

The Ark and the Philistines (c. 1104 – c. 1103 BC)

1 Samuel 5:1–7:2

Ashdod

5:1 Now *the* Philistines had captured the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

2 Then *the* Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the temple of Dagon and placed it beside Dagon.

3 When the Ashdodites got up early the next morning, there was Dagon fallen with his face to the ground before the ark of Yahweh! So they took Dagon and returned him to his place.

4 When they got up early in the morning the next day, there was Dagon fallen *again* with his face to the ground before the ark of Yahweh! The head of Dagon and the palms of his two hands were cut off, lying at the threshold; only *the body* of Dagon was left.

5 (Therefore the priests of Dagon and all who come into the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod until this *very* day.)

6 Now the hand of Yahweh was heavy against the Ashdodites and he destroyed them and struck them with tumors, both in Ashdod and its territories.

7 The men of Ashdod saw *that* it *was* so, and they said, “The ark of the God of Israel should not remain with us, because his hand *is* harsh on us and on Dagon our god!”

Gath

8 So they sent and gathered all the rulers of *the* Philistines to them, and they asked, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” And they said, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around toward Gath.” So they moved the ark of the God of Israel *to Gath*.

9 After they moved it, the hand of Yahweh was against the city, causing a very great confusion, and he struck the men of the city from the youngest to the oldest, causing tumors to break out on them.

Ekron

10 So they sent the ark of God *to* Ekron. But when the ark of God came *to* Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, saying, “They have brought around the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people!”

11 So they sent and gathered all the rulers of *the* Philistines, and they said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel and let it return to its place, so that it will not kill us and our people.” For a deadly confusion was throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

12 The men who did not die were struck with *the* tumors, so that the cry of the city for help went up *to* heaven.

The Ark is Returned

6:1 Now the ark of Yahweh had been in the territory of *the* Philistines *for* seven months,

2 and *the* Philistines called to the priests and to those who practiced divination, saying, “What should we do with the ark of Yahweh? Inform us how we should send it to its place.”

3 They said, “If you *are* sending the ark of the God of Israel away, you must not send it away empty, but by all means return it with a guilt offering. Then you will be healed and it will become known to you why his hand *is* not turned aside from you.”

4 And they said, “What *is* the guilt offering that we should return to him?” They said, “The number of the rulers of *the* Philistines *is* five. Therefore send five gold tumors and five gold mice, because one plague *was* on all of you and all your rulers.

5 You must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that *are* ravaging the land, and you must give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand on you and on your gods and on your land.

6 Why should you harden your hearts like *the* Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their heart? Is it not just like when he dealt with them wantonly so that they sent them away and they left?

7 So then, prepare one new utility cart and two milking cows that have never had a yoke on them, and you must harness the cows to the utility cart and then turn their calves from following them to their stall.

8 And you must take the ark of Yahweh and place it on the utility cart with the gold objects that you *are* returning to him as a guilt offering. You must place *them* in the container beside *the ark* and then send it *off* so that it goes away.

9 You must watch; if it goes up by the way of its territory to Beth Shemesh, he has caused this great disaster to *come on* us. But if not, then we will know his hand has not struck us; it *was by* chance *that* this happened to us.

10 So the men did so; they took two milking cows and harnessed them to the utility cart, but they shut up their calves in the stall.

11 Then they put the ark of Yahweh on the utility cart with the container *holding* the gold mice and the images of their tumors.

12 The cows went straight on the way on the road to Beth Shemesh, on the one main road, lowing as they went. They did not turn aside to the right or to the left, and the rulers of *the* Philistines *were* walking after them up to the border of Beth Shemesh.

Beth-shemesh

13 Now *the people of* Beth Shemesh *were* reaping the wheat harvest in the valley. They lifted their eyes and saw the ark, and they were glad to see *it*.

