

# 1 Samuel 6 Commentary

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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](#)  
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### The Man Samuel in 1 Samuel 1-8



**1 Samuel 6:1** Now the ark of the LORD had been in the country of the Philistines seven months.

- the ark: 1Sa 5:1,3,10,11 Ps 78:61

## SEVEN MONTHS OF SUFFERING

**Now the Ark (aron) of the LORD had been in the country of the Philistines (pelishti) seven months** - That the Philistines kept the Ark of the LORD for seven months is amazing! Did it take them that long to come to the realization that their being ravaged and suffering tumors was by accident? Clearly they had some understanding that Yahweh was behind their suffering. Perhaps they thought their little g "god" might eventually defeat the God of Israel. But now they have come to their senses! 1Sa 6:6 perhaps gives us a clue as to why this suffering was endured for 7 months -- their hearts were hardened like Pharaoh's heart had been hardened. Note that the Lxx adds "and their land swarmed with mice."

**THOUGHT** - O, the futility of resisting the hand of God. Are you resisting the hand of God in some area of your life today, beloved? Give it up! He will win sooner or later. The sooner you submit to His loving discipline, the sooner you will experience the peaceful fruit of righteousness! The writer of Hebrews says "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." (Heb 12:11+).

**Bergen on 7 months** - number to be understood literally but probably included because of its symbolic overtones. The number seven was understood in ancient Israel to suggest "completeness, perfection, consummation" (M. H. Pope, IDB Sup, s.v. "Seven, Seventh, Seventy"). Cf. also G. Archer, who indicated this number suggested "the perfect work of God" (**Borrow - A Survey of Old Testament Introduction**, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1974], 247). In addition to stating the number of months the ark was in

Philistine hands for the purpose of making a more complete historical record, the writer was apparently making a symbolic statement such as, "When the time of exile allotted by God had been fulfilled ..." Such a secondary message would have been particularly relevant to readers/auditors in an Israelite exilic community. (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

Archer on the number 7 - The religious year is dominated by the sacred number seven (symbolizing the perfect work of God). Hence (a) every seventh day is a holy sabbath; (b) every seventh year is a Sabbath year of rest for the crop-bearing land; (c) after seven sevens of years the fiftieth year is to be hallowed as a jubilee, in which all mortgaged lands are to be returned to the original family; (d) Passover is held at the end of the second heptad of Abib, on the evening of the fourteenth; (e) the Feast of Unleavened Bread is celebrated for the next seven days; (f) the Feast of Pentecost is celebrated after seven sevens of days following the offering of the wave-sheaf (hence on the "fiftieth" day); (g) the seventh month, Tishri, is especially sanctified by three holy observances: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles; (h) the Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated seven days (fifteenth to twenty-second of Tishri), plus an eighth day for the final convocation. (Borrow - [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#) - page 247)

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**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](#).

**Pelishti in 1-2 Samuel** - 1Sa 4:1-3, 6-7, 9-10, 17; 5:1-2, 8, 11; 6:1-2, 4, 12, 16-18, 21; 7:3, 7-8, 10-11, 13-14; 9:16; 10:5; 12:9; 13:3-5, 11-12, 16-17, 19-20, 23; 14:1, 4, 11, 19, 21-22, 30-31, 36-37, 46-47, 52; 17:1-4, 8, 10-11, 16, 19, 21, 23, 26, 32-33, 36-37, 40ff, 48ff, 57; 18:6, 17, 21, 25, 27, 30; 19:5, 8; 21:9; 22:10; 23:1ff, 27-28; 24:1; 27:1, 7, 11; 28:1, 4-5, 15, 19; 29:1-4, 7, 9, 11; 30:16; 31:1-2, 7-9, 11; 2Sa. 1:20; 3:14, 18; 5:17-19, 22, 24-25; 8:1, 12; 19:9; 21:12, 15, 17-19; 23:9ff, 16

**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. **Aron** is often used with another word to denote the ark of the covenant: "the ark of the Lord your God" (Josh. 4:5); "the ark of God" (1 Sam. 3:3); "the ark of the God of Israel" (1 Sam. 5:7); "the holy ark" (2 Chr. 35:3). The Ark contained the tablets of the law (Dt. 10:5); a copy of the Law which Moses had written (Dt. 31:26); a pot of manna (Ex 16:33, 34); Aaron's rod (Nu 17:10).

**Aron** in 1-2 Samuel - 1 Sam. 3:3; 1 Sam. 4:3; 1 Sam. 4:4; 1 Sam. 4:5; 1 Sam. 4:6; 1 Sam. 4:11; 1 Sam. 4:13; 1 Sam. 4:17; 1 Sam. 4:18; 1 Sam. 4:19; 1 Sam. 4:21; 1 Sam. 4:22; 1 Sam. 5:1; 1 Sam. 5:2; 1 Sam. 5:3; 1 Sam. 5:4; 1 Sam. 5:7; 1 Sam. 5:8; 1 Sam. 5:10; 1 Sam. 5:11; 1 Sam. 6:1; 1 Sam. 6:2; 1 Sam. 6:3; 1 Sam. 6:8; 1 Sam. 6:11; 1 Sam. 6:13; 1 Sam. 6:15; 1 Sam. 6:18; 1 Sam. 6:19; 1 Sam. 6:21; 1 Sam. 7:1; 1 Sam. 7:2; 1 Sam. 14:18; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Sam. 6:3; 2 Sam. 6:4; 2 Sam. 6:6; 2 Sam. 6:7; 2 Sam. 6:9; 2 Sam. 6:10; 2 Sam. 6:11; 2 Sam. 6:12; 2 Sam. 6:13; 2 Sam. 6:15; 2 Sam. 6:16; 2 Sam. 6:17; 2 Sam. 7:2; 2 Sam. 11:11; 2 Sam. 15:24; 2 Sam. 15:25; 2 Sam. 15:29

**1 Samuel 6:2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we shall send it to its place."**

- **called:** Ge 41:8 Ex 7:11 Isa 47:12,13 Da 2:2 5:7 Mt 2:4
- **what shall:** Mic 6:6-9

## CALL IN THE DIVINERS

**And the Philistines ([pelishti](#)) called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do with the Ark([aron](#)) of the LORD? Tell us how we shall send it to its place** - They were like Nebuchadnezzar when he was puzzled by the dream and called in "the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams." (Da 2:2). This section has the longest recorded dialogue by Philistines in the Bible (120 words in the Hebrew).

**Bergen** - sending away an offended and powerful deity was not a task to be undertaken lightly; if done improperly, Yahweh might become even more provoked, with dire consequences for all Philistia. Thus "the priests and diviners" (v. 2) were called upon to determine the most efficacious means of removing the ark from their region. "Diviners" were a class of religious leaders that Israelites were forbidden to consult (cf. Deut 18:10, 14). (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**ESV Global Study Bible** - Drawing all people to himself. Israel is defeated, but the God of Israel certainly is not. He has allowed the

ark to be taken by the Philistines because of the superstition of the Israelites, but now the ark defeats the superstition of the Philistines! This account shows that when God's people are faithless and attempt to manipulate God through their superstitions, he may allow their superstitions to succeed before then using his power to humble them. The humbled Philistines show more respect to the ark than the Israelites had done: "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" (1Sa 5:8; compare 1Sa 4:3). God has hidden his power in Israel but reveals his power in Philistia—the Israelites give up on their God because superstition has led to defeat, yet due to the same superstition and its effects in Philistia, the Philistines give up on Dagon and acknowledge the God of Israel. Thus the superstitious world of both the Israelites and Philistines has been turned upside down by a missionary God who is creatively drawing all peoples to himself.

