document with instructions or principles (Jonah 3:7) he [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **za'aq** in Hab 1:2 with the verb [boao](#) which means to cry out for help, to cry out in anguish (Mk 15:34, Mt 27:46)

**1 Samuel 4:14** When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What does the noise of this commotion mean?" Then the man came hurriedly and told Eli.

- **mean:** 1Sa 4:6

### ELI BLIND BUT NOT DEAF

**When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What does the noise of this commotion (ESV - uproar) mean?"** The cries of anguish and grief must have been piercing and clearly got blind Eli's attention and had him preparing himself for the outcome of the battle and the number of Israeli soldiers who had died! But he was in no way prepared for what he would soon hear from the runner!

**Then the man came hurriedly and told Eli**

**1 Samuel 4:15** Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set so that he could not see.

- **ninety-eight:** 1Sa 3:2 Ps 90:10
- **and his eyes:** Ge 27:1

### ANCIENT ELI BLIND

**Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set so that he could not see-** It is interesting that in 1Sa 4:13 he had been "eagerly watching," even though he was in essence blind. The **NET** says "his eyes looked straight ahead." There is a tragic irony that Eli ends his life physically blind, but had suffered from spiritual blindness long before this time. The latter is far more of a disability to one's soul, than the former!

**1 Samuel 4:16** The man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battle line. Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today." And he said, "How did things go, my son?"

- **How did things go,** 2Sa 1:4
- **my son:** 1Sa 3:6 Jos 7:19

### SURVIVOR OF THE BATTLE IDENTIFIES HIMSELF

The man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battle line. Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today." And he said, "How did things go, my son - The climax builds to the crescendo in the next verse.

1 Samuel 4:17 Then the one who brought the news replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken."

- Israel: 1Sa 4:10,11 1Sa 3:11

## SURVIVOR RELATES FOUR TRAGEDIES

Then the one who brought the news replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark ([aron](#)) of God has been taken - Notice that he leaves the worse news to the last. This is the occurrence about which Eli had been most concerned.

**Young** - The four items—Israel's flight, the general massacre, the death of Eli's sons, and the capture of the ark—are presented in order of increasing significance for the old priest. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**William Blaikie** - The Divine symbol, with its overshadowing cherubim and its sacred light, into which year by year Eli had gone alone to sprinkle the blood of atonement on the mercy-seat, and where he had solemnly transacted with God on behalf of the people, was in an enemy's hands! The ark, that no Canaanite or Amalekite had ever touched, on which no Midianite or Ammonite had ever laid his polluted finger, which had remained safe and sure in Israel's custody through all the perils of their journeys and all the storms of battle, was now torn from their grasp! And there perishes with it all the hope of Israel, and all the sacred service which was associated with it; and Israel is a widowed, desolate, godless people, without hope and without God in the world; and all this has come because they dragged it away from its place, and these two sons of mine, now gone to their account, encouraged the profanation([1 Samuel 4](#))

1 Samuel 4:18 When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years.

- **when he mentioned:** 1Sa 4:21,22 Ps 26:8 42:3,10 69:9 La 2:15-19
- **his neck:** 1Sa 2:31-32 1Sa 3:12-13 Lev 10:3 1Co 11:30-32 1Pe 4:17,18

### Related Passages:

Leviticus 10:3 (ON DEATH OF AARON'S TWO SONS) Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

1 Samuel 2:31-32+ Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 'You will see the distress of My dwelling, in spite of all the good that I do for Israel; and an old man will not be in your house forever.

## THE CAPTURED ARK "TIPPED THE SCALES" FOR ELI!

When he mentioned the Ark ([aron](#)) of God, Eli fell off the seat ([kisse](#)) backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy ([kabed](#)). Thus he judged Israel forty years- Old Eli surely grieved the loss of his sons, but the loss of the Ark was more than he could handle. Folks don't just all off seats backward when given bad news, so it is quite likely that Eli was overwhelmed and suffered a heart attack (or possibly a stroke). The irony is that the gate was where Eli's judgments would take place and fittingly it is here that God executes His judgment on Eli! Note that this the first time we discover that we discover Eli was a judge in Israel. Unfortunately, he was unable to judge his own sons! Eli reminds me of the [Humpty Dumpty song](#).