14 The utility cart came to the field of Joshua *of* Beth Shemesh and stopped there where there *was* a large stone. They split the

wood of the utility cart and sacrificed the cows *as* a burnt offering to Yahweh.

15 Then the Levites took down the ark of Yahweh and the container that was beside it, in which *were* the gold objects, and *they* set them on the large stone. Then the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings, and they made sacrifices to Yahweh on that day.

16 The five rulers of *the* Philistines saw *it* and returned *to* Ekron that *same* day.

17 Now these *are* the gold tumors which *the* Philistines returned *as* a guilt offering to Yahweh: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron.

18 And the gold mice *according to* the number of all the cities of *the* Philistines, for their five rulers, from *the* fortified city to the unwallled village of the open country as far as the great stone, where they set the ark of Yahweh until this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh.

19 He struck seventy men among the men of Beth Shemesh because they looked into the ark of Yahweh. So the people mourned because Yahweh had struck a great blow among the people.

20 Then the men of Beth Shemesh asked, “Who *is* able to stand before Yahweh, this holy God? And to whom shall it go up from us?”

21 So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath Jearim saying, “*The* Philistines have returned the ark of Yahweh. Come down and take it up to yourselves.”

Kiriath-jearim

7:1 The men of Kiriath Jearim came and brought up the ark of Yahweh, and they brought it to the house of Abinadab in Gibeah. They consecrated Eleazer his son to guard the ark of Yahweh.

2 From the day the ark stayed in Kiriath Jearim, days multiplied and became twenty years while all the house of Israel mourned after Yahweh.

Judgeship of Samson (c. 1104 – c. 1084 BC)

Judges 14–15

Seeking for an Opportunity Against the Philistines

14:1 And Samson went down to Timnah, and he saw a woman in Timnah from the daughters of the Philistines.

2 He went up and told his father and mother, and he said, “I saw a woman in Timnah from the daughters of *the* Philistines; so then, take her for me as a wife.”

3 But his father and mother said to him, “Is there not a wife among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must take a wife from *the* uncircumcised Philistines?” But Samson said to his father, “Take her for me because she pleases me.”

4 His father and mother did not know that this *was* from Yahweh; he was seeking for an occasion against *the* Philistines. Now at that time *the* Philistines *were* ruling in Israel.

Samson’s Riddle

5 And Samson and his father and mother went down to Timnah, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah, and suddenly a young lion *came* roaring to meet him.

6 And the Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one might tear apart a male kid goat (he was bare-handed). But he did not tell his father and mother what he had done.

7 Then he went down and talked to the woman, and she pleased Samson.

8 And he returned after awhile to marry her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and there *was* a swarm of wild honey bees in the body of the lion, and honey.

9 He scraped it out into his hands, and he went on, eating *it* as he went. And he went to his father and mother and gave *some* to them, and they ate it. But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the body of the lion.

10 His father went down to the woman, and Samson prepared there a feast, as young men were accustomed to doing this.

11 When they saw him, they took thirty companions, and they were with him.

12 And Samson said to them, “Let me tell you a riddle. If you can fully explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find *it out*, I will give to you thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments.

13 But if you are unable to explain it to me, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments.” So they said to him, “Tell your riddle; let us hear it.”

14 He said to them,

“From the eater came out food,
From *the* strong came out sweet.”

But they were unable to explain the riddle for three days.

The Philistines Force Samson’s Wife to Reveal the Answer

15 When it was the fourth day, they said to Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband and tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your

father's house with fire. Have you invited us to rob us?"

16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and she said, "You must hate me; you do not love me. You told the riddle to my people, but you have not explained *it* to me." He said to her, "I have not explained *it* to my father and mother. *Why* should I explain it to you?"

17 She wept before him the seven days of their feast; and it happened, because she nagged him, on the seventh day he explained *it* to her, and she told the riddle to her people.

18a The men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went *down*,

"What *is* sweeter than honey?
What *is* stronger than a lion?"