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**Diviner** (07080) **qasam** is derived from an Arabic root which primarily means to distribute, divide, decide (by God or so-called fate) and then to determine by lot or magical scroll, and thus to divine. The pagans (and sadly Israel) would divine by various methods -- sometimes by examining the position of the stars, and other times through casting lots with arrows, consulting idols, examining animal organs such as the liver (see esp [Ezek 21:21](#)) or through conjuring up the dead (a sin King Saul committed in [1Sa 28:8](#)). The goal of divination was to attempt to predict the future or discern hidden knowledge by one of these occult methods. A [soothsayer](#) was one who attempted to predict the future by magical, intuitive, or more rational means. Notice that divination was just one of a group of evil (occult) spiritual practices (Dt 18:10)

**Vine on qasam** - Divination was a pagan parallel to prophesying (Dt. 18:10, 14-15—first occurrence.) Qasam is a seeking after the will of the gods, in an effort to learn their future action or divine blessing on some proposed future action (Josh 13:22). It seems probable that the diviners conversed with demons (1Cor 10:20). The practice of divination might involve offering sacrifices to the deity on an altar (Nu 23:1ff.). It might also involve the use of a hole in the ground, through which the diviner spoke to the spirits of the dead (1Sa 28:8). At other times, a diviner might shake arrows, consult with household idols, or study the livers of dead animals (Ezek. 21:21). **Divination was one of man's attempts to know and control the world and the future, apart from the true God. It was the opposite of true prophecy, which essentially is submission to God's sovereignty**([Dt. 18:14](#)).

**Qasam** - 20v - Deut. 18:10; Deut. 18:14; Jos. 13:22; 1 Sam. 6:2; 1 Sam. 28:8; 2 Ki. 17:17; Isa. 3:2; Isa. 44:25; Jer. 27:9; Jer. 29:8; Ezek. 13:9; Ezek. 13:23; Ezek. 21:21; Ezek. 21:23; Ezek. 21:29; Ezek. 22:28; Mic. 3:6; Mic. 3:7; Mic. 3:11; Zech. 10:2

**1 Samuel 6:3 They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but you shall surely return to Him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you."**

- **empty:** Ex 23:15 34:20 De 16:16
- **Guilt offering:** Lev 5:6, Lev 5:15-19 Lev 6:6 Lev 7:1-7
- **known:** 1Sa 6:9 5:7,9,11 Job 10:2 34:31,32

## TWO REASONS FOR SENDING ARK BACK

**They said, "If you send away the Ark ([aron](#)) of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but you shall surely return to Him a guilt offering** - These religious men may have had some sense of the need for offerings to Yahweh, but they undoubtedly made offerings to their inanimate gods. The fact that they call for guilt offerings implies they felt the God of the Ark had been offended in some way.

**Bergen** - Interestingly, the diviners' statements express a knowledge of certain details of the Torah's narrative (6:6), theology (6:5), and ritual (6:3). The diviners understood, for example, that the Philistines needed to "pay honor to Israel's god" and that one way to do that was by presenting "a guilt offering" ('āšām; cf. Lev 5:14–6:7; 7:1–6). However, the means they recommended was totally wrongheaded. In addition to missing the Torah requirement of the slaying of a ram as part of the guilt offering (cf. Lev 5:15), the detestable diviners recommended appeasing Yahweh with ten fashioned images of gold, a violation of the Decalogue's prohibition against all likenesses of animals and humans (cf. Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8). Incredibly, the recommended statues were to be of ritually detestable animals (cf. Lev 11:29)—"rats"! As if that were not enough, Yahweh was also to be given a gift of five golden images of unclean portions of the human anatomy—"tumors"! This advice apparently represents a syncretistic blend of pagan imitative magic and perverted Torah ritual. The fashioning of five mice and five tumors, followed by their subsequent removal from the territory, was no doubt meant to bring about the removal of the troublesome rodent and disease from the region of the five cities. (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**Then you will be healed** - They sound quite convinced of their prophetic pronouncements. Was their "prophecy" by these godless

diviners and priests accurate? Did Philistia experience "healing" once the **Ark (aron)** was returned to Israel? Did the "plague" in Philistia cease? The text is not clear as to whether the ravaging and the tumors subsided. One thing the Scripture does say is that in some form "the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." (1Sa 7:13+) This means that God's hand brought suffering of some sort and some degree on the Philistines for about 50-60 more years (20 years in 1Sa 7:2 plus somewhere less than 40 years of Saul's rule - Samuel died at some time in his rule).

**And it will be known to you why His hand (yad - hand is keyword in 1Sa 4-7 = 13x/13v) is not removed from you - NLT = "Then, if you are healed, you will know it was his hand that caused the plague." This is the second reason for sending back the Ark -- they would know if His hand would be removed from Philistia.**

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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, יָד** 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. **יָד** 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). **יָד** can be used metonymically to describe God's mighty acts, either for the salvation or for the judgment of his people: "the great power (הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה) [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 (יָד הַיְיָ, e.g., Isa 19:16; Zech 2:9 [13]), lifts up his hand (יָד הַיְיָ, Isa 49:22; to swear, Deut 32:40; Ezek 20:5) or stretches out his hand (יָד הַיְיָ, Exod 7:5; Isa 14:26-27; Jer 6:12; יָד הַיְיָ 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 4-5 page discussion of imagery of HAND in [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (online)
- 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;

**1 Samuel 6:4 Then they said, "What shall be the guilt offering which we shall return to Him?" And they said, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for one plague was on all of you and on your lords.**

- **Five golden:** 1Sa 6:5,17,18 5:6,9 Ex 12:35 Jos 13:3 Jud 3:3

## **GOLDEN GUILT OFFERING**

**Then they said, "What shall be the guilt offering which we shall return to Him?"** - The five lords accept the religious leaders' advice.

**And they said, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice according to the number of the lords of the Philistines([pelishti](#)), for one plague was on all of you and on your lords** - This is mere superstition as the offerings to Yahweh are never items made of gold, but are most often live animals who are sacrificed (grain offerings are an exception).

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### **QUESTION - [What were the emerods God afflicted the Philistines with?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In 1 Samuel 5—6 (KJV), God afflicts the [Philistines](#) with emerods in His anger over their taking the [Ark of the Covenant](#) from the Israelites. The word translated "emerods" in the [King James Version](#) comes from a root word literally meaning "to swell," and the Hebrew word translated "emerods" literally means "mound." This is basically all we know about emerods, but the context has led historians and Bible commentators to conclude that the plague of emerods was actually an occurrence of tumors, boils, or possibly hemorrhoids or "piles." Most translations of 1 Samuel 5:6 say the affliction was "tumors"; the ISV says "tumors of the groin"; and the Darby translation says "hemorrhoids."

The emerods were a divine punishment on the Philistines when they defeated the Israelites and captured the Ark of the Covenant on the day that Eli and his sons died. The Philistines brought the Ark to Ashdod, one of the Philistine-controlled cities of Judah. They placed the Ark in their temple next to the statue of Dagon, their pagan god. When the Philistines rose the next day, they found Dagon's image on its face before the Ark. They placed the statue upright, only to find it on the floor before the Ark again the next day—this time with its head and both hands broken off. In addition to humiliating the Philistine god, God afflicted the worshipers of Dagon with "emerods," which could be boils, tumors, or severe, bleeding hemorrhoids (1 Samuel 5:1–6).

The Philistines realized that their affliction was from the God of Israel, and they rightly associated their suffering with the stolen Ark of the Covenant. But they wrongly assumed a change of location would help. They sent the Ark to [Gath](#), another Philistine city. At Gath, God "smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts" (1 Samuel 5:9KJV). The Philistines tried again, sending the Ark on to Ekron, where the same thing happened: "And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven" (1 Samuel 5:12KJV).

We have a couple of other clues as to what the emerods were. The condition was "devastating" to the Philistines and caused "a great panic" in Gath (1 Samuel 5:6, 9). Verse 12 indicates that Philistines were dying from the emerods. This doesn't sound much like hemorrhoids, however severe. Then, in 1 Samuel 6:4, we have the additional detail that rats were somehow involved in the plague. It could very well be that God sent bubonic plague to the Philistines, spread by rats and causing boils and death. It is also possible that the rats were not spreading the emerods but simply destroying crops.

