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1 Samuel 4

Israel was often at war with the Philistines over land and power. The Philistines were the nemesis to Israel and often made incursions into Israel. At this point Israel was being defeated repeatedly by the Philistines due to their superior armor and weapons. The leader of Israel at this time was Eli and his sons.

Map of Philistine Cities and Conquests



This time reflected here in Samuel 4 is leading up to the successive blunders by Israel led by Hophni and Phineas the two sons of the High Priest Eli.

We will get a little off topic but I think it is important to understand who Israel was dealing with as to the Philistines. I'll try not to stray far.

1 Samuel 4:1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

“And the word of Samuel came to all Israel”. It was recognized by all the tribes of Israel that a new Judge was emerging from the Tabernacle and his name was Samuel. Even though at this point Hophni and Phineas were still the active Priests under their father Eli.

Based on the document I sent to everyone via email Samuel is around 38 years old as we start 1 Samuel 4.

Here we start a short rabbit trail.

A little history of the word “Philistine” According to <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Philistine.html>

*“The name Philistine means **Grievors, Burrowers, Weakeners...**, according to Abarim publications.*

According to firmisrael.org the original name for these people was Peleshet: <https://firmisrael.org/learn/down-the-coast-to-gaza-who-were-the-philistines-neighbors-of-israel/>

“Linguistically, since their arrival brought war and destruction to the region, it’s easy to understand how they got their name Peleshet (which became Philistine in English). The word literally means “invaders” or “foreigners” according to Hebrew and Egyptian sources.”

The Philistines were a seafaring culture reportedly originally from the northern islands of the Mediterranean near Crete or Greece in the Aegean Sea. When they left their homeland, they went to what is today the western land Egypt.

As we learned the Philistines were a seafaring culture coming from in the north islands of the Mediterranean. They had a cultural collapse in their homeland the ventured out to survive. One group who were later called the Peleshite which is where the name Palestine comes from. These seafaring people looking for a homeland attacked Egypt from the sea and land and were soundly defeated by Pharaoh Rameses III. It is believed that

some of those the Pharaoh captured he used to populate along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean on what is now Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod. Rameses did this to build a defense against future attacks from the sea from Asia.

The Philistines were not Palestinians and the people who occupied Palestine were not Philistines. They were a combination of former Greeks/Crete's, Arabs and Hebrews. As a matter of fact, Jews referred to themselves as Palestinian Jews.

Show 3-minute video:

https://youtu.be/DadVT2Ux_4

2And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

The Philistines had found a method of create iron of sorts to craft into weapons, much more useful in swords and spears. (this is what historians called the “Iron age”. The Jews were often “out maneuvered” and “outnumbered” in contact with the Philistines. But for the Jews it wasn't weapons, numbers or military tactics that saved them from time to time. It was God when they obeyed Him, He protected them.

God's promise in general to Israel was if they would walk with Him, He would protect them. There were two types of covenants God created with Israel. Unconditional and Conditional. Below is a conditional covenant that is relevant to Israel in the time of the Judges and clearly during Samuel's time as a judge and prophet.

Deuteronomy 11: 26Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; 27A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: 28And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

Eli and his two son's Phineas and Hophni did not walk in the way of the Lord and led or allowed Israel to fall into sin. The result was God placing a protagonist against their western border the Philistines. They became a nemesis of Israel for Israel's failure to walk with God. God would use them to punish Israel for their failure to walk with Him.

When people have no good reliable leader, they will conjure up some incredibly stupid ideas.

3And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

The elders were usually the leaders of the 12 tribes and would consult with one another in decisions that affected the nation of Israel. When there was an active Judge or Prophet they would seek their guidance. With Eli on his death bed and his sons being so far from God they relied on their own tribal wisdom.

The people thought of God or more specifically His earthly throne as a talisman of sorts to be used as they saw fit. Instead of inquiring of the Lord they simply set their plan in motion. Now one would think that those God had put in charge of the Tabernacle would themselves resist the people until they had sought the Lord but no, we have two near-do-wells in Phineas and Hophni overseeing the Tabernacle while their father the High Priest Eli lay on his death bed.

4So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth *between* the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

What are the odds of two men overseeing the most important object in Israel, and these two men were a couple of the most reprobate in the nation? Glad nothing like that ever happened in America!!!!

When God instructs Israel as He did with Joshua and Jericho as how to defeat an enemy, God receives the Glory as He should.

Joshua 6: 1Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. 2And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

God brought about the fall of Jericho without Israel having to fire a single arrow. *“The people of Israel marched around the city; seven times they marched around the walls of Jericho. Singing Glory to God they shouted together and down came the walls of Jericho.”*

Even as today with Believers, God has always wanted a personal relationship with those who Believe in Him and Love Him. When the covenant relationship is replaced by a symbolic relationship the true connection to God is broken. The Arc was that symbol of God’s presence, and it now takes the place of the True God as Israel brings it from Shiloh.

How many religions today worship symbols and other gods instead of the Living God Elohim?

You could liken it to today’s worship of the environment over worshipping the God of Creation. Many religions that call

themselves Christian today have forsaken God and turned to their own idol worship such as the Environment or even LBGT. Idol worship replacing God and His Word with woke ecclesiastics.

5And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

The deception to Israel was brought about by non-Godly leaders deciding on a tactic and those whom God had put in charge failing in their positions. Israel is misled by evil and will pay the price.