Samson Feels Justified in Attacking the Philistines

18b And he said to them,

"If you had not plowed with my heifer,
you would not have found out my riddle."

19 And the Spirit of Yahweh rushed on him, and he went down to Ashkelon. He killed thirty men from them, and he took their belongings, and he gave festal garments to the ones that explained the riddle. He was angry, and he went up to his father's house.

The Philistine Father Gives Samson's Wife to Another Man

20 And Samson's wife was *given* to his companion who *was* his best man.

15:1 After a while, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat. He said, "I want to go to my wife's private room." But her father would not allow him to enter.

2 Her father said, "I really thought that you hated her, so I gave her to your companion. *Is* not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please, take her instead."

Samson Again Feels Justified in Taking Revenge

3 And Samson said to them, "This time, as far as the Philistines are concerned, when I do something evil I am without blame."

4 And Samson went and captured three hundred foxes, and he took torches. He turned *them* tail to tail, and he put one torch between two tails.

5 He set fire to the torches and let *the foxes* go into the standing grain of *the* Philistines, and he burned both the stacks of sheaves and the standing grain, up to the vineyards of olive groves.

The Philistines Retaliate

6 And *the* Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they said, "Samson the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and gave her to his companion." And *the* Philistines went up and burned her and her father with fire.

Samson Takes Revenge Once Again

7 Samson said to them, "If you want to behave like this, *I swear* I will not rest unless I have taken revenge on you."

8 And he gave them a thorough beating, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

The Philistines Decide to Eliminate Samson Permanently

9 Then *the* Philistines came up and encamped in Judah, and they overran Lehi.

10 And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" And they said, "To bind Samson; to do to him just as he did to us."

11 Then three thousand men from Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and they said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines *are* ruling over us? What *is* this *that* you have done to us?" And he said to them, "Just as they did to me, so I have done to them."

12 They said to him, "We have come down to bind you and give you over into the hand of *the* Philistines." And Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not attack me yourselves."

13 They said to him, "No, we will only bind you and give you into their hand; we will certainly not kill you." So they bound him with two new ropes, and they brought him up from the rock.

Samson Kills an Entire Philistine Battalion

14 As he came up to Lehi, *the* Philistines came shouting to meet him; and the Spirit of Yahweh rushed on him, and the ropes that *were* on his arms became like flax that has burned with fire, and his bindings melted from his hands.

15 And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey; he reached down and took it and killed one thousand men with it.

16 And Samson said,

“With the jawbone of the donkey,
heap upon heap;
with the jawbone of the donkey,
I struck dead one thousand men.”

- 17 And it happened, when he finished speaking he threw the jawbone from his hand; and he called that place Ramath Lehi.
18 And he was very thirsty, and he called to Yahweh and said, “You gave this great victory into the hand of your servant, but now I must die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?”
19 So God split the hollow place that *is* at Lehi, and water came out from it; and he drank, and his spirit returned, and he was revived. Thus he called its name The Spring of Ha-Qore, which *is* at Lehi to this day.
20 And he judged Israel in the days of *the* Philistines twenty years.

Judgeship of Ibzan (c. 1100 – c. 1093 BC)

Judges 12:8–10

- 8 After him [Jephthah] Ibzan from Bethlehem judged Israel.
9 He had thirty sons. He gave his thirty daughters away in marriage outside *his clan* and brought in from outside thirty young women for his sons. He judged Israel for seven years.
10 Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

Judgeship of Elon (c. 1093 – c. 1083 BC)

Judges 12:11–12

- 11 After him [Ibzan] Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel, and he judged Israel ten years.
12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

The Death of Samson (c. 1084 BC)

Judges 16

Samson Carries the Gaza City Gates 38 Miles Uphill to Hebron

- 1 Samson went down to Gaza; there he saw a prostitute and had sex with her.
2 The Gazites *were told*, “Samson has come here,” so they surrounded *the place* and lay in ambush for him all night at the city gate. They kept silent all night, saying, “*We will wait* until the morning light, and then we will kill him.”
3 But Samson lay until the middle of the night; he got up in the middle of the night and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two door posts, tore them loose with the bar, put them on his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.