**Bergen** has an interesting comment - With great artistic skill the writer captured this fateful moment with words that convey at least two messages simultaneously. First, it signifies the end of the Elide dynasty. Eli's fall from his chair literally dethroned the Elide dynasty in Israel. Second, Eli's death ended an abomination in Israel that rivaled that of pagan idolatry. The Lord would soon bring an end to an unseeing Philistine abomination by causing an image of Dagon to fall and its neck to break, but first he would bring about the same fate to a blind Hebrew abomination. The parallel between the events of the present section and those of the next chapter are striking and deliberate. The writer notes that at the time of Eli's death he was "**heavy**" (v. 18). The Hebrew word employed here (**kbd**) is aptly chosen, for its spectrum of meaning—"honored," "heavy," "burdensome"—applies broadly to the man (perhaps a play on words). As high priest at Shiloh, Eli was a man with much social "weight"/"significance"; because of his practice of eating unauthorized sacrificial portions (cf. comments at 1Sa 2:29), he was also "**heavy**"; finally, as a result of the sins he permitted in his own life and household, Eli was a burden that weighed down and ultimately brought disaster upon Israel. (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

Regarding the **seat** (**kisse**) Excavations from this time have uncovered large stone benches without backs, which were often beside the city gates. Thus, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord, all of the priestly line through Eli had been wiped out (1/a 2:29–34). Eli seems more stricken by the fate of the ark than by the death of his sons.

The writer notes that at the time of Eli's death he was **heavy**. The Hebrew word employed here (**kabod**) is interesting because it can also mean "honored". As high priest at Shiloh, Eli was a man of some social "weight. However, most likely because of his practice of eating unauthorized sacrificial portions (1Sa 2:29), he was also physically "heavy!" As a result of the sin which he permitted in his own life and household, Eli was a heavy "burden" that weighed down and ultimately brought disaster upon Israel.

**Wiersbe** - The Hebrew word **kabod** shows up frequently in this account. It means "heavy" but also can mean "honor, glory, respectful" (people of "weight"). Eli was "heavy" but he wasn't "weighty" when it came to character and godliness, what Paul called the "weight of glory" (1 Cor. 4:17) (See [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#)).

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**Heavy** (severe, large, difficult, slow, stubborn) ([03515](#)) **kabed** note there is considerable overlap with Strong's #[03513](#) - **kabad** = verb meaning to be heavy, to be honored) means to to be heavy, to make dull, to let weigh down (1Ki 12:4). In some contexts = to honor (1Chr 4:9, 1Chr 11:21, 25). It is used literally of Eli who was "old and **heavy**" (1 Sa 4:18), of Absalom's hair (**heavy** - 2 Sa 14:26). The first use in Ge 12:10 = famine was **severe**. Ge 13:2 (Ge 41:31, 43:1, 47:13) = **rich** in livestock. Ge 50:9 = **great** company. Ge 50:10 = **sorrowful** lamentation. Ex 4:10 = **slow** of speech and **slow** of tongue. Ex 7:14 = stubborn. Ex 8:24 = **great** swarms. Ex 9:3 = **severe** pestilence. Ex 9:18 (Ex 9:24) = **heavy** hail. Ex 10:14 = **numerous** (locusts). Ex 12:38 = **large number** of livestock. Ex 17:12 = Moses' hands were **heavy**. Ex 18:18 = task is too **heavy**. Ex 19:16 = **thick** cloud. Nu 11:14 = too **burdensome** (people). Nu 20:20 = **heavy** force. Isa 1:4 = People **weighed down** with iniquity. Ezek. 3:5; Ezek. 3:6 = **difficult** language. 1 Ki 12:4 (1 Ki 12:11, 2 Chr 10:10, 14) = a heavy yoke (taxation by Solomon).

**1 Samuel 4:19** Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant and about to give birth; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she kneeled down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her.

### PHINEHAS' WIFE OVERWHELMED AND GOES INTO LABOR

**Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant and about to give birth; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she kneeled down** (crouched) **and gave birth, for her pains came upon her** - The shock and anguish of the devastating news resulted in premature labor pains coming upon Phinehas' wife.

**Young on she kneeled down and gave birth** - In some parts of the East, parturient women give birth to their offspring in a standing position; in others, they bring forth kneeling, as is still the custom in Ethiopia. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**1 Samuel 4:20** And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son." But she did not answer or pay attention.