6And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

Non-Believers and religious people can be easily stampeded as the world will see during the Tribulation. But leading up to that time, we can see history repeat itself by entire nations being stampeded into hatred, violence, fear. Turning to symbols instead of God.

The Philistines had heard the stories of Israel and the power of its Arc. They had been successful in their attacks thus far, but the introduction of the God of Israel into the battle caused them to fear.

The problem for Israel was putting their faith in an object and not in God. Not seeking God's Council before making decisions and taking action.

7And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. 8Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these *are* the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

Idol worshipers were taught that there were many gods, they could not conceive of a single God a living God that loved and protected. So, their take on Egypt and Israel was that Israel had many gods.

The escape from Egypt was a story told repeatedly. When a mighty world powers fell legends were made of those who overthrew them. This legend had the God of the Hebrew's as its focus and now it appeared to the Philistines that this Hebrew God was in the camp of their enemy.

9Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

10And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a

very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

The thing that the Philistines feared did not take place. Quite the contrary they killed over 30,000 Hebrew soldiers. Those who did not die in battle fled back into Israel.

Even worse or as it would seem the Ark that was to be in Shiloh was captured and taken by the Philistines.

11And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

If you recall the prophet that came to Eli in the second chapter, told Eli that all males of his family would not grow old but would die young. He also told Eli that both of his sons would die on the same day. Eli and his family were cursed for their sin at the Tabernacle.

1 Samuel 2:32And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. 33And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.34And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.

Reports of war and the success or failure often took days to reach the home of the warriors. Sometimes if the battle was nearby the results would arrive sooner as in the case of Eli's sons.

12And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

Tearing one's clothing and putting dirt on their head symbolized bad news and this is the state of the Benjamite who brought news of not only Eli's sons but even more devastating news of the Arc of the Covenant. In fact, Eli was more concerned about the Arc that has been in his custody than the lives of his evil sons.

No where is mentioned Samuel in these events of the Arc. And remember based on the documents you have Samuel would be around 38 years old now. It was through these events and the deaths of Eli and his family that we will see Samuel emerge.

13And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told *it*, all the city cried out. 14And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli. 15Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

Eli was near death at 98, and was blind. He could hear the crying and wailing in the city of Shiloh, but he would have to wait to find out what had happened.

16And the man said unto Eli, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? 17And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

Eli had already been chastised by God through the Prophet from 1 Samuel 2, and now those things that he had said came true. But even worse, Eli had not been told that the Arc would be lost and was obviously in agony having let it go from Shiloh or had known his son's personally remove the Arc and take it to the battle. Eli's distress was immense. Eli was well aware that God had not told him or anyone else to take the Arc from the Tabernacle to the battlefield. That was all ingenuity of man, and it failed miserably.

18And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

The Arc was crafted precisely as God directed by Moses and his craftsmen. It was a symbol of the God in the Law, food and life, containing the 10 Commandments, manna and Aaron's rod. It sat

in the Holy of Holies only seen by the High Priest once a year for a very special offering.

An overview of the Day of Atonement from Got Questions:

“The Day of Atonement ([Leviticus 23:27-28](#)), also known as Yom Kippur, was the most solemn holy day of all the Israelite feasts and festivals, occurring once a year on the tenth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. On that day, the high priest was to perform elaborate rituals to atone for the sins of the people. Described in [Leviticus 16:1-34](#), the atonement ritual began with Aaron, or subsequent high priests of Israel, coming into the holy of holies. The solemnity of the day was underscored by God telling Moses to warn Aaron not to come into the Most Holy Place whenever he felt like it; he could only come on this special day once a year, lest he die (v.2). This was not a ceremony to be taken lightly, and the people were to understand that atonement for sin was to be done God’s way.”

The Arc in the Holy of Holies was a symbol of God’s presence on earth with His chosen people Israel. There were so many rules surround the Arc that to remove it would be beyond reason without God’s direction to do so. Not seeking God in the matter of the battle and to simply assume that taking this symbol would somehow entice God to act was beyond comprehension.

One of Eli’s sons was married, and his wife was pregnant. The following is what happened when she hears of her husband and the Arc’s fate.

19And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, *near* to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.

This woman had probably lived in luxury compared to most women in Israel. All due to her father-in-law being the High Priest, her husband the son of the High Priest and a Priest to Israel himself was now left destitute. To make matters worse she realized what the loss of the Arc meant. It was the symbol that made the Tabernacle a Holy Place. Now all of it was gone. She was in agony, so much so that she would not survive either.

20And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard *it*. 21And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.

According to Strong's Concordance.

"Ichabod means "no glory or inglorious".

22And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

Israel is in turmoil, defeated by the Philistines, they lost the arc to their enemy, thousands of soldiers were killed, Eli the High Priest

is dead and so are his two evil Priestly sons as well as the wife of one of his sons. The city of Shiloh was in morning, not knowing what would come next. They knew that the Glory of God had departed from them, even though they wrongly assigned that departure to the Arc, but in fact God had removed Himself long before that. That is why they had no prophets, no judges, no hope, only despair.

But God, He will change things. But God, and only God has the power to change things. But God, has the power to raise up a prophet and a judge and get Israel to listen again, even for a short time, but at least they would see their failings and repent.

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