After seven months of suffering with emerods (1 Samuel 6:5), the Philistines called for their priests and diviners and asked what was

to be done about the Ark. Their advice was to send the Ark back to Israel with a guilt offering of “five gold tumors and five gold rats, according to the number of the Philistine rulers” (1 Samuel 6:4). The smarting Philistines made the golden tumors and golden rats, placed the Ark on “a new cart,” and sent the Ark away “with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked” (1 Samuel 6:7). The cows “went straight up . . . keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left” (verse 12), and thus the Ark was returned to Israel. The Bible doesn’t say when the tumors and rats disappeared from the cities of Philistia.

Interestingly, the pagan priests and prophets of Philistia cited the [plagues of Egypt](#) as a reason to send the Ark back to Israel. They asked their fellow Philistines, “Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When Israel’s god dealt harshly with them, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way?” (1 Samuel 6:6). Such was the fame of Israel’s God and the demonstration of His power that pagan nations generations later still feared His wrath. The plague of emerods was bad enough—what if it was only the first of ten?

The word *emerods* first appears in the KJV in Deuteronomy 28. The Lord promised blessings upon the Israelites if they listened to His voice and obeyed His commandments. If they did not, He promised curses upon them, one of which was “the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed” (Deuteronomy 28:27, KJV). The “botch of Egypt” is a reference to the boils with which God plagued the Egyptians during the sixth plague (Exodus 9:9).

Whether the emerods were hemorrhoids or tumors of the private parts or a symptom of bubonic plague, the lesson is that God does not take lightly the disobedience of men. He is holy, and He did not allow the Philistines to profane the Ark of the Covenant. The Lord alone is God, and Dagon, the impotent god of the Philistines, was no match for His power and glory. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Samuel 6:5 "So you shall make likenesses of your tumors and likenesses of your mice that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods, and your land."**

- **mice:** Ex 8:5,17,24 10:14,15 Joe 1:4-7 2:25
- **give glory:** Jos 7:19 Ps 18:44 66:3 \*marg: Isa 42:12 Jer 3:13 13:16 Mal 2:2 Joh 9:24 Rev 11:13 16:9
- **perhaps He will ease His hand:** 1Sa 5:6,11 Ps 32:4 39:10
- **from you, your gods, and your land.:** 1Sa 5:3,4,7 Ex 12:12 Nu 33:4 Isa 19:1

### **PAGANS ADVISED TO GIVE GOD THE GLORY**

**So** - Term of conclusion. Based on their recommendations to the five lords, they offer the following conclusion.

**you shall make likenesses of your tumors and likenesses of your mice that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will ease His hand** ([yad](#) - hand is keyword in 1Sa 4-7 = 13x/13v) **from you, your gods, and your land** - Literally “Perhaps he will lighten his hand from upon you and from upon your gods and from upon your land.” To give glory to God means to give a proper opinion of Him. In this context their acknowledgement that He was the power behind their punishment in effect gave a proper opinion of Him and thus gave glory to Him. Notice the pagan priests acknowledge that hand of Yahweh had been against everything in Philistia, **you, your gods, and your land** (the mention of **land** suggests that likely their harvests had been affected by the hand of the LORD). Notice that they would give Him glory, but they would not worship Him as the supreme and only God.

**1 Samuel 6:6 "Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had severely dealt with them, did they not allow the people to go, and they departed?"**

BGT 1 Samuel 6:6 καὶ νὰ τ βάρνετε τς καρδᾶς μνς βρυεν Α γυπτος κα Φαραω τν καρδᾶν ατν οχ  
τε ν παιξεν ατος ξαπ στειλαν ατος κα π λθον

LXE 1 Samuel 6:6 And why do ye (present tense - continually) harden your hearts, as Egypt and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? was it not so when he mocked them, that they let the people go, and they departed?

KJV 1 Samuel 6:6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

NET 1 Samuel 6:6 Why harden your hearts like the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When God treated them harshly, didn't the Egyptians send the Israelites on their way?



CSB 1 Samuel 6:6 Why harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened theirs? When He afflicted them, didn't they send Israel away, and Israel left?

ESV 1 Samuel 6:6 Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed?

NIV 1 Samuel 6:6 Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When he treated them harshly, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way?

NLT 1 Samuel 6:6 Don't be stubborn and rebellious as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were. By the time God was finished with them, they were eager to let Israel go.

NRS 1 Samuel 6:6 Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had made fools of them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

RSV 1 Samuel 6:6 Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had made sport of them, did not they let the people go, and they departed?

YLT 1 Samuel 6:6 and why do ye harden your heart as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their heart? do they not -- when He hath rolled Himself upon them -- send them away, and they go?

NKJ 1 Samuel 6:6 "Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart?"

NJB 1 Samuel 6:6 Why should you be as stubborn as Egypt and Pharaoh were? After he had brought disasters on them, did they not let the people leave?

- **harden:** Job 9:4 Ps 95:8 Ro 2:5 Heb 3:13
- **the Egyptians:** Ex 7:13 8:15 9:16,34 10:3 14:17,23 15:14-16
- **did they not:** Ex 12:31-33

## PAGAN PRIESTS HAD SOME INKLINGS OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY

**Why then do you harden ([kabad](#); Lxx = baruno = to cause pressure, weigh down - present tense - continually) your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened ([kabad](#)) their hearts?** - Literally "like Egypt and Pharaoh hardened their heart." The implication is that the 5 lords had hardened their hearts which probably explains why they kept the Ark for 7 months. The pagan priests were correct in their recall of the "heart" problem of Pharaoh which cost the Egyptians dearly. God's reputation was clearly known among the pagan nations even though these events had occurred over 350 years before.

**When He had severely dealt with them, did they not allow the people to go, and they departed?**- The religious folks understood that even mighty Pharaoh finally caved in to the mightier hand of Yahweh!

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**Harden** ([03513](#)) [kabad](#) is a verb which is translated in several ways (as shown below in the list of words in NAS) and primarily means to weigh heavily, to be heavy (weighty, burdensome). In some contexts [kabad](#) can also to be honored, to be wealthy, to get honor, to make dull, to make hard, to multiply or make numerous. There are 2 literal uses of [kabad](#) describing Eli as **heavy** (1Sa 4:18) and Absalom's hair as **heavy** (2Sa 14:26). Most of the uses of [kabad](#) are figurative and most of these figurative uses in turn convey the sense of **honor** or **glory** (e.g., a "weighty" person in society is one who is honored or worthy of respect ["respected" = Ge 24:19].) **Note use of [kabad](#) in 1Sa 5-6** = 1 Sam. 5:6; 1 Sam. 5:11; 1 Sam. 6:6;

**1 Samuel 6:7 "Now therefore, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never been a yoke; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home, away from them."**

- **new cart:** 2Sa 6:3 1Ch 13:7
- **on which:** Nu 19:2

### Related Passages:

Numbers 7:7-9+ Two carts and four oxen he gave to the [sons of Gershon](#) (had charge of the fabrics of the tabernacle--the coverings, curtains, hangings and cords.), according to their service, 8 and four carts and eight

oxen he gave to the [sons of Merari](#) (had charge over the cords of the tabernacle and the court, and all the tools connected with setting them up), according to their service, under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 9 But he did not give any to the [sons of Kohath](#) (they had the charge of the most holy portion of the vessels of the tabernacle, including the ark) because **theirs was the service of the holy objects, which they carried on the shoulder.** (IN OTHER WORDS NOT ON A CART!)

## THE MILK COW TEST

**Now therefore, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never been a yoke; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home, away from them** - While they felt the Ark (and the God of the Ark) was the cause of their suffering, they needed to put out a fleece (so to speak) to see if this was God without a doubt. They selected cows that were nursing would naturally want to return to the calves. For the cows to not return to their calves would be most unnatural (and by default supernatural!) Also these cows were to be ones that had never pulled a cart. If their test was "successful" with these two negative features, it would strongly support that God was the cause.

**Guzik** explains it this way - The test was simple, and stacked against God. By nature, two milk cows which have never been yoked should not pull a cart at all, instead they should have resisted their yokes. Additionally, they decided to take their calves home, away from them. The "maternal instinct" of the cows would draw them not towards the land of Israel, but back home to their own calves. The Philistines devised a test that "forced" the God of Israel to do something miraculous to demonstrate He really was the cause of the plagues.