- **Do not be afraid;**; Ge 35:17,18 Joh 16:21

- **But she did not answer or pay attention** Heb. and set not her heart, Ps 77:2

## **PHINEHAS' WIFE DYING IN CHILDBIRTH**

**And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son." But she did not answer or pay attention** - Birth of a son to Jewish woman was good news, but not in this case because the bad news was overwhelming!

**1 Samuel 4:21 And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband.**

BGT 1 Samuel 4:21 κα κλεσεν τ παιδ ριον Ο α Βαρχαβωθ π ρ τ ς κιβωτο το θεο κα π ρ το πενθερο α τ ς κα π ρ το νδ ρ ς α τ ς

KJV 1 Samuel 4:21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.

NET 1 Samuel 4:21 She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," referring to the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband.

CSB 1 Samuel 4:21 She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," referring to the capture of the ark of God and to the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband.

ESV 1 Samuel 4:21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

NIV 1 Samuel 4:21 She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel"--because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband.

NLT 1 Samuel 4:21 She named the child Ichabod (which means "Where is the glory?"), for she said, "Israel's glory is gone." She named him this because the Ark of God had been captured and because her father-in-law and husband were dead.

NRS 1 Samuel 4:21 She named the child Ichabod, meaning, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

RSV 1 Samuel 4:21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

YLT 1 Samuel 4:21 and she calleth the youth I-Chabod, saying, 'Honour hath removed from Israel,' because of the taking of the ark of God, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

NKJ 1 Samuel 4:21 Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

NJB 1 Samuel 4:21 She named the child Ichabod, saying, 'The glory has gone from Israel,' alluding to the capture of the ark of God and to her father-in-law and husband.

NAB 1 Samuel 4:21 (She named the child Ichabod, saying, "Gone is the glory from Israel," with reference to the capture of the ark of God and to her father-in-law and her husband.)

LXE 1 Samuel 4:21 And she called the child Uaebarchaboth, because of the ark of God, and because of her father-in-law, and because of her husband.

ASV 1 Samuel 4:21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel; because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

DBY 1 Samuel 4:21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel; because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

- **The glory:** Ps 26:8 Ps 78:61,64 Ps 106:20 Jer 2:11 Ho 9:12

**Related Passage:**

Exodus 24:16-17+ The **glory** ([kabod](#); Lxx = [doxa](#)) of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. 17 And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the **glory** ([kabod](#)) of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top.

Exodus 33:18+ **(A GOOD PRAYER TO PRAY IF YOU FEEL LIKE "ICHABOD" TODAY!)** Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your **glory** ([kabod](#))!"

Psalms 26:8 O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And **the place where Your glory** ([kabod](#)) dwells.

Psalms 78:58-61 For they provoked Him with their high places And aroused His jealousy with their graven images. 59 When God heard, He was filled with wrath And greatly abhorred Israel; 60 So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, The tent which He had pitched among men, 61 And gave up His strength to captivity And His **glory** ([kabod](#)) into the hand of the adversary.

Jeremiah 7:12-14 **(THE FATE OF SHILOH WHERE THE ARK HAD BEEN HOUSED)** "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. 13 "And now, because you have done all these things," declares the LORD, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer, 14 therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, **as I did to Shiloh**. 15 "I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim.

Jeremiah 26:6, 9 **Then I will make this house like Shiloh**, and this city I will make a curse to all the nations of the earth.".....9 "Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD saying, 'This house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate, without inhabitant'?" And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

## **CALL THE SON ICHABOD**

**And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory ([kabod](#)) has departed ([galah](#)) from Israel,"** - The glory refers to the "[Shekinah glory](#)" (Ex 13:21) which dwelled in the tabernacle, over the ark "between the cherubims" (1Sa 4:4), and neither the ark nor the tabernacle were ever to be moved unless the [Shekinah glory](#) cloud itself, representing the Lord's presence, moved first. The presumptuous act of the elders of Israel, and the priests Hophni and Phinehas (who should have known better), in taking the ark out of the tabernacle into the army camp resulted in the tragic loss of the "glory."

