

Catastrophe In Israel

Housekeeping / Homework:

- *The Making Of A Man Of God*, by Alan Redpath
- Available on podcast; notes & audio at: www.htchurch.com/samuel

About Samuel

- Just one book in the Hebrew Bible
- Writers: Samuel, Gad, and Nathan
- Main characters: Samuel, King Saul, King David
- When did this all happen? Samuel born around 1100 B.C. King David conquered Jerusalem sometime around 1000 B.C.
- God’s goals:
 - raising up the prophetic ministry
 - raising up the kingly ministry
 - raising up the priestly ministry
- Where in Bible history? First Samuel begins with the story of Samuel’s birth, and Second Samuel ends with the story of David purchasing the land for the Temple.
- Chapter One: Hannah and the birth of Samuel.
- Chapter Two: Eli, the priest, and his two wicked sons.
- Chapter Three: Announcements of judgment; Samuel established as a prophet.

Samuel Established As A Prophet (1 Sam. 3:19-4:1a)

19 So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord. 21 Then the Lord appeared again in Shiloh. For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. 1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

- The acceptance of Samuel’s prophetic ministry was something Israel probably hadn’t seen since Moses. God didn’t let any of his words fall to the ground.
- Now we read that the Lord appeared again. This probably means that the Angel of the Lord was appearing to Samuel.
- Prophets not only received verbal messages, but would often see God in His Divine Council. (Think of Isaiah in Isaiah Chapter 1.)
- Yahweh appeared as the pre-incarnate Christ, probably as He had earlier appeared to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses.
- The word of Samuel came to all the nation. The spiritual darkness was lifting off!

An Unexpected Defeat (1 Sam. 4:1b-4)

1b Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. 2 Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field. 3 And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies.”

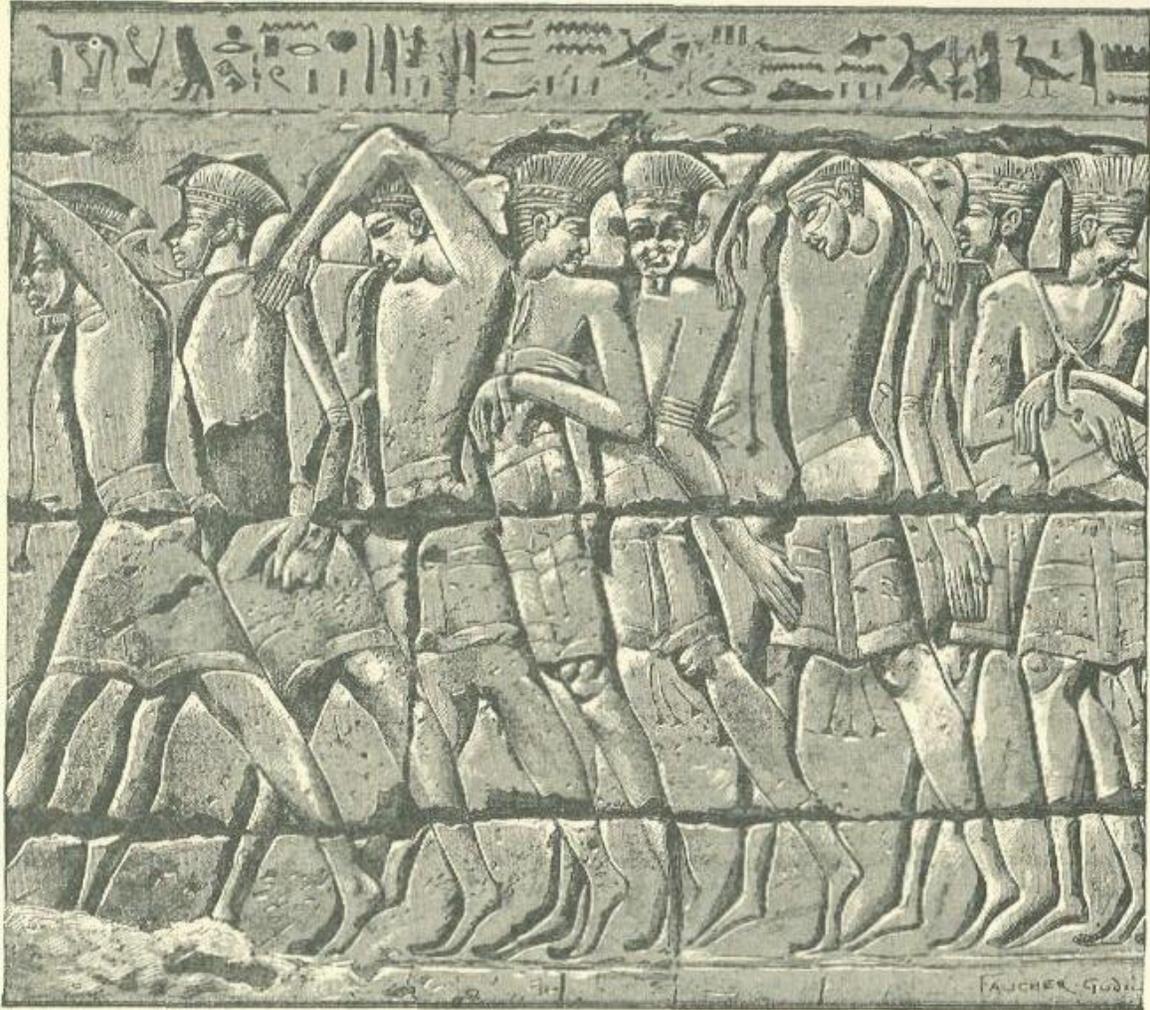
4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

