

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 The Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the temple of Dagon, where they positioned it beside Dagon.

3 When the residents of Ashdod got up early the next day, Dagon was lying on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him back in his place.

4 But when they got up early the following day, Dagon was again lying on the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and his two hands were sheared off and were lying at the threshold. Only Dagon's body was left intact.

5 (For this reason, to this very day, neither Dagon's priests nor anyone else who enters Dagon's temple step on Dagon's threshold in Ashdod.)

6 The LORD attacked the residents of Ashdod severely, bringing devastation on them. He struck the people of both Ashdod and the surrounding area with sores.

7 When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel should not remain with us, for he has attacked both us and our god Dagon!"

Gath

8 So they assembled all the leaders of the Philistines and asked, "What should we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They replied, "The ark of the God of Israel should be moved to Gath." So they moved the ark of the God of Israel.

9 But after it had been moved the LORD attacked that city as well, causing a great deal of panic. He struck all the people of that city with sores.

Ekron

10 So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But when the ark of God arrived at Ekron, the residents of Ekron cried out saying, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel here to kill our people!"

11 So they assembled all the leaders of the Philistines and said, "Get the ark of the God of Israel out of here! Let it go back to its own place so that it won't kill us and our people!" The terror of death was throughout the entire city; God was attacking them very severely there.

12 The people who did not die were struck with sores; the city's cry for help went all the way up to heaven.

The Ark is Returned

6:1 When the ark of the LORD had been in the land of the Philistines for seven months,

2 the Philistines called the priests and the omen readers, saying, "What should we do with the ark of the LORD? Advise us as to how we should send it back to its place."

3 They replied, "If you are going to send the ark of the God of Israel back, don't send it away empty. Be sure to return it with a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and you will understand why his hand is not removed from you."

4 They inquired, "What is the guilt offering that we should send to him?" They replied, "The Philistine leaders number five. So send five gold sores and five gold mice, for it is the same plague that has afflicted both you and your leaders.

5 You should make images of the sores and images of the mice that are destroying the land. You should honor the God of Israel. Perhaps he will release his grip on you, your gods, and your land.

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?

7 So now go and make a new cart. Get two cows that have calves and that have never had a yoke placed on them. Harness the cows to the cart and take their calves from them back to their stalls.

8 Then take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart, and put in a chest beside it the gold objects you are sending to him as a guilt offering. You should then send it on its way.

9 But keep an eye on it. If it should go up by the way of its own border to Beth Shemesh, then he has brought this great calamity on us. But if that is not the case, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us; rather, it just happened to us by accident."

10 So the men did as instructed. They took two cows that had calves and harnessed them to a cart; they also removed their calves to their stalls.

11 They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, along with the chest, the gold mice, and the images of the sores.

12 Then the cows went directly on the road to Beth Shemesh. They went along, mooing as they went; they turned neither to the right nor to the left. The leaders of the Philistines were walking along behind them all the way to the border of Beth Shemesh.

Beth-shemesh

13 Now the residents of Beth Shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley. When they looked up and saw the ark, they were pleased at the sight.

14 The cart was coming to the field of Joshua, who was from Beth Shemesh. It paused there near a big stone. Then they cut up the

wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD.

15 The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the chest that was with it, which contained the gold objects. They placed them near the big stone. At that time the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD.

16 The five leaders of the Philistines watched what was happening and then returned to Ekron on the same day.

17 These are the gold sores that the Philistines brought as a guilt offering to the LORD—one for each of the following cities: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.

18 The gold mice corresponded in number to all the Philistine cities of the five leaders, from the fortified cities to hamlet villages, to greater Abel, where they positioned the ark of the LORD until this very day in the field of Joshua who was from Beth Shemesh.

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.

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?”

21 So they sent messengers to the residents of Kiriath Jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down here and take it back home with you.”

Kiriath-jearim

7:1 Then the people of Kiriath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD; they brought it to the house of Abinadab located on the hill. They consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD.

2 It was quite a long time—some twenty years in all—that the ark stayed at Kiriath Jearim. All the people of Israel longed for the LORD.

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

Judges 14–15

Seeking for an Opportunity Against the Philistines

14:1 Samson went down to Timnah, where a Philistine girl caught his eye.

2 When he got home, he told his father and mother, “A Philistine girl in Timnah has caught my eye. Now get her for my wife.”

3 But his father and mother said to him, “Certainly you can find a wife among your relatives or among all our people! You should not have to go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines.” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, because she is the right one for me.”

4 Now his father and mother did not realize this was the LORD’s doing, because he was looking for an opportunity to stir up trouble with the Philistines (for at that time the Philistines were ruling Israel).

