

# The Ark Returned

1 Samuel 6:1-21

## I. Captivity Ends

**A. The Philistines held the ark just over half a year.** And *the ark* of the LORD *was in the country of the Philistines seven months.* (1 SAMUEL 6:1)

**B. The Philistines did not know what to do with their trophy.** And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, *What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.* (1 SAMUEL 6:2)

**C. The pagan priests suggested attempting a deal with God.** And they said, If ye *send away the ark* of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but *in any wise return him a trespass offering*: then ye shall be healed, *and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.* (1 SAMUEL 6:3) See Exodus 34:20 and Deuteronomy 16:16

**D. The priests suggested the trespass offering relate to the trespass.** Then said they, *What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him?* They answered, *Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.* Wherefore ye shall make *images of your emerods, and images of your mice* that mar 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.* (1 SAMUEL 6:4-5)

**E. No one can take God lightly with safety.** Say unto God, How terrible *art thou* in thy works! *through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.* (PSALM 66:3)

## II. The Philistines Had a Plan

**A. The priests did not want to make Egypt's mistake – PAGANS CAN BE CLEAVER BY THEIR LIGHTS.** Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as *the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go,* and they departed? (1 SAMUEL 6:6)

**B. A pair of cows would cart the ark and the offerings back to Bethshemesh.** Now therefore *make a new cart*, and take *two milch kine*, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from the: And *take the ark of the LORD*, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye *return him for a trespass offering*, in a coffer by the side thereof; *and send it away*, that it may go. And see, *if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil*: but if not, then we shall know that *it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us.* (1 SAMUEL

6:7-9)

**C. The people followed the plan.** And *the men did so*; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: And *they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold* and the images of their emerods. (1 SAMUEL 6:10-11)

**D. Cows and kings witnessed the power of God.** And *the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh*, and went along the highway, *lowing as they went, and turned not aside* to the right hand or to the left; *and the lords of the Philistines went after them* unto the border of Bethshemesh. (1 SAMUEL 6:12)

### III. The Ark Returned

**A. Israel rejoiced when the ark returned.** And *they of Bethshemesh were* reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and *they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced* to see it. (1 SAMUEL 6:13)

**B. The nation offered a sacrifice.** And the cart came into *the field of Joshua*, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where *there was a great stone*: and *they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering* unto the LORD. (1 SAMUEL 6:14)

**C. The Levites took charge and the Philistine kings observed.** And the *Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it*, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put *them* on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD. And *when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron* the same day. (1 SAMUEL 6:15-16) vs17 and 18 review the details

**D. In the midst of joy the Bethshemites violated the law and brought judgment on themselves.** And *he smote the men* of Bethshemesh, *because they had looked into the ark of the LORD*, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and *the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people* with a great slaughter. (1 SAMUEL 6:19)

**1. The People were not to look into the ark.** But *they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die*. (NUMBERS 4:20)

**2. The people had warning.** And *the LORD said unto Moses*, Go down, charge the people, *lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish*. (EXODUS 19:21)

**3. Examples of punished disobedience had occurred.** And *Nadab and Abihu*, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and **offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.** And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses **said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me,** and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace. (LEVITICUS 10:1-3)

**4. Take God at His word. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.** (HEBREWS 10:31)

**5. Holiness consumes unholiness.** But who may abide the day of his coming? and **who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire,** and like fullers' soap: (MALACHI 3:2)

**E. Out of terror rather than respect, the Bethshemites passed the ark off to Kirjathjearim.** 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? And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, **The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.** (1 SAMUEL 6:20-21)