**Bergen** - the priests and diviners directed the Philistines to transport the ark on a cart, **a means of transportation for the ark expressly forbidden in the Torah** (Nu 7:7–9; cf. 2 Sam 6:3–13). Their recommendations were framed in a historical lesson from the Torah suggesting the need for immediate action: "Why harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did?" (v. 6). (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**1 Samuel 6:8 "Take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side. Then send it away that it may go.**

- 1Sa 6:4,5

### Related Passages:

Numbers 4:15+ "When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that **the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them**, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die. These are the things (Nu 4:11) in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

Exodus 25:12-15+ "You shall cast four gold rings for it and fasten them on its four feet, and two rings shall be on one side of it and two rings on the other side of it. 13 "You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 14 "You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. 15 **"The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it.**

Poles for Carrying Ark on Shoulders

## PREPARATION OF THE ARK FOR TRANSPORT

**Take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart**- Bad move! God had instructed that the Ark was to be carried by poles (that were to remain inserted in the rings on the Ark) on men's shoulders (see depiction above), not on a cart. Using the poles prevented anyone from touching the Ark and dying like Uzzah (2Sa 6:6-8+). But the Philistines would have been ignorant of this revelation. Did they still have the poles? The text does not tell us, but in keeping with Exodus 25:15 we can assume the poles were still present.

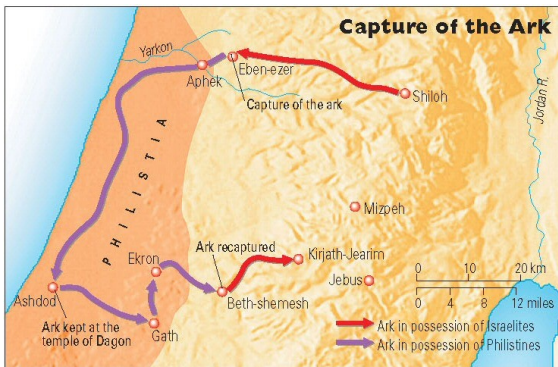
[Matthew Poole](#) writes that regarding the Philistines' mishandling of the Ark - God winked at it in them, both because they were ignorant of God's law to the contrary, and because they had no Levites to carry it upon their shoulders.

**and put the articles of gold which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side. Then send it away that it may**

go - They are sending the Ark away but they also presumed by this maneuver to be sending Israel's deity away.

1 Samuel 6:9 "Watch, if it goes up by the way of its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we will know that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance."

- **Beth shemesh:** Jos 15:10 21:16
- **he:** Am 3:6
- **we will know:** 1Sa 6:3
- **not his hand:** Isa 26:11
- **by chance:** 2Sa 1:6 Ec 9:11 Lu 10:31



Ark from Ekron to Beth-Shemesh

### TEST TO SEE IF PLAGUE WAS YAHWEH OR CHANCE

Watch, if it goes up by the way of its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then He has done us this great evil - Fulfillment of this "if...then" clause would be evidence that Yahweh (**He**) was the cause of the **evil**.

**But if not, then we will know that it was not His hand (yad - hand is keyword in 1Sa 4-7 = 13x/13v) that struck us; it happened to us by chance.** - If the cows did not go to **Beth-shemesh** on their own, then it was not God Who caused the evil. Normally nursing cows would head for their calves, not Beth-Shemesh. In a way they are putting God to the test, because He is only One Who could cause the milk cows to go to Beth-Shemesh. On the other hand, if they go to Beth-Shemesh then is clear God caused the plague and thus the pagans receive a proper opinion of the power of Yahweh. In other words He would be glorified before these pagans.

**Bergen** - If a team of cows that had never been trained or yoked could work together to pull the cart straight for a stretch of several miles, all the while ignoring their maternal instincts to respond to the cries of their unweaned calves, then Yahweh would indeed be accepted as the source of "this great disaster." However, if the cows failed to pull the cart "as far as the border of Beth Shemesh," then the whole series of recent Philistine catastrophes would be understood to have happened "by chance" (v. 9). (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**Guzik on chance** - Some say the world was created by chance. People who are otherwise intelligent often fall into this delusion. Jacques Monod, a biochemist, wrote: "Chance alone is at the source of every innovation, of all creation in the biosphere. Pure chance, absolutely free but blind, at the very root of the stupendous edifice of evolution." Assigning such power to "chance" is crazy because chance has no power. For example, when a coin is flipped, the chance that it will land "heads" is 50%. However, "chance" does not make it land heads. Whether or not it lands heads or tails is due to the strength of the flip, the force of air currents and air pressure as it flies through the air, where it is caught, and if it is flipped over once caught. Chance doesn't "do" anything other than describe a probability. We live in a cause and effect world, and chance is not a cause, but God is the great cause. When Carl Sagan petitioned the federal government for a grant to search for intelligent life in outer space, he hoped to find it by using a super sensitive instrument to pick up radio signals from distant space. When he received those radio signals, he looked for order and pattern—which would demonstrate that the signals were transmitted by intelligent life. In the same way, the order and pattern of the whole universe demonstrates that it was fashioned by intelligent life, not by "chance." Scientists detect "chance" in the radio signals constantly (in the form of unpatterned static), but it tells them nothing. Realizing that **nothing happens by chance** should not make us think every event is full of important meaning from God. Some things just happen and have no great eternal purpose that we can discern. **Christians can get off track by trying to see a message from God in everything But nothing happens by chance.** We live in a cause and effect world. "But wicked men will sooner believe the most uncertain and ridiculous things, than own the visible demonstrations of God's power and providence." (Poole)

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**QUESTION - [How did the Philistines learn that things do not happen by chance \(1 Samuel 6:9\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The [Philistines](#) made themselves enemies of Israel, and they engaged in many battles against God's people. In one instance, they thought they had won a great victory over Israel, but the Philistines would learn the hard way that things do not happen by chance (1 Samuel 6).

Near the end of the time of the judges, the Philistines and the Israelites were [fighting again](#). After a defeat at the hands of the Philistines, the leaders of Israel decided to sway the next battle by bringing the ark of the covenant into the camp (1 Samuel 4:3–6). The leaders treated it as some kind of good luck charm. Initially, the ark provided a psychological advantage for the Israelites, but the Philistines won the battle and took the ark (1 Samuel 4:10–11).

In celebration of their victory, the Philistines put the ark of the covenant in the house of their god Dagon, but the idol kept falling on its face before the ark (1 Samuel 5:3–5). They moved the ark from Dagon's house to various cities, and in each city where the ark went, the people were afflicted with illness and tumors (1 Samuel 5:6–12). After seven months the leaders of the Philistines realized something had to be done, so they inquired of the priests and diviners (1 Samuel 6:2). They recommended to put inside the ark some trespass offerings and give glory to God (1 Samuel 6:3–8). The Philistines were beginning to learn that things do not happen by chance.

The Philistine priests and diviners explained that they should watch the ark as it was carried on a cart drawn by two cows to see which road it would take. If the ark traveled by way of its own territory through Beth Shemesh, then the Philistines would know that God was the one who had afflicted the Philistines. If, on the other hand, the ark took a different path, then they would know that God had not done this, and that all the misfortune had befallen them by chance (1 Samuel 6:9). The Philistines followed the word of their priests (1 Samuel 6:10–12) and watched as the ark traveled directly to Beth Shemesh (1 Samuel 6:13–14). The cows, who had been separated from their calves, "went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left" (1 Samuel 6:12). The rulers of the Philistines could now be certain that the destruction of the image of Dagon and the plague suffered by the Philistines were not happenstance. Those events had been orchestrated by the one true God. The Philistines learned that things do not happen by chance.

When the ark was returned, all the people of Israel cried out to God (1 Samuel 7:2). They returned to the Lord (1 Samuel 7:3–4) and acknowledged their sin before God (1 Samuel 7:6). The Philistines attacked again, but this time God won the victory for Israel (1 Samuel 7:10). The Philistines may have learned that things do not happen by chance and that the one true God is in control, but they forgot that lesson quickly.