Samson’s Riddle

5 Samson went down to Timnah. When he approached the vineyards of Timnah, he saw a roaring young lion attacking him.

6 The LORD’s spirit empowered him and he tore the lion in two with his bare hands as easily as one would tear a young goat. But he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

7 Samson continued on down to Timnah and spoke to the girl. In his opinion, she was just the right one.

8 Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to see the lion’s remains. He saw a swarm of bees in the lion’s carcass, as well as some honey.

9 He scooped it up with his hands and ate it as he walked along. When he returned to his father and mother, he offered them some and they ate it. But he did not tell them he had scooped the honey out of the lion’s carcass.

10 Then Samson’s father accompanied him to Timnah for the marriage. Samson hosted a party there, for this was customary for bridegrooms to do.

11 When the Philistines saw he had no attendants, they gave him thirty groomsmen who kept him company.

12 Samson said to them, “I will give you a riddle. If you really can solve it during the seven days the party lasts, I will give you thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes.

13 But if you cannot solve it, you will give me thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes.” They said to him, “Let us hear your riddle.”

14 He said to them,

“Out of the one who eats came something to eat;
out of the strong one came something sweet.”

They could not solve the riddle for three days.

The Philistines Force Samson’s Wife to Reveal the Answer

15 On the fourth day they said to Samson’s bride, “Trick your husband into giving the solution to the riddle. If you refuse, we will

burn up you and your father's family. Did you invite us here to make us poor?"

16 So Samson's bride cried on his shoulder and said, "You must hate me; you do not love me! You told the young men a riddle, but you have not told me the solution." He said to her, "Look, I have not even told my father or mother. Do you really expect me to tell you?"

17 She cried on his shoulder until the party was almost over. Finally, on the seventh day, he told her because she had nagged him so much. Then she told the young men the solution to the riddle.

18a On the seventh day, before the sun set, the men of the city said to him,

"What is sweeter than honey?

What is stronger than a lion?"

Samson Feels Justified in Attacking the Philistines

18b He said to them,

"If you had not plowed with my heifer,

you would not have solved my riddle!"

19 The LORD's spirit empowered him. He went down to Ashkelon and murdered thirty men. He took their clothes and gave them to the men who had solved the riddle. He was furious as he went back home.

The Philistine Father Gives Samson's Wife to Another Man

20 Samson's bride was then given to his best man.

15:1 Sometime later, during the wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat as a gift and went to visit his bride. He said to her father, "I want to have sex with my bride in her bedroom!" But her father would not let him enter.

2 Her father said, "I really thought you absolutely despised her, so I gave her to your best man. Her younger sister is more attractive than she is. Take her instead!"

Samson Again Feels Justified in Taking Revenge

3 Samson said to them, "This time I am justified in doing the Philistines harm!"

4 Samson went and captured three hundred jackals and got some torches. He tied the jackals in pairs by their tails and then tied a torch to each pair.

5 He lit the torches and set the jackals loose in the Philistines' standing grain. He burned up the grain heaps and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves.

The Philistines Retaliate

6 The Philistines asked, "Who did this?" They were told, "Samson, the Timnite's son-in-law, because the Timnite took Samson's bride and gave her to his best man." So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father.

Samson Takes Revenge Once Again

7 Samson said to them, "Because you did this, I will get revenge against you before I quit fighting."

8 He struck them down and defeated them. Then he went down and lived for a time in the cave in the cliff of Etam.

The Philistines Decide to Eliminate Samson Permanently

9 The Philistines went up and invaded Judah. They arrayed themselves for battle in Lehi.

10 The men of Judah said, "Why are you attacking us?" The Philistines said, "We have come up to take Samson prisoner so we can do to him what he has done to us."

11 Three thousand men of Judah went down to the cave in the cliff of Etam and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? Why have you done this to us?" He said to them, "I have only done to them what they have done to me."

12 They said to him, "We have come down to take you prisoner so we can hand you over to the Philistines." Samson said to them, "Promise me you will not kill me."

13 They said to him, "We promise! We will only take you prisoner and hand you over to them. We promise not to kill you." They tied him up with two brand new ropes and led him up from the cliff.

Samson Kills an Entire Philistine Battalion

14 When he arrived in Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they approached him. But the LORD's spirit empowered him. The ropes around his arms were like flax dissolving in fire, and they melted away from his hands.

15 He happened to see a solid jawbone of a donkey. He grabbed it and struck down a thousand men.

16 Samson then said,

“With the jawbone of a donkey
I have left them in heaps;
with the jawbone of a donkey
I have struck down a thousand men!”

