

1 Samuel (Sh'mu'el Alef)

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Chapter 6

1 And the ark of the LORD was in the land of the Philistines seven months.¹

2 Then the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we shall return it to his place.

3 And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but ye shall pay unto him the expiation of guilt; then ye shall be healed, and ye shall know why his hand was not removed from you.

4 Then said they, What shall be the expiation of guilt which we shall pay unto him? They answered, Five golden hemorrhoids and five golden rats,² according to the number of the cardinals of the Philistines, for the same plague that is on you is also on your cardinals.

5 Therefore, ye shall make images of your hemorrhoids and images of your rats that destroy the land, and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel; peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you and from off your gods and from off your land.

6 Why then do ye harden your hearts³ as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had dealt thus among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?⁴

7 Now, therefore, make a new cart⁵ and take two milk cows, on which no yoke has been placed⁶ and tie the cows to the cart and bring their calves home from them.⁷

¹ That was a long time for the Israelites to endure, but they probably had agents who reported what was happening there, and it was likely encouraging to them that the Philistines were having such a hard time.

In the meantime, they had a lot to think about when the Ark was gone. It was not only an important artefact, but also their reassurance of the Presence of God with them. Moses had said that he did not want to go anywhere, even if he would be successful, if the Presence of God did not come with him. The absence of the Ark probably prompted a lot of heart searching. Each person had to decide if they would turn to some other god, or if they would be faithful to God, and continue to serve Him, even without the physical evidence of His Presence.

² It was the heathen custom to make images of their plagues, and offer them to their idols as gifts, to seek relief from the plagues.

³ Some of the leaders were not convinced that the plagues were from God. They thought that there might be natural explanations for it, such as the air of the cities having become unhealthy.

⁴ Hundreds of years later, it was still well-known that the cataclysms of the Exodus were brought about to free the Israelites from Egypt. The Philistines were not happy, though, that the Israelites' destination was the land that they had been occupying.

The remaining Philistines were desperate to hold on to what they had left of Canaan, and they had been harsh towards the Israelites, instead of just wisely moving on and finding another land to live in. There was plenty of empty space in those days, if they were willing to sail across the seas. Some of the Philistines did so, and set up colonies elsewhere, as they were a nautical, trading people.

8 Then ye shall take the ark of the LORD and lay it upon the cart and put the jewels of gold, which ye pay him for expiation of guilt, in a coffer by the side thereof, and let it go.

9 And see if it goes up by the way of his own border to Bethshemesh (Beit Shemesh)⁸, then he has done us this great evil,⁹ but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was an accident that happened to us.

10 ¶ And the men did so and took two milk cows and tied them to the cart and shut up their calves at home.

11 Then they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart and the coffer with the rats of gold and the images of their hemorrhoids.

⁵ A new cart was used, to be careful to not further insult the God of Israel by using just any old cart. The Ark was not supposed to be transported by cart, but by gold covered poles inserted in its holding loops and carried by Levites, but God excused their ignorance.

⁶ A test was proposed, by which they could confirm if the plagues were brought upon them by Israel's God. Two cows that had never been trained to the yoke would not be docile under it.

⁷ Another test for the cows pulling the cart. If their calves were taken from them, they would head home to their calves, instead of towards the Israelites.

⁸ H1053

בֵּית שֶׁמֶשׁ

be`yth shemesh
bayth sheh'-mesh

From H1004 and H8121; **house of (the) sun**; Beth-Shemesh, a place in Israel: - Beth-shemesh.

It was probably called this before pagans had worshipped the sun there before the Israelite conquest, but the shemesh also meant "the servant," as the sun served mankind with its life-giving rays.

In the same way, though the Lord Jesus Christ is much greater than mankind, He served us by coming to Earth, setting us the ultimate example of righteousness as the Light of the world, and submitting to torture and death to redeem us from the curses of sin. It was no coincidence that God directed the Ark to the house of the Servant.

On a menorah, the middle candle is called "the servant," as this candle is lit first, and then the other candles are lit from it.

BETH-SHEMESH house of the sun. (1.) A sacerdotal city in the tribe of Dan (Joshua 21:16; 1 Samuel 6:15), on the north border of Judah (Joshua 15:10). It was the scene of an encounter between Jehoash, king of Israel, and Amaziah, king of Judah, in which the latter was made prisoner (2 Kings 14:11, 13). It was afterwards taken by the Philistines (2 Chronicles 28:18). It is the modern ruined Arabic village 'Ain-shems, on the north-west slopes of the mountains of Judah, 14 miles west of Jerusalem. (Easton's Bible Dictionary)

Beit Shemesh (Hebrew: בֵּית שֶׁמֶשׁ) is a city located approximately 30 kilometres (19 mi) west of Jerusalem in Israel's Jerusalem District, with a population of 80,600 in 2010. The history of Beit Shemesh goes back to pre-biblical times. The modern city of Beit Shemesh was founded in 1950. (Wikipedia)

⁹ The Philistines wanted to ascertain if the plagues were supernatural, and if they were caused by Israel's God, then the cows would take the Ark back to His people.

12 And the cows went straight¹⁰ down the way of Bethshemesh and went along the highway, lowing as they went¹¹ and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left,¹² and the cardinals of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh.

13 And those of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley,¹³ and they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark and rejoiced to see it.¹⁴

14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua (Y'hoshua),¹⁵ a Bethshemite, and stopped there, for there was a great stone there;¹⁶ and they clave the wood of the cart and offered the cows in a burnt offering unto the LORD.

¹⁰ Without any delay, the cows headed for Bethshemesh, submissive to the Creator who made them.

¹¹ The cows complained for their calves, confirming that their natural inclination was to return to them, but they were being compelled to go to the Israelites.