- We don't know why this battle took place. Ebenezer was possibly in central Israel, and so the Philistines may have been looking to take territory.
- The number of deaths (4,000) may seem large, but isn't unrealistic.
- The elders attribute Israel's defeat to the direct action of God, but they do not seek God. Instead, they became religious, even superstitious.
- Ark of the Covenant was also called the Ark of Yahweh of Hosts (Yahweh of Armies).

Who Were The Philistines?

One of the most powerful enemies that Israel ever faced.

- *Philistines* appears 250+ times, the majority of those times in Samuel.
- The Hebrew is *Pilistim* or *Pilishtim*: possibly meaning *foreigner* or *wanderer*.
- Around 1200 B.C., the "Sea Peoples" invaded Egypt.
- The Bible says they came from Caphtor, which may have been Crete. They seem to have been an Aegean people.
- The Bible seems to treat them as if they were a collection of different people. When the Bible was first translated into Greek they didn't call the Philistines *Philistines*; instead they just called them *Allophuloi*: "other nations."
- Abraham and Isaac had dealings with people who may have been *other* Philistines. Moses said that the Philistines in Genesis were descended from Ham.



Egyptian Carving of Philistine Captives at Medinet Habu

- The Philistines were clustered mainly in five key cities: Ashdod; Ashkelon; Ekron (ruin); Gath (ruin); and, Gaza.
- The word *Philistine*, or *Philistia*, meaning the place of the Philistines, has given us our word Palestine, which has been used for many centuries.



Cities of the Philistine Pentapolis

Let's Talk About The Ark of the Covenant

If you saw *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, then you already have a good idea of what it was!

- The Ark was made of wood, and covered over with pure gold.
- On top was a cover, called the *Mercy Seat*. The Mercy Seat had two angels, or cherubim, on it, sweeping out their wings to create a resting place for God.

- The Ark was considered an earthly throne for Yahweh. See 1 Chronicles 28:2: *“Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God...”*



“Moses and Joshua In The Tabernacle”

- It was also called the Ark of God’s Testimony, because it contained the tablets of the Law, along with a pot of manna, and Aaron’s Rod.
- On the Day of Atonement, blood of sacrifice was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat.
- The Ark was held in great reverence, not only for what it contained, but because the glory of God was there, resting upon the cherubim.
- The Israelites revered the Ark, but they were misusing the Ark as a magic charm.

Catastrophe (1 Sam. 4:5-11)

5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook. 6 Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. 7 So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp!" And they said, "Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before. 8 Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9 Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!" 10 So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. 11 Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

- Fleshly enthusiasm or real worship?
- The Philistines for their part were mostly ignorant about the Israelite god.
- The Philistines here and in other places may be a *type* or symbol of *the world*.

Eli's Sad End (1 Sam. 4:12-18)

12 Then a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line the same day, and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. 13 Now when he came, there was Eli, sitting on 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. 14 When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What does the sound of this tumult mean?" And the man came quickly and told Eli. 15 Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see.

16 Then the man said to Eli, "I am he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line." And he said, "What happened, my son?" 17 So the messenger answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured." 18 Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

- This might have been real grief, but more likely it reveals a religious spirit.

The Glory Has Departed (1 Sam. 4:19-22)

19 Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, due to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. 20 And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard it. 21 Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. 22 And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

- *Ichabod* means "no glory," or "missing glory."
- Israel was now in an even worse crisis than before. Their faith would have been shaken, because the Ark, which was more than a mere symbol, had been taken.