**Bergen** comments - With her dying gasps she named the child "Ichabod" (Hb. 'î-kābôd, lit., "Where [is] glory?" or "Nothing of glory"). The name, a derivative of kbd (cf. discussion of v. 18), was appropriate, for with the deaths of the patriarch and his two sons the kbd—honor, weight, burden—of the Elide dynasty was gone. More than that, the glorious "ark of God" (v. 21), the Lord's throne, had "been captured" (v. 22). For Israel on that day the kbd was gone. Not until the glory departed from the temple in the days of Ezekiel would an event of similar magnitude occur again (cf. Ezek 10:18). **(ED: SEE SCHEMATIC DEPICTING [Departure of the Glory of Jehovah from Solomon's Temple](#) AS DESCRIBED IN EZEKIEL)(Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))**

**MacArthur** - To the Hebrew, "glory" was often used to refer to God's presence; hence, the text means "Where is God?" The word "departed" carries the idea of having gone into exile. Thus, to the people of Israel, the capturing of the ark was a symbol that God had gone into exile. Although this was the mindset of Israel, the text narrative will reveal that God was present, even when He disciplined His people.(BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Young** adds a similar note on **departed** - It is an ominous word, meaning, is gone into exile. The ark had gone into a foreign land. It is probable that this victory of the Philistines was followed by the desolation of Shiloh. Though the historical books are silent about this tragedy, it was still far from forgotten in Jeremiah's day (Jer 7:12, 14; 26:6). (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**Wiersbe** - Before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Prophet Ezekiel saw the glory leave the temple and the city (Ezek. 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22-23). Ezekiel also saw the future millennial temple and the return of the glory of God (Ezek. 43:1-5). The glory of God didn't return to this earth until the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world (Luke 2:8-11; John 1:14). Today, God's glory dwells in His people individually (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and in His church collectively (Eph. 2:19-22). (See [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Because the Ark ([aron](#)) of God was taken - Ichabod** means where is the glory, or, There is no glory.



**Young on glory** - **Glory** has a variety of meanings in Hebrew. It may mean "weight," used metaphorically to denote worth or prestige. Such "**glory**" may be evidenced in riches (Ps 49:16, 17), in a crown (Job 19:9), in gorgeous vestments (Ex 28:2). The glory of a forest is its trees; of a nation, its people. "**Glory**" is also used as a surrogate for God. Here it means, "Where is God?" **The Hebrews often failed to distinguish between the presence of God and the religious symbols for his presence. God was where the holy objects were. When the ark was taken, God was regarded as absent from Israel.** In subsequent years, Israel's prophets insisted that God was with his people as truly in the hour of chastisement as at the time of blessing. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**And because of her father-in-law and her husband** - See seems to have associated some degree of glory with them.

**William Blaikie** - Poor, good woman! with such a husband she had no doubt had a troubled life. The spring of her spirit had probably been broken long ago; and what little of elasticity yet remained was all too little to bear up under such an overwhelming load. But it may have been her comfort to live so near to the house of God as she did, and to be thus reminded of Him who had commanded the sons of Aaron to bless the people saying, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious to thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace." But now the ark of God is taken, its services are at an end, and the blessing is gone. The tribes may come up to the feasts as before, but not with the bright eye or the merry shouts of former days; the bullock may smoke on the altar, but where is the sanctuary in which Jehovah dwelt, and where the mercy-seat for the priest to sprinkle the blood, and where the door by which he can come out to bless the people? Oh, my hapless child, what shall I call thee, who hast been ushered on this day of midnight gloom into a God-forsaken and dishonoured place? I will call thee *Ichabod*, for the glory is departed. The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken." ([1 Samuel 4](#))

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**Glory** ([03519](#)) **kabod** from root **kabad** = to be heavy or weighty) conveys the central meaning of weight in most OT occurrences and most of the applications carry this figurative sense (cp "heavy with sin"). This sense gives rise to the idea of a "weighty" person in society or one who is honorable, impressive, worthy of respect. The basic meaning of *kābôd* is "glory" or "honor." Such honor or glory can be associated with dignity, wealth, or high position. It involves respect or reverence from others; sometimes it refers to an object as being worthy of respect.

