

1 Samuel 5:1-12 **The Philistines and the Ark of God**

The captured Ark of God at Ashdod

¹ Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

² When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon.

³ And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again.

⁴ And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands were broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's torso was left of it.

⁵ Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

⁶ But the hand of the Lord was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. ⁷ And when the men of Ashdod saw how it was, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and Dagon our god." ⁸ Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?"

The captured Ark of God at Gath

And they answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to Gath." So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away. ⁹ So it was, after they had carried it away, that the hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction; and He struck the men of the city, both small and great, and tumors broke out on them.

The captured Ark of God at Ekron

¹⁰ Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. So it was, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!"

¹¹ So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people." For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. ¹² And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

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Facts Revealed:

The captured Ark of God at Ashdod [1 Samuel 5:1-8]

- ✧ Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. They brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon.
- ✧ Apparently they thought that the God of Israel would then be subject to their god Dagon since He was unable to protect His people Israel, thus demonstrating that their god Dagon was mightier than all the gods of Egypt which were overcome by the God of Israel.
- ✧ As it turned out, their god Dagon could not stand before the Ark of the God of Israel, and was cast down before Him, with the head and hands broken off the second time and on the threshold of Dagon's temple, leaving only the torso of Dagon intact.

- ✧ Moreover, the people of Ashdod and all its territory were struck with tumors by the hand of the Lord.
- ✧ The Philistines of Ashdod realized the price they were suffering with the Ark of the God of Israel in their midst, so they consulted the lords of the Philistines and decided to send the Ark of the God of Israel to Gath.

The captured Ark of God at Gath [1 Samuel 5:8-9]

- ✧ When the Ark of the God of Israel came to Gath, the hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction and all the men of Gath were struck with tumors, so they sent the Ark of the God of Israel to Ekron.

The captured Ark of God at Ekron [1 Samuel 5:10-12]

- ✧ Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. So it was, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, "**They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!**"

- ✧ News got around, and the people of Ekron were terrified when the Ark of the God of Israel was brought to Ekron.
- ✧ What the Philistines originally felt was a great victory over the God of Israel was reversed, and now they realized that the God of Israel does not need a human army to destroy the enemy, but is able to defend His Ark even in the land of the enemy.
- ✧ God gained honor among the Philistines without His people being present.

- ✧ So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "**Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people.**"

For **there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city**; the hand of God was very heavy there. And **the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors**, and the cry of the city went up to heaven. [1 Samuel 5:11-12]

- ✧ The hand of the Lord was heavy and each city that received the Ark of the God of Israel was struck worse than the one before it.
- ✧ We do not know the number of Philistines that died while the Ark of the Lord was in their territory, but we do know that all the men who survived were stricken with tumors, which would suggest that the majority had died.
- ✧ Israel had lost 34,000 men when the Ark was taken [1 Samuel 4:1-11], and the Philistines lost a great enough number of people to motivate them to return the Ark to Israel.