Besides providing important historical data, these events can serve us as a cautionary tale. They warn us to learn well that things do not happen by chance. God is the sovereign Creator and has the authority and power over His creation. The Philistines failed to remember that and set themselves against the people whom God had chosen. The Philistines endured difficult consequences as a result. It would have been much better for them if they had remembered the lesson they learned when the ark took the path to Beth Shemesh—that things do not happen by chance. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Samuel 6:10 Then the men did so, and took two milch cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home.**

**THE FIVE LORDS COMPLY  
WITH CART INSTRUCTIONS**

**Then the men did so, and took two milch cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home.**- Note how the writer repeats the fact that calves are shut up at home, and home is the direction the **two milch cows** normally would want to go. But this is not a normal event.

**1 Samuel 6:11 They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the likenesses of their tumors.**

- they put: 2Sa 6:3 1Ch 13:7 15:13-15

## THE ARK AND OFFERINGS PREPARED FOR THE TEST

They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the likenesses of their tumors- Thankfully they did not put the idolatrous images in God's "box" but another box to the side of the Ark.

1 Samuel 6:12 And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh.

## THE PHILISTINES' TROUBLES SHOWN NOT TO BE BY CHANCE!

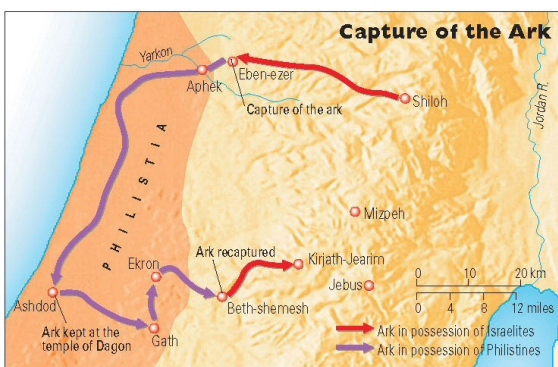
And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left - Why were they lowing as they went? They went straight and not once did these untrained cows turn aside to the right or to the left indicating they were supernaturally steered! Lowing indicates they were likely calling for their calves.

[Answer from Dairy Australia](#) - Cows are herd animals and have complex social structures. Mooing is one way that they interact and how they express their emotions. They use different pitches of sound to express different emotions. **They moo to: seek their herd mates, calf or mother**, say they are hungry; call for a partner when they are wishing to mate; raise alarm to warn their herd mates of potential danger; show contentment; and express pain.

And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh- The five lords follow to see that the cows "passed the test" and now they are convinced that God's hand was upon their land for 7 months! In a sense this was God demonstrating His sovereignty and power to the pagans, but it is doubtful any of them became Gentile "God-fearers!"

## 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



10. 2 Sam. 6:2–5 David begins to move the ark to Jerusalem on a cart
11. 2 Sam. 6:6–7 The Lord strikes Uzzah dead for holding on to the ark
12. 2 Sam. 6:10–11 David takes the ark to the house of Obed-edom, where it stays for three months
13. 2 Sam. 6:12–17 David brings the ark to Jerusalem, and places it inside the tent he pitched for it
14. 2 Sam. 15:24–25 Zadok brings the ark to David, who commands him to carry it back to Jerusalem
15. 2 Sam. 15:29 Zadok and Abiathar carry the ark back to Jerusalem

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**F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - 1 Samuel 6:12 And the kine went along the highway, lowing as they went.**

That two milch kine which had never borne the yoke should move quietly along the high road, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and lowing for the calves they had left behind, clearly indicated that they were possessed and guided by some mysterious power, which we know to have been God's. And if He were able thus to overpower the instincts of their nature, and to compel them to do His will, may we not infer that all circumstances, and all men, however unwittingly, and against their natural instinct, are subserving the purposes of His will, and bearing on the Ark? The fish yields the tribute money; the colt of the ass waits where two ways meet to bear the Redeemer; the man with the waterpot leads to the upper room; the Roman soldiers enable Paul to fulfill the mission of his life, in preaching the Gospel without hindrance in the very heart of Rome.

As we go forth into the world, let us believe that the movement of all things is toward the accomplishment of God's purpose. Herein is a fulfillment of the Psalmist's prediction about man, which can only be perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the second Adam—that all things are under His feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field. Everything serves Christ and those who serve Christ. In a true sense all things are ours; they minister to us, even as Christ to God.

And against our natural inclinations let us always regard the claims of God as paramount; and dare to go His way, though our heart pines for those we leave behind. "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me."

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**G Campbell Morgan - And the kine took the straight way by the way to Beth-shemesh.—1 Sam. 6.12.**

These words constitute the record of a remarkable fact, which to Philistia was a conclusive proof of the action and power of God. As the result of the clamour of the people that the Ark should be sent away, a council was called; and the help of the diviners was asked. It is intensely interesting to see how definitely they recognized the Divine action. Whatever the long years had done for Israel, it is certain that the fear and dread of Jehovah had been implanted in the heart of the surrounding nations. The counselors advised the sending back of the Ark, accompanied by offerings which would indicate their recognition of the fact that the plagues which had fallen upon them had come by the act of God. The method of sending the Ark was of the nature of an experiment, and the sequel shows how their own test must have conclusively proved to them that God was at work. That the kine took their way directly to Beth-shemesh was clear evidence of His overruling. That they should go quietly, lowing as they went, was a most remarkable fact, for they were "milch kine," not trained to draw loads. That they should travel away from their calves was the more remarkable. That they should take their way to the first city of Israel was conclusive. To those who have eyes to see, God constantly bears witness to Himself by turning the natural courses of men and things into extraordinary and unnatural lines of activity. ([Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible](#))

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**1 Samuel 6:13 Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see it.**

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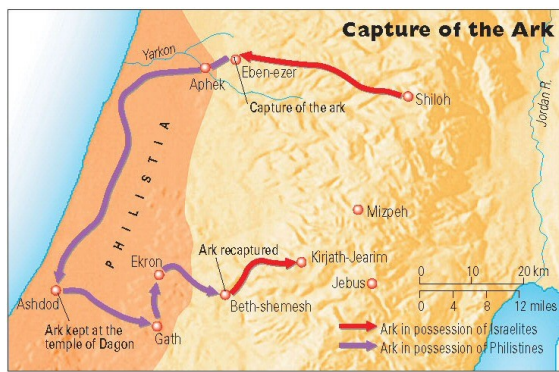
**Related Passages:**

Numbers 3:31+ Now their ([sons of Kohath](#)) duties involved the **ARK**, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister, and the screen, and all the service concerning them;

Numbers 4:4+ "This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting, concerning the most holy things.

Numbers 4:15-20+ "When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die. **These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.** (SHOULDERS - NO CARTS) 16 "The responsibility of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is the oil for the light and the fragrant incense and the continual grain offering and the anointing oil—the responsibility of all the tabernacle and of all that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings." 17 Then the

LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 18“Do not let the tribe of the families of the Kohathites be cut off from among the Levites. 19 “But do this to them that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy objects: Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each of them to his work and to his load; 20 **but they shall not go in to see the holy objects even for a moment, or they will die.**”



**Beth-shemesh in Judah**

## THE RETURN OF THE ARK BRINGS JOY FOLLOWED BY SORROW

Now the people of **Beth-shemesh** (shemesh is a Semitic name for "the sun god") were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see it - Beth-shemesh in the Shephelah of Judah, in the valley of Sorek was a Levitical city set aside for the clan of Kohath, the Levites who were charged with the responsibility of caring for the ark of the covenant (Nu 4:4, 15) and thus would have Levites present and should be familiar with the rules for proper handling of the Ark. As you can see from the map above Beth-Shemesh was less than 5 miles the Philistine border, and was a constant focal point of battle.