17 When he finished speaking, he threw the jawbone down and named that place Ramath Lehi.

18 He was very thirsty, so he cried out to the LORD and said, “You have given your servant this great victory. But now must I die of thirst and fall into hands of the Philistines?”

19 So God split open the basin at Lehi and water flowed out from it. When he took a drink, his strength was restored and he revived. For this reason he named the spring En Hakkore. It remains in Lehi to this very day.

20 Samson led Israel for twenty years during the days of Philistine prominence.

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

Judges 12:8–10

8 After him [Jephthah] Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel.

9 He had thirty sons. He arranged for thirty of his daughters to be married outside his extended family, and he arranged for thirty young women to be brought from outside as wives for his sons. Ibzan led Israel for seven years;

10 then he 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 led Israel for 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 to Gaza. There he saw a prostitute and went in to have sex with her.

2 The Gazites were told, “Samson has come here!” So they surrounded the town and hid all night at the city gate, waiting for him to leave. They relaxed all night, thinking, “He will not leave until morning comes; then we will kill him!”

3 Samson spent half the night with the prostitute; then he got up in the middle of the night and left. He grabbed the doors of the city gate, as well as the two posts, and pulled them right off, bar and all. He put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of a hill east of Hebron.

Samson and Delilah

4 After this Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the Sorek Valley.

5 The rulers of the Philistines went up to visit her and said to her, “Trick him! Find out what makes him so strong and how we can subdue him and humiliate him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred silver pieces.”

6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me what makes you so strong and how you can be subdued and humiliated.”

7 Samson said to her, “If they tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I will become weak and be just like any other man.”

8 So the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings which had not been dried and they tied him up with them.

9 They hid in the bedroom and then she said to him, “The Philistines are here, Samson!” He snapped the bowstrings as easily as a thread of yarn snaps when it is put close to fire. The secret of his strength was not discovered.

10 Delilah said to Samson, “Look, you deceived me and told me lies! Now tell me how you can be subdued.”

11 He said to her, “If they tie me tightly with brand new ropes that have never been used, I will become weak and be just like any other man.”

12 So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them and said to him, “The Philistines are here, Samson!” (The Philistines were hiding in the bedroom.) But he tore the ropes from his arms as if they were a piece of thread.

13 Delilah said to Samson, “Up to now you have deceived me and told me lies. Tell me how you can be subdued.” He said to her, “If you weave the seven braids of my hair into the fabric on the loom and secure it with the pin, I will become weak and be like any other man.”

14 So she made him go to sleep, wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric on the loom, fastened it with the pin, and said to

him, “The Philistines are here, Samson!” He woke up and tore away the pin of the loom and the fabric.

15 She said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you will not share your secret with me? Three times you have deceived me and have not told me what makes you so strong.”

16 She nagged him every day and pressured him until he was sick to death of it.

17 Finally he told her his secret. He said to her, “My hair has never been cut, for I have been dedicated to God from the time I was conceived. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me; I would become weak, and be just like all other men.”

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her his secret, she sent for the rulers of the Philistines, saying, “Come up here again, for he has told me his secret.” So the rulers of the Philistines went up to visit her, bringing the silver in their hands.

19 She made him go to sleep on her lap and then called a man in to shave off the seven braids of his hair. She made him vulnerable and his strength left him.

20 She said, “The Philistines are here, Samson!” He woke up and thought, “I will do as I did before and shake myself free.” But he did not realize that the LORD had left him.

21 The Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him in bronze chains. He became a grinder in the prison.

22 His hair began to grow back after it had been shaved off.

Samson’s Final Act of Faith

23 The rulers of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate. They said, “Our god has handed Samson, our enemy, over to us.”

24 When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, “Our god has handed our enemy over to us, the one who ruined our land and killed so many of us!”

25 When they really started celebrating, they said, “Call for Samson so he can entertain us!” So they summoned Samson from the prison and he entertained them. They made him stand between two pillars.

26 Samson said to the young man who held his hand, “Position me so I can touch the pillars that support the temple. Then I can lean on them.”

27 Now the temple was filled with men and women, and all the rulers of the Philistines were there. There were three thousand men and women on the roof watching Samson entertain.

28 Samson called to the LORD, “O Master, LORD, remember me! Strengthen me just one more time, O God, so I can get swift revenge against the Philistines for my two eyes!”

29 Samson took hold of the two middle pillars that supported the temple and he leaned against them, with his right hand on one and his left hand on the other.

30 Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” He pushed hard and the temple collapsed on the rulers and all the people in it. He killed many more people in his death than he had killed during his life. [\[Heb 11:32\]](#)

31 His brothers and all his family went down and brought him back. They buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel for twenty years.

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