

Chapter 4

v.1 “The Philistines were a sea people who settled along the Mediterranean coast around 1200 B.C. They established five major cities, from which they spread inland. These people maintained a military advantage from the time of Samson until the age of David. This was due to the fact that they alone in the area knew the secret of working iron. Their iron weapons were far superior to any weapons of the poverty-stricken Israelites.” (Missler)

v.3 “The elders understood that their defeat was more an indication of God’s displeasure than it was of Philistine military might.” (NIV) “This was a blatant attempt to manipulate God!” (Missler)

v.4 “Hophni and Phinehas did not restrain the army from its improper use of the ark but actually accompanied the ark to the battlefield.” (NIV)

The ark was venerated as the visible sign of the presence of Yahweh. It was Yahweh’s footstool or podium above which was the divine throne itself, flanked in the manner characteristic of Canaanite royal thrones by a pair of winged sphinxes or cherubim.” (McCarter)

v.10 “There is wide agreement that the designation ‘thousand’ denotes some kind of military unit of unspecified size.” (McCarter)

“The ark was captured because Yahweh had chosen to abandon Israel on account of the wickedness of the Elides.” (McCarter). Leadership Matters.

v.13 “Eli had sufficient spiritual sensitivity to be aware of the danger inherent in the sinful and presumptuous act of taking the ark of God into the battle. And he seems to have been even more concerned for the ark than for his sons.” (NIV)

v.21 “The glory of Israel was Israel’s God, not the ark. Yet the removal of the ark did signal estrangement in the relationship.” (NIV) Ichabod—“Alas for the Glory!” (McCarter)

Chapter 5

v.1 “Ashdod. One of the five major cities of the Philistines, it was located near the Mediterranean coast about 35 miles west of Jerusalem.” (NIV)

v.2 “Dagon. In Canaanite mythology the son (or brother) of El and the father of Baal.” (NIV) “The temple referred to here (or a later successor) was burned in 147 B.C. by Jonathan, the brother of Judas Maccabaeus (I Macc 10.83-84; 11.4).” (McCarter)

v.6 “God would not be manipulated by his own people, nor would he permit the Philistines to think that their victory over the Israelites and the capture of the ark demonstrated the superiority of their god over the God of Israel.” (NIV)

“It was the custom of the peoples of the ancient Near East to carry off the ‘gods’ of a conquered enemy and deposit them in places of worship at home.... Clearly a captured god was the final proof of the subjugation of a victim.... It demonstrated the utter helplessness of the defeated army.” (McCarter)

“The collocation of tumors and mice in this account has led most commentators since Martin Luther to identify the disease that ravaged the Philistines as bubonic plague.... In antiquity plague was endemic to coastal areas, where infected rats might arrive by ship.” (McCarter)

“By withholding his hand from the Philistines at Ebenezer, Yahweh had created an opportunity not only to remove his ark from Shiloh and its wicked priests but also to demonstrate his power in the land of his enemies.” (McCarter)

“Warfare in which casualties from wounds inflicted by the enemy exceed those from disease is a modern, indeed a twentieth-century phenomenon; and in the ancient world the divine origin of battlefield epidemics—or indeed of any disease—was never doubted. Plague was the weapon of the gods, and relief could be had only by appeasement of the gods.” (McCarter)

Chapter 6

“The wonderful manner in which the untrained cattle proceed directly to Beth-shemesh demonstrates to the lords of the Philistines what their priests had already suspected, namely, that their recent misfortune was the work of the alien god whose ark they had captured.” (McCarter)

“Hophni and Phinehas thought they could win victories by trusting the ark when their lives were wicked, and God Killed them. Eli died because he had not disciplined his own sons who were dishonoring the Lord. The Philistines died because they treated Jehovah like one of their own gods. The men of Bethshemesh died because they presumptuously looked into the ark. It does not pay to trifle with God.” (Missler)