**Bergen** says **Beth-shemesh** "was also a designated home for the descendants of Aaron (cf. Josh 21:13–16). It is reasonable to assume that many if not most of the Israelites in this city were from the tribe of Levi and that they, more than most Israelites, would have had cause to celebrate the ark's return." (**ED**: AND ALSO THAT THEY MORE THAN MOST ISRAELITES WOULD HAVE MORE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW THE ARK WAS TO BE REVERENTIALLY HANDLED)(Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**Beth-shemesh** - beth-she'-mesh, beth'-shemesh (beth-shemesh; Baithsamus, "house of the sun"): This name for a place doubtless arose in every instance from the presence of a sanctuary of the sun there. In accordance with the meaning and origin of the word, it is quite to be expected that there should be several places of this name in Bible lands, and the expectation is not disappointed. Analysis and comparison of the passages in the Bible where a Beth-shemesh is mentioned show four places of this name.

**Beth-shemesh of Judah:** The first mention of a place by this name is in the description of the border of the territory of Judah (Josh 15:10) which "went down to Beth-Shemesh." This topographical indication "down" puts the place toward the lowlands on the East or West side of Palestine, but does not indicate which. This point is clearly determined by the account of the return of the ark by the Philistine lords from Ekron (1 Sam 6:9-19). They returned the ark to Beth-shemesh, the location of which they indicated by the remark that if their affliction was from Yahweh, the kine would bear the ark "by the way of its own border." The Philistines lay along the western border of Judah and the location of Beth-Shemesh of Judah is thus clearly fixed near the western lowland, close to the border between the territory of Judah and that claimed by the Philistines. This is confirmed by the account of the twelve officers of the commissariat of King Solomon. One of these, the son of Dekar, had a Beth-shemesh in his territory. By excluding the territory assigned to the other eleven officers, the territory of this son of Dekar is found to be in Judah and to lie along the Philistine border (1 Ki 4:9). A Philistine attack upon the border-land of Judah testifies to the same effect (2 Ch 28:18). Finally, the battle between Amaziah of Judah and Jehoash of Israel, who "looked one another in the face" at Beth-shemesh, puts Beth-Shemesh most probably near the border between Judah and Israel, which would locate it near the northern part of the western border of Judah's territory. **In the assignment of cities to the Levites, Judah gave Beth-shemesh with its suburbs** (Josh 21:16). It has been identified with a good degree of certainty with the modern `Ain Shems.

**Beth-shemesh - 21x in 19v** Beth-shemesh (20), Heliopolis(1). - Jos. 15:10; Jos. 19:22; Jos. 19:38; Jos. 21:16; Jdg. 1:33; 1 Sam. 6:9; 1 Sam. 6:12; 1 Sam. 6:13; 1 Sam. 6:15; 1 Sam. 6:19; 1 Sam. 6:20; 1 Ki. 4:9; 2 Ki. 14:11; 2 Ki. 14:13; 1 Chr. 6:59; 2 Chr. 25:21; 2 Chr. 25:23; 2 Chr. 28:18; Jer. 43:13

**1 Samuel 6:14** The cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite and stood there where there was a large stone; and they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD.

- offered: 1Sa 7:9-17 11:5 20:29 Ex 20:24 Jdg 6:26 21:4 2Sa 24:18,22,25 1Ki 18:30-38

#### Related Passages:

Leviticus 1:3 'If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, **a male without defect**; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD.

Leviticus 22:19 for you to be accepted—**it must be a male without defect from the cattle, the sheep, or the goats.**

### BURNT OFFERINGS ARE MADE TO YAHWEH

**The cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite and stood there where there was a large stone-** God stopped the cart with the Ark in the field of a man who is named, which suggests there is some importance to this fact. Had he handled the Ark reverently, undoubtedly the rest of the story would have been quite different and he likely would have been blessed, Instead, they reapers made an temporary altar on the **large stone**. to have in effect an impromptu worship service. One might think that God would have been pleased for this attention, but that would not prove true!

**and they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD-** What's wrong with this picture? For one thing only male animals were to be sacrificed and these clearly were female cows. The second problem is that this is not necessarily the place God choose to make offerings as instructed in the Law of Moses...

"But **you shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes** to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. 6 "There you shall bring your **burnt offerings**, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. (Deut 12:5-6+)

**1 Samuel 6:15** The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was with it, in which were the articles of gold, and put them on the large stone; and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to the LORD.

### MORE BURNT OFFERINGS TO YAHWEH

**The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was with it, in which were the articles of gold, and put them on the large stone; and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to the LORD-** The people knew enough of the Law of Moses to allow the Levites to handle the Ark. However, **the Levites** would have (or should have) known the procedure for handling the Ark by the poles and never touched and that it was not to even be seen! Instead they put it on a large rock for all to see! It is shocking that the five golden mice and five golden tumors (essentially idolatrous images) were offered to Yahweh as **burnt offerings**. There is no offering of golden material mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

**Bergen** points out that "The present narrative appears to be yet one more indictment against the Levites during the period of the Judges. It thus takes its place alongside the story of the Levite who served as priest for the Danites (cf. Jdg 17:7–18:31), of the Levite who cut up his wife's corpse and mobilized Israel in fratricidal warfare (cf. Jdg 19:1–20:10), and of Eli and his sons." (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**1 Samuel 6:16** When the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned to Ekron that day.

- **the five:** 1Sa 6:4,12 Jos 13:3 Jud 3:3 16:5,23-30
- **they returned:** 1Sa 5:10

## PHILISTINE LORDS SATISFIED SEEING SACRIFICES

When the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned to Ekron that day -Seeing the festive reception of the Ark by the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh surely must have convinced that their "cow cart test" had been successful in showing that their suffering was not by chance, and that they had successfully rid themselves of the dread Ark and its plague.

1 Samuel 6:17 These are the golden tumors which the Philistines returned for a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron;

- **these:** 1Sa 6:4
- **Ashdod:** 1Sa 5:1 2Ch 26:6 Jer 25:20 Zec 9:6
- **Gaza:** Jdg 16:1,21 Am 1:7,8
- **Ashkelon:** Jdg 1:18 Zec 9:5
- **Gath:** 1Sa 5:8 2Sa 1:20 21:22 Am 6:2
- **Ekron:** 1Sa 5:10 2Ki 1:2 Am 1:8

## ONE GOLDEN TUMOR FOR EACH CITY

These are the golden tumors which the Philistines returned for a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron

1 Samuel 6:18 and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities and of country villages. The large stone on which they set the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.

- **the five lords:** 1Sa 6:16 Jos 13:3

## ONE GOLDEN MOUSE FOR EACH CITY

and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities and of country villages. The large stone on which they set the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.

1 Samuel 6:19 He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck down of all the people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.

BGT 1 Samuel 6:19 κα ο κ σμ νισαν ο υ ο λεχονιου ν το ς νδρ σιν Βαιθσαμυς τι ε δαν κιβωτ ν κυρ ου κα π ταξεν ν α το ς βδομ κοντα νδρας κα πεντ κοντα χιλι δας νδρ ν κα π νθησεν λα ς τι π ταξεν κ ριος ν τ λα πληγ ν μεγ λην σφ δρα

KJV 1 Samuel 6:19 And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even **he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men** and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

NET 1 Samuel 6:19 But the LORD struck down some of the people of Beth Shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the LORD; **he struck down 50,070 of the men.** The people grieved because the LORD had struck the people with a hard blow.

CSB 1 Samuel 6:19 God struck down the men of Beth-shemesh because they looked inside the ark of the

LORD. **He struck down 70 men out of 50,000 men.** The people mourned because the LORD struck them with a great slaughter.

ESV 1 Samuel 6:19 And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. **He struck seventy men of them,** and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow.

NIV 1 Samuel 6:19 But God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, **putting seventy of them to death** because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the LORD had dealt them,

NLT 1 Samuel 6:19 But **the LORD killed seventy men** from Beth-shemesh because they looked into the Ark of the LORD. And the people mourned greatly because of what the LORD had done.

NRS 1 Samuel 6:19 The descendants of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the people of Beth-shemesh when they greeted the ark of the LORD; and he killed seventy men of them. The people mourned because the LORD had made a great slaughter among the people.