**Kabod** in 1Sa-2Chr - 1 Sam. 2:8; 1 Sam. 4:21; 1 Sam. 4:22; 1 Sam. 6:5; 1 Ki. 3:13; 1 Ki. 8:11; 1 Chr. 16:24; 1 Chr. 16:28; 1 Chr. 16:29; 1 Chr. 17:18; 1 Chr. 29:12; 1 Chr. 29:28; 2 Chr. 1:11; 2 Chr. 1:12; 2 Chr. 5:14; 2 Chr. 7:1; 2 Chr. 7:2; 2 Chr. 7:3; 2 Chr. 17:5; 2 Chr. 18:1; 2 Chr. 26:18; 2 Chr. 32:27; 2 Chr. 32:33

**Departed** (exile) (01540) *galah* means to uncover but in its intransitive meaning it means "to remove," or "to go into exile"

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#### QUESTION - [What does the term "Ichabod" mean in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - The term *Ichabod* is found in two places in the Bible, 1 Samuel 4:21 and 14:3. Ichabod was the son of Phinehas and the grandson of Eli, the priest of the Lord in Shiloh. The sad story of Eli and his two wayward sons, Phinehas and Hophni, is found in 1 Samuel, chapters 2 and 4. Hophni and Phinehas died in battle with the Philistines who captured the Ark of the Covenant and took it away from Israel. Upon hearing this terrible news, Eli fell backward off his chair and broke his neck and died. Phinehas' pregnant wife went into labor and bore a son.

"And she named the child Ichabod, saying, 'The glory has departed from Israel!' because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, 'The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured'" (1 Samuel 4:21–22). The word *Ichabod* means literally "inglorious" or "there is no glory," and in her pain and despair, the woman (who is unnamed in Scripture) lamented over the loss of the glory of God from Israel.

The glory of God is used to describe God's favor and blessings toward His people. In the Old Testament, God's glory is seen as a pillar of fire and cloud that followed the Israelites during the exodus from Egypt, guiding and guarding them (Exodus 13:21). Once the [Ark of the Covenant](#) was built and placed in the tabernacle in the wilderness, and later in the temple in Jerusalem, God's glory resided there as a symbol of His presence among His people. When the Ark was captured by the Philistines, the glory departed from the Israelites—Ichabod became a reality.

Jesus later refers to the concept of the glory of God leaving Israel. In His last message to the populace of Israel, His final word to the religious leaders was "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:37–38). That was His final statement of judgment on Israel for the rejection of their Messiah. He has indicted their leaders and, by indicting the leaders, indicted all the people who followed the leaders. And now He says their house is left desolate—Ichabod, the glory is departing.

Notice that He says *your* house is desolate. Not My house, not My Father's house, as He used to call it. Now it's your house because God has left—Ichabod! God is no longer there, it's not the Father's house; it's not My house; it's your house. The Greek word translated "desolate," means "abandoned to ruin." This place is in abandonment. God has left. It's cursed, devoted to ruination. And they won't see Jesus again till He comes in full Messianic glory (Matthew 23:39).

It is a terrible thing to experience the loss of the glory of God. And while Israel's ruin was temporary "until the fullness of the Gentiles" would be brought into the kingdom of God on earth (Romans 11:25), one wonders how many churches today have lost the glory of the Lord, whether willingly or unknowingly. The same things that caused Ichabod in Israel—sin, disobedience, idolatry—are present in many of today's churches. Christians must never take the glory of God in our midst for granted, lest we wake up one day and find that Ichabod has become a reality among us. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**1 Samuel 4:22 She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken."**

- **The glory:** Ps 137:5,6 Joh 2:17

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## THE GLORY HAS DEPARTED

**She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the Ark([aron](#)) of God was taken."** This possibly refers specifically to the "shekinah glory cloud" (Exodus 13:21), which had evidently been permanently residing in the temple at Shiloh until this time. It is also significant that Shiloh itself is never mentioned as the center of Israel's worship after this. Archaeological and Biblical evidence indicates that the city was eventually destroyed (Jeremiah 7:14; 26:6,9). Yes, the Ark had departed but God was about to show His glory to the pagans in chapters 5-6!

**HCSB** - The wife of Phinehas incorrectly associated God's glorious presence with the presence of the ark of God. However, she was right in the sense that she believed life apart from God's presence was not worth living. (Borrow [HCSB Study Bible](#))

**Ellison** comments that "The glory of God had indeed departed, but not because the ark of God had been captured; the ark had been captured because the glory had already departed."

**Matthew Poole** - "Thus as God was no loser by this event, so the Philistines were no gainers by it; and Israel, all things considered, received more good than hurt by it, as we shall see."