Samson and Delilah

- 4 After this he fell in love *with* a woman in the wadi of Sorek, and her name *was* Delilah.
5 And the rulers of *the* Philistines came up to her and said, “Entice him and find out what makes his strength so great, and how we can overpower him, so that we may bind him up in order to subdue him; each of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.
6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me what makes your strength so great, and with what can you be tied up to subdue you?”
7 Samson said to her, “If you tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings that are not dried up, I will become weak like everyone else.”
8 So the rulers of *the* Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that were not dried up, and she tied him up with them.
9 The ambush *was sitting in wait* for her in an inner room. And she said to him, “*The Philistines are upon you Samson!*” And he snapped the bowstrings just as flax fiber snaps when it comes close to fire. And *the secret* of his strength remained unknown.
10 Delilah said to Samson, “Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you can be bound.”
11 He said to her, “If they tie me tightly with new ropes that have not been used, I will become weak and be like everyone else.”
12 So Delilah took new ropes and tied him up with them, and she said to him, “*The Philistines are upon you, Samson!*” (The ambush *was sitting* in an inner room.) But he snapped them from his arms like thread.
13 And Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told lies to me. Tell me how you can be bound.” And he said to her, “If you weave seven locks of my head with warp-threads.”
14 She fastened *it* with the pin and said to him, “*The Philistines are upon you, Samson!*” And Samson woke up from his sleep and tore loose the loom pin of the web and the warp-threads.
15 And she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me how your strength is so great.”
16 And because she nagged him day after day with her words, and pestered him, his soul grew impatient to the point of death.

17 So he confided everything to her, and he said to her, “A razor has never touched my head, for I *am* a Nazirite of God from birth. If I am shaved my strength will leave me, and I will become weak, like everyone else.

18 Delilah realized that he had confided in her, so she sent and called the rulers of *the* Philistines, saying, “Come up one more time, for he has confided in me.” And the rulers of *the* Philistines came up, and they brought the money with them.

19 And she put him to sleep on her lap; then she called the men and shaved off seven locks of his head. Then she began to subdue him, and his strength went away from him.

20 And she said to him, “*The* Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” And he woke up from his sleep and said, “I will go out just like every other time and shake myself free,” but he did not know that Yahweh had left him.

21 And *the* Philistines seized him, gouged his eyes, and brought him to Gaza. They tied him up with bronze shackles, and he became a grinder in the prison.

22 But the hair of his head began to grow back after it had been shaved off.

Samson’s Final Act of Faith

23 The rulers of *the* Philistines had gathered to sacrifice a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice. And they said, “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.”

24 And the people saw him, and they praised their god, for they said, “Our god has given into our hand those who hate us, devastate our land, and have killed many of us.”

25 After awhile, when their hearts were merry, they said, “Call Samson and let him entertain us.” And they called Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars.

26 Then Samson said to the servant who was holding him by his hand, “Position me so that I can touch the pillars on which the house rests, so I can lean on them.”

27 And the house was full of men and women, and all of the rulers of *the* Philistines *were* there—about three thousand men and women were on the roof watching the performance of Samson.

28 And Samson called to Yahweh and said, “My Lord Yahweh, remember me! Please give me strength this one time, O God, so that I can repay *with* one act of revenge to *the* Philistines for my eyes.”

29 And Samson reached out and held two of the middle pillars on which the house *was* resting, and he leaned on them, one on his right and one on his left.

30 And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.” And he pushed with *all his* strength, and the house fell on the rulers and all of the people who *were* with him. And the dead whom he killed in his death were more than those he killed in his life. [[Heb 11:32](#)]

31 His brothers and his whole family came down and picked him up; and they brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father; he judged Israel twenty years.

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