RSV 1 Samuel 6:19 And he slew some of the men of Bethshemesh, because they looked into the ark of the LORD; he slew seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had made a great slaughter among the people.

YLT 1 Samuel 6:19 And He smiteth among the men of Beth-Shemesh, for they looked into the ark of Jehovah, yea, **He smiteth among the people seventy men -- fifty chief men;** and the people mourn, because Jehovah smote among the people -- a great smiting.

NKJ 1 Samuel 6:19 Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. **He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people,** and the people lamented because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.

NJB 1 Samuel 6:19 Of the people of Beth-Shemesh the sons of Jeconiah had not rejoiced when they saw the ark of Yahweh, and Yahweh **struck down seventy of them.** The people mourned because Yahweh had struck them so fiercely.

NAB 1 Samuel 6:19 The descendants of Jeconiah did not join in the celebration with the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh when they greeted the ark of the LORD, and **seventy of them were struck down.** The people went into mourning at this great calamity with which the LORD had afflicted them.

LXE 1 Samuel 6:19 And the sons of Jechonias were not pleased with the men of Baethsamys, because they saw the ark of the Lord; and the Lord smote among them **seventy men, and fifty thousand men:** and the people mourned, because the Lord had inflicted on the people, a very great plague.

ASV 1 Samuel 6:19 And he smote of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of Jehovah, he smote of the people **seventy men, and fifty thousand** men; and the people mourned, because Jehovah had smitten the people with a great slaughter.

DBY 1 Samuel 6:19 And he smote among the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of Jehovah, and **smote of the people seventy** men; and the people lamented, because Jehovah had smitten the people with a great slaughter.

GWN 1 Samuel 6:19 God struck down some of the people from Beth Shemesh because they looked inside the ark of the LORD. **He struck down 70 people.** The people mourned because the LORD struck them with such a great blow.

BBE 1 Samuel 6:19 But the Lord sent destruction on seventy men of the people of Beth-shemesh for looking into the ark of the Lord; and great was the sorrow of the people for the destruction which the Lord had sent on them.

- **smote:** Ex 19:21 Lev 10:1-3 Nu 4:4,5,15,20 De 29:29 2Sa 6:7 1Ch 13:9,10 Col 2:18 1Pe 4:17

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 4:5-6 **(NO ONE OUTSIDE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD PERMITTED TO EVEN LOOK AT THE ARK MUCH LESS INSIDE!)** "When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it; 6 and they shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on



it, and shall spread over it a cloth of pure blue, and shall insert its poles. (See [Did the high priest have a rope tied to him when he entered the Holy of Holies? | GotQuestions.org](#))

## THE HIGH COST OF IRREVERENCE TO YAHWEH

Ignorance is not bliss in the case of the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh! Ignorance in fact is death! They were even a Levitical city and should have known God's clear instructions on handling the Ark with great caution, care and reverence. But as the story unfolds, they clearly "missed the mark" (description of the meaning of sin!) and discovered quickly that the wages of sin is death!

**He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because** (term of explanation explaining God's severe punishment) **they had looked into the ark of the LORD** - Nu 4:20 was a clear warning about looking inside the Ark, Moses recording "they (KOHATHITES - Nu 4:18,19) shall not go in to see the holy objects even for a moment, or they will die."

**Bergen** points out that "Even the Kohathites, whose God-given duty it was to transport the ark, **were forbidden either to touch or view the sacred box**. Thus, the first duty of the Israelites—especially the Kohathites, whose charge it was to care for the holy things of Israelite worship (cf. Num 4:2)—would have been to **hide the ark from view while avoiding any physical or visual contact with it**." The task required of the Kohathites would have been parallel to the one performed by Shem and Japheth when they were called upon to cover their father's nakedness. Cf. Gen 9:23. Instead, the Beth Shemeshites behaved like Ham (Gen 9:22), a fact that probably would not have been lost on the original audience. (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

**...for our God is a consuming fire!**

-- Hebrews 10:31+, Hebrews 12:29+

**He struck down of all the people, 50,070 men**, - Note that of **all the people** does NOT say **all the people** of Beth-shemesh (he had just stated "**He struck down some** [not all] **of the men of Beth-shemesh**"), and in the following verse we see some of the men of Beth-shemesh speaking. This is a strange passage because it does not explain why the 50,070 men were also struck down. This would have been a **great slaughter**, more dying at this time than the 30,000 who were killed by the Philistines in 1Sa 4:10! Many writers feel that the 50,070 was a transmission error by a scribe and it may have been more like 70 with the 50,000 representing the scribal error, but the manuscript evidence does not support this premise (see NET Note below). Therefore, the question is where did such a large number come from? While we can only speculate, given the popularity of the Ark, it would not be at all surprising for the word to spread quickly to other nearby cities so that spectators could gather fairly quickly and account for the large number who were struck down by God. Remember all they had to do was look at the exposed Ark and they would die. They did not necessarily need to look inside as some did and were struck down.

**Ginzberg** speculates "The **seventy** members of the Sanhedrin perished, and with them fifty thousand of the people." ([Legends of the Jews - a fascinating book](#)) (The problem with this thought is there was not "Sanhedrin" at this time in Israel's history).

**Bergen** - According to both the MT and LXX, God "struck down" (Hb. nkx; cf. 5:6, 9) fifty thousand and seventy men from Beth Shemesh. The number, so large as to defy reason, has been reduced in the NIV and other modern versions, which choose to follow Josephus (Ant. 6.1.4) to a more rational "seventy." Though there are obvious difficulties associated with the extremely large number preserved in ancient versions—for example, the unlikelihood that fifty thousand people ever lived in ancient Beth Shemesh at one time—the MT's reading apparently is the original. Accepting the larger number results in a theological truth consonant with the teachings of the book retained: Israel must respect the Lord more than the might of the Philistines. Although the Philistines with their military prowess could kill thirty thousand Israelites (1Sa 4:10), God in his holiness could kill more than fifty thousand. For Israel, life could be found only in a fear of Yahweh that issued forth in obedience to his Torah and his prophet. (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel - New American Commentary](#))

**NET Note** - The number 50,070 is surprisingly large, although it finds **almost unanimous textual support** in the MT and in the ancient versions. Only a few medieval Hebrew manuscripts lack "50,000," reading simply "70" instead. However, there does not seem to be sufficient external evidence to warrant reading 70 rather than 50,070, although that is done by a number of recent translations (e.g., NAB, NIV, NRSV, NLT). The present translation (reluctantly) follows the MT and the ancient versions here

**Guzik** incorrectly states "The manuscript evidence is pretty clear that the number recorded originally in the text was seventy, not fifty thousand and seventy." **Editorial note** - The manuscript evidence is actually pretty clear that the numbers are as stated (see NET Note above). Furthermore the text does not just state "slaughter" which would have been reasonably appropriate if 70 had died, but "great slaughter" would add weight to the fact that the 50,000 is the actual number slaughtered (plus 70). Not everyone agrees, and we will wait until Heaven to discover the truth of the text.

Even if it were only the one who died, one has to ask why did the Philistines not die from touching the Ark like Uzzah did when he touched the Ark (2Sa 6:6-8+)? Keep in mind that the Philistines had no access to the special revelation of God, so would not have known they had sinned by touching the ark and using a new cart to transport it. Clearly God is merciful toward those with less knowledge of His than will than toward those (like Uzzah) who are or should be knowledgeable. This same line of reasoning explains why it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than it will be for those who personally witnessed the great acts of the Savior in Capernaum (Mt 11:23–24).

**Treasury of Scripture** note says "As it is very improbable that the village of Beth-shemesh should contain, or be capable of employing, 50,070 men in the fields at wheat harvest, much less that they could all peep into the ark, and from the uncommon manner in which it is expressed in the original, it is generally allowed that there is some corruption in the text, or that some explanatory word is omitted."

**and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter-** What should the people have done? Mourned because of their sinful, irreverent handling of the Ark. Instead they mourned the great slaughter!