**Eugene Merrill** comments "Since the presence of the ark represented the presence of God in Israel, its capture suggested that not only was the ark gone but God Himself and all His glory were now in enemy hands. To the pagans it was conceivable that gods could be taken into exile (Isa. 46:1-2), but the Israelites should have known that their omnipresent God could not be taken away from them. How heathen Israel's perception of God had become!" (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**William Blaikie** - What an awful impression these scenes convey to us of the overpowering desolation that comes to believing souls with the feeling that God has taken His departure. Tell us that the sun is no longer to shine; tell us that neither dew nor rain shall ever fall again to refresh the earth; tell us that a cruel and savage nation is to reign unchecked and unchallenged over all the families of a people once free and happy; you convey no such image of desolation as when you tell to pious hearts that God has departed from their community. **Let us learn the obvious lesson, to do nothing to provoke such a calamity.** It is only when resisted and dishonoured that the Spirit of God departs (ED: THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN IN THE NEW COVENANT)—only when He is driven away. Oh, beware of everything that grieves Him (Eph 4:30)—everything that interferes with His gracious action on your souls. Beware of all that would lead God to say, "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek My face." Let our prayer be the cry of David:—"Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit." ([1 Samuel 4](#))

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**G Campbell Morgan** - The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken.—1 Sam. 4.22

It was indeed a dark hour for Israel when the Philistines routed them in battle. There fell of Israel thirty thousand foot-men; the two sons of Eli were slain; and the Ark of God was captured. A woman in the anguish of child-birth understood the central tragedy. Her husband was slain, but the more terrible fact was that the Ark was taken. The glory had departed from Israel. That Ark had been at

once the symbol and pledge of the Presence of Jehovah in the midst of His people To that Presence they owed everything. If that was gone, Israel had no glory, for she had neither might nor wisdom apart from her relationship to God. The perpetual spiritual significance of this is patent. The people of God, in every age, have no glory save that of the actual and manifested Presence of the Lord in their midst. If that is lacking, they are poor indeed. They may be, as to earthly matters, rich and increased with goods, and having need of nothing; but they are poor, blind, naked, miserable, when the living Lord is not patently present among them. And there is no mistaking the absence. Men of the world know when the elaborate and spectacular organization is devoid of the power of the living Presence; and when it is so, they hold it in contempt. The sense of the Presence of the Lord to-day may be mystic, defying our explanation, but it is the one and only thing which gives us distinction, and creates our power in the affairs of men. When it is absent, there is no glory—we are Ichabod.

[\(Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible\)](#)

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**QUESTION - [What is the Shekinah glory?](#)** (See in depth discussion of Shekinah Glory on Preceptaustin).

**ANSWER** - The word *shekinah* does not appear in the Bible, but the concept clearly does. The Jewish rabbis coined this extra-biblical expression, a form of a Hebrew word that literally means “he caused to dwell,” signifying that it was a divine visitation of the presence or dwelling of the Lord God on this earth. The Shekinah was first evident when the Israelites set out from [Succoth](#) in their escape from Egypt. There the Lord appeared in a cloudy pillar in the day and a fiery pillar by night: “After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people” (Exodus 13:20–22).

God spoke to Moses out of the pillar of cloud in Exodus 33, assuring him that His Presence would be with the Israelites (v. 9). Verse 11 says God spoke to Moses “face to face” out of the cloud, but when Moses asked to see God’s glory, God told Him, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (v. 20). So, apparently, the visible manifestation of God’s glory was somewhat muted. When Moses asked to see God’s glory, God hid Moses in the cleft of a rock, covered him with His hand, and passed by. Then He removed His hand, and Moses saw only His back. This would seem to indicate that God’s glory is too awesome and powerful to be seen completely by man.

The visible manifestation of God’s presence was seen not only by the Israelites but also by the Egyptians: “During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, ‘Let’s get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!’” (Exodus 14:24-25). Just the presence of God’s Shekinah glory was enough to convince His enemies that He was not someone to be resisted.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the dwelling place of God’s glory. Colossians 2:9 tells us that “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,” causing Jesus to exclaim to Philip, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In Christ, we see the visible manifestation of God Himself in the second person of the Trinity. Although His glory was also veiled, Jesus is nonetheless the presence of God on earth. Just as the divine Presence dwelled in a relatively plain tent called the “tabernacle” before the Temple in Jerusalem was built, so did the Presence dwell in the relatively plain man who was Jesus. “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). But when we get to heaven, we will see both the Son and the Father in all their glory, and the Shekinah will no longer be veiled (1 John 3:2). [GotQuestions.org](#)