¹² God commands all nature. Whether it is animal or a device of technology, which is made of materials found in nature, we should remember that it is all under God's command, and available for His use, regardless of its normal functions. Through prayer, God can make a car run without a battery, or without gasoline in its tank. I've heard of both occurrences. He can also turn an aircraft, or any other device, at His will, for God is the Lord of all its components.

¹³ This speaks of souls coming to salvation, and God's servants working in the harvest field. Jesus came to Earth to save souls.

¹⁴ It's a good thing that the Ark appeared before the Philistines, because it otherwise would have been unsettling to see their enemies hove into view when they were out in the fields and armed only with sickles. It was apparent, though, that the Philistines were returning the Ark.

¹⁵H3091

יהושע יהושע

yeho^hshu^a yeho^hshu^a
yeh-ho-shoo'-ah, yeh-ho-shoo'-ah

From H3068 and H3467; **Jehovah-saved**; Jehoshua (that is, Joshua), the Jewish leader: - Jehoshua, Jehoshuah, Joshua.

It was not a coincidence that the name of the person to whose house the Ark was brought was also the same Name as our Saviour, the Anointed Lord Yehoshua. ak.a. Jesus Christ.

In a shadow and a type, the Ark was brought to the house of the Servant, right to the doorstep of the Saviour, where it could be set upon a rock, which is another type of the Saviour. Ultimately, when Jesus Christ was sacrificed, His Blood ran down His legs and dripped into a crack by the cross, caused by the earthquake that happened at that time, and it dripped directly onto the Mercy Seat, which had been concealed since Jeremiah's day in a cave below where Jesus was crucified, thus fulfilling the prophecy that His Blood would be applied to it. [Daniel 9:24] [Leviticus 16:14] [Psalm 77:13]

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6s_f1voLWw (36.01 on the video refers to the Blood falling on the Mercy Seat.)

¹⁶ The Lord conveniently brought the Ark to where a thank offering could be made, but the rock probably also was symbolic of Jesus being our Rock.

15 And the Levites (L'vi'im) took down the ark of the LORD and the coffer that was with it, in which were the jewels of gold, and put them on the great stone, and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.

16 And when the five cardinals of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day.

17 These, therefore are the golden hemorrhoids which the Philistines returned in expiation for their guilt unto the LORD, for Ashdod one, for Gaza ('Azah)¹⁷ one, for Askelon¹⁸ one, for Gath one, for Ekron one,

18 and the golden rats, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five cardinals; a ransom for those of the fenced cities and for the country dwellers even unto the great stone of Abel,¹⁹ upon which they placed the ark of the LORD in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite (Beit-Shimshi), and this is remembered unto this day.

¹⁷ H5804

עצה

ʿazzaḥ

az-zaw'

Feminine of H5794; **strong**; Azzah, a place in Israel: - Azzah, Gaza.

¹⁸ H831

אשקלון

'ashqeloṅ

ash-kel-one'

Probably from H8254 in the sense of weighing place (that is, mart); Ashkelon, a place in Israel: - Ashkelon, Askalon.

¹⁹ H59

אבל

'aḇeḵ

aw-bale'

From H58; **a meadow**; Abel, the name of two places in Israel: - Abel.

This is not the same word that was used for Abel, the son of Adam. It may have evolved into the word for meadow, though, because Abel was a shepherd, and his animals would have grazed in meadows. The word of Abel, the son of Adam, is shown below.

H1892

הבל הבל

hebel haḇeḵ

heh'-bel, hab-ale'

From H1891; emptiness or vanity; figuratively something transitory and unsatisfactory; often used as an adverb: - X altogether, vain, vanity.

This stone of Abel might have been so called in remembrance of the story of Abel and the acceptable sacrifice that he offered up to God. It would not be the same stone. It would be ludicrous to suppose that the very same stone would still be in the same place as before the Flood, as the upheaval probably buried it or rolled it far away from its original place.

19 ¶ Then God smote those of Bethshemesh because they had looked at the ark of the LORD;
²⁰he smote fifty thousand²¹ of the people and seventy principal men.²² And the people lamented because the LORD had smitten the people with such a great slaughter.
 20 And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall he go up from us?
 21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim (Kiryat-Ye'arim),²³ saying, The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD; come down, therefore, and carry it up to you.

If my theory is correct, that the stone was so named in memory of Abel's acceptable sacrifice, then it increases the significance of God directing the Ark of the Covenant to it.

²⁰ They were snoop, instead of reverent. They didn't need to look in there. They were told that the stone tablets of the Law, Aaron's almond rod, and the pot of manna were in there. That should have been good enough, because they also knew that only the high priest was supposed to have access to what was in the Ark. Perhaps they wondered if the Philistines had meddled with what was inside, but God is able to take care of what is His, which is why the Philistines suffered so much from having taken the Ark, and then brought it back.

²¹ The Israelites possibly flocked to Beth-shemesh when they heard the Ark was there? It isn't likely that 50,000 people lived in that little town. 50,000 is probably a copyist error, which is quite common with Hebrew numbers in the text.

²² The seventy principal men probably bore the responsibility for ensuring that the Ark was treated with respect, according to God's order. They should have used their influence to restrain the people.

²³ **H7157**

קִרְיַת יַעֲרִים קִרְיַת עֲרִים

qiryath ye' a rîym qiryath ' a rîym
 (keer-yath') yeh-aw-reem', aw-reem'

Used in Jer_26:20 with the article interposed; or in Jos_18:28 using simply the former part of the word; from H7151 and the plural of H3293 or H5892; **city of forests**, or **city of towns**; Kirjath Jearim or Kirjath Arim, a place in Israel: - Kirjath, Kirjath-jearim, Kirjath-arim.