While I love Warren Wiersbe's comments, it seems he goes a bit far afield in this comment - That 70 men were judged isn't difficult to believe, but 50,000 seems extravagant. However, since we don't know the population of Beth-Shemesh and its environs, we can't pass judgment on the text. One day an archeologist may solve the problem for us. **(ED: HE IS CORRECT - WE CANNOT PASS JUDGMENT ON THE TEXT AND WE DO NOT NEED TO WAIT FOR EXTRA-BIBLICAL CONFIRMATION! GOD SAID IT, THAT SETTLES IT WHETHER WE BELIEVE IT OR NOT AND WHETHER WE CAN EXPLAIN IT OR NOT!)**

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### **New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties - Gleason Archer -**

How could Beth-shemesh have contained over 50,000 men in Samuel's day (1 Sam. 6:19)? Why was such an extreme judgment visited on them?

It is quite true that 50,000 men would seem to have been far in excess of the normal population of a community like Beth-shemesh in the eleventh century B.C. But there is very strong evidence to indicate that the original text of 1 Samuel 6:19 read a much lower number. That is to say, nowhere else is a figure like 50,070 written in this fashion according to the grammar of biblical Hebrew. Normally the wording would have been either **šib'im 'iš waḥamiššim 'elep 'iš** (lit., "seventy man and fifty thousand man") or else in the descending order—which was far more usual—**ḥamiššim 'elep 'iš wašib'im 'iš** ("fifty thousand man and seventy man"). The fact that neither of these customary word orders was followed in the received Hebrew text of this passage gives rise to a very justified suspicion that the text was inadvertently garbled in the course of transmission. **(Textual errors are demonstrable for 1 Samuel more frequently than for almost any other book in the Old Testament.)**

While it is true that the Septuagint already found this same reading in its Hebrew Vorlage (hebdomēkonta andras kai pentēkonta chiliadas andrōn, "seventy men and fifty thousands of men"), it is highly significant that even in the late first century A.D., Josephus (*Antiquities* 6.1.4) refers to the loss of life at Beth-shemesh as only seventy, with no mention whatever of the "fifty thousand." There are also a few Hebrew manuscripts that entirely omit "fifty thousand man." Hence it is not necessary to defend this huge number as part of the text of the original, inerrant manuscript of 1 Samuel. Nor is it likely that more than seventy men would have become involved in the sacrilege of removing the golden propitiatory (KJV, "mercy seat") from the ark of the covenant in order to see what was inside. It is hardly conceivable that fifty thousand persons would have filed by the opened ark in order to peer into its interior and satisfy themselves that it contained only the two tablets of the Decalogue (cf. 1 Kings 8:9). Therefore such an enormous loss of life is almost impossible to account for. Yet for the seventy who were involved in this sacrilege, they showed such an impious attitude toward the God who had invested this symbol of His presence with the most solemn of sanctions that it is hardly to be wondered at that they forfeited their lives in a sudden and catastrophic way—somewhat as Uzzah in the time of David, when he merely touched the exterior of the ark, to steady it in the lurching wagon (2Sa 6:6-8+)

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### **Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask - 1 SAMUEL 6:19—How could Beth Shemesh have a population of over 50,000 men?**

**PROBLEM:** After the people of the town of Beth Shemesh had received the ark of the covenant, some of the citizens ignored the sacredness of the ark and looked inside it. This passage states that the Lord "struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people." However, a population of over 50,000 seems to be much too large for such a community.

**SOLUTION:** First, **this is most probably a scribal or transcription error.** The numerical designation in Hebrew usually follows a certain pattern in which the larger number is written first, then the smaller number. The normal manner to write such a number would be "fifty thousand men and seventy men." However, in this instance, the numbers appear backward. The text actually reads "seventy men fifty thousand men." In addition, numerical designations are almost always connected by the conjunction "and" so that the

statement would read, "fifty thousand men and seventy men." Again this passage departs from the normal practice by omitting the "and." These factors have lead many to suspect that the text was inadvertently corrupted in transmission.

Second, it is also conceivable that some explanation for the size of the group has simply eluded investigation to the present. Some future archaeological excavation may uncover evidence to explain why there was in fact such a large group present, or at least involved in the judgment at Beth Shemesh. Although a population of over 50,000 may have been too great for a community like Beth Shemesh, such population sizes were not unheard of in major cities in the ancient world. This large number may yet be accounted for in some way.

## 1 Samuel 6:20 The men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?"

BGT 1 Samuel 6:20 κα ε παν ο νδρες ο κ Βαιθσαμυς τ ς δυν σεται διελθε ν ν πιον κυρ ου το γ ου το του κα πρ ς τ να ναβ σεται κιβωτ ς κυρ ου φ μ ν

KJV 1 Samuel 6:20 And the men of Beth shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?

NET 1 Samuel 6:20 The residents of Beth Shemesh asked, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?"

CSB 1 Samuel 6:20 The men of Beth-shemesh asked, "Who is able to stand in the presence of this holy LORD God? Who should the ark go to from here?"

ESV 1 Samuel 6:20 Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?"

NIV 1 Samuel 6:20 and the men of Beth Shemesh asked, "Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?"

NLT 1 Samuel 6:20 "Who is able to stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God?" they cried out. "Where can we send the Ark from here?"

NRS 1 Samuel 6:20 Then the people of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? To whom shall he go so that we may be rid of him?"

- 1Sa 5:8-12 Nu 17:12,13 2Sa 6:7,9 1Ch 13:11-13 Ps 76:7 Mal 3:2 Lu 5:8 8:37

### DEATHS PROMPT GOOD QUESTIONS!

The men of [Beth-shemesh](#) said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God?" - The **great slaughter** would have prompted such a question! God is indeed holy and His holiness is not to be trifled with but to be held in reverential awe (with a touch of trepidation in my opinion). This is a great question because the implied answer is no one. Even the High Priest could enter the Holy of holies only once per year and that with some degree of trepidation and with taking of blood.

**THOUGHT** - The answer to this question of course is there is only one Man Who could stand before the Holy God, the Man Christ Jesus. But because all who have placed their faith in Him are clothed with His righteousness (and made positionally holy), all these can stand before the Holy God! Amazing grace indeed!

**Guzik** has an interesting note on their question - In one sense, the men of Beth Shemesh showed a bad heart in asking this question. Their question made God seem too harsh instead of showing themselves to be too disobedient....Their question was not, "How can we be made right with a holy God," but it was "Who can we give this problem to so the holiness of God is no longer a burden to us?"

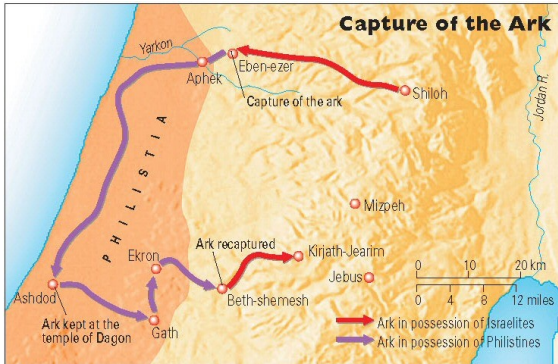
**John Trapp** adds "Here they seem peevishly [angrily] to lay the blame of their sufferings upon God, as over-holy and strict: of their sins, the true cause, they say nothing; but take care to rid their hands of the ark, which they should have retained reverently."

**And to whom shall He go up from us?" - CSB - "Who should the ark go to from here?"** Knowing Yahweh was holy did not make them want to draw near but to put some distance between Him and them! And so in an incredible irony, the citizens of Beth-shemesh mimic the Philistines in seeking to get rid of the Ark because of the **great slaughter**, which was the same thing that had

motivated the Philistines!

**1 Samuel 6:21** So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up to you."

- **Kirjath-jearim:** Jos 18:14 Jdg 18:12 1Ch 13:5,6 Ps 78:60 Jer 7:12,14



### PREPARATION FOR TRANSPORT OF ARK TO KIRIATH-JEARIM

So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of [Kiriath-jearim](#) - Why did they select this particular town? The text is silent. Kiriath-jearim was a Gibeonite city some fifteen miles to the east.

Saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up to you- We don't want the Ark in Beth-shemesh!