

STUDIES IN SAMUEL  
CHAPTER 5 IN REVIEW

1. To what city did the Philistines first take the ark? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where did the Philistines put the ark? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What was the name of the Philistine god? \_\_\_\_\_
4. To what city was the ark taken next? \_\_\_\_\_
5. With what affliction did God smite the Philistine men? \_\_\_\_\_
6. To what Philistine city was the ark taken? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What happened to the Philistine idol during the first night? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What happened to the idol during the second night? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What other cities formed the Philistine pentapolis? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Which of the cities was nearest to Israel? \_\_\_\_\_

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 6

- Vv. 1-9 *The decision to return the Ark.* Although the Philistines had beaten Israel on the field of battle, they were themselves utterly defeated in their attempt to make a prize of war out of the Ark of the Testimony. As they had moved the Ark about from city to city, its trail had been marked by constant afflictions on the Philistines. In utter dismay, they gave up in their attempts to keep it and made preparations to return it to Israel.
- Vv. 10-18 *The Ark returned.* An ingenious plan was devised by the Philistines. By it they were able to determine that God was indeed directing the path of the kine. They knew then that

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Jehovah, the God of the Israelites, had been the source of the plagues brought against Philistia.

Vv. 19-21 *Men of Beth-shemesh smitten.* When the Ark was returned to Israel's territory, the first spot it reached was Beth-shemesh. Some of these men did not have proper respect for the symbol of God's abiding presence; and God smote 50,070 men of Israel on account of this lack of respect.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God's hand is seen in the affairs of men.* The Philistines knew that there was something very unusual about the fact that trouble came wherever the Ark was located. This might have been coincidental if it happened only a time or two; but when it happened again and again, they knew that some supernatural power was behind the occurrences. Since they saw the hand of Almighty God in these events, they rightly decided that they should repent of their wrong actions and make restitution for their misdeeds.
2. *God guides even the beasts of the field.* The natural instinct of the kine was overruled. Naturally, these milk cows would want to stay close to their calves. When the calves were locked in the stall and the cows were hitched to the cart bearing the Ark of the Lord, the cows went directly away from their own calves. Nothing short of the interference of God in the natural instincts of these beasts would cause them to go against their habits. This was a sign to the Philistines that the hand of God was in the whole affair.
3. *Man should have reverence for the things of God.* Only Levites and priests were to bear the Ark of the Covenant. Their duties were assigned to them (Numbers 4).

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The men of Beth-shemesh were quite presumptuous when they "looked into the ark of the Lord" (v. 19). This lack of respect brought punishment upon the people, and the event should be a lesson in reverence for men of all times.

### *The Decision to Return the Ark. 6:1-9*

And the ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 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.

6 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?

7 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 them:

8 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.

9 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. *What was the final decision about the deposition of the Ark? 6:1*

The method of disposing of it was of rational order. They were to put a trespass offering beside the Ark. This was to be of five golden emerods and five golden mice. They there were to build a new cart; take two milk cows, upon which the yoke had never been; leave their calves at home; and see if the Lord would guide the cows to remove the Ark from their country. The natural inclination of the mother cows would keep them from going away. The behavior of the cattle would show whether God wished them to return to Israel. Their respect for God is seen in the fact that they prepared a new cart and they selected milk cows upon which no yoke had yet come.

2. *Who were the Diviners? 6:2*

Divination is practiced by many religious people who are without God's revelation. The king of Egypt had magicians whom he called to interpret his dreams (Genesis 41:8). Joseph pretended to divine by the use of a silver cup (Genesis 44:15). Generally speaking, divination was the art of obtaining secret knowledge, especially of the future. It may be considered as the pagan counterpart of Biblical prophecy. A careful study of Scripture reveals that divination is by demon power, whereas genuine prophecy is by the Spirit of God. Many passages in the Bible legislate against such activity as divination (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). The lords of the Philistines evidently had their diviners, and they depended upon them to help them to make decisions.

3. *How did the Philistines know about a trespass offering?*  
6:3

Many false religions contain parallels of the true religion. The trespass offering of the Philistine paganism is an instance of this. God had laid down rules and regulations for the making of a trespass offering (Leviticus 5 and 6). What the Philistines offered was a pagan counterfeit of the true trespass offering. The fact that it is not a Biblical trespass offering is seen from the nature of what they offered—golden emerods and golden mice. Unclean animals such as mice would be an abomination to Jehovah.

4. *Why did they send golden mice?* 6:4

The golden mice were images of the rodents which overran the land and added severity to the plague of boils which afflicted their persons. The pestilence which had accompanied the presence of the Ark was so severe that many of the men had died (5:12). The cry of the city went up to heaven. The men themselves were incapacitated and the pests added increased suffering and hardship to the afflicted people.

5. *How did the Philistines know about the Egyptian bondage?* 6:6

What happened in Egypt was well known throughout all the Mediterranean basin. Immediately after the people of Israel had crossed the Red Sea, they sang a song to celebrate the triumph. In one verse, they said: "The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine" (Exodus 15:14). This news did spread when Joshua led the people of Israel against Jericho. Rahab the harlot said: "We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when you came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites (Joshua 2:10). The people of Philistia also knew that the Egyptians had hardened their hearts. This statement throws some light on the repeated reference made to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Although it is said in some references that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 10:27; 11:10; 14:4), it is also said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 9:34). The Philistines knew that Pharaoh was responsible for hardening his own heart, and they did not want to harden their hearts against God and be destroyed.

6. *Why were the heifers not broken?* 6:7

Heifers which were not broken would not naturally stand still while they were hitched to the cart. When their calves were penned up, they would not be expected to leave the area. All of this unnatural activity on the part of the kine indicated that God's hand was involved in this procedure.

7. *What were the jewels of gold?* 6:8

The jewels of gold were evidently the five golden emerods and the five golden mice. They are called here a trespass offering and identified as being the jewels. They were placed in the coffer by the side of the Ark. It is doubtful if the Philistines had removed the mercy seat from the Ark, and looked in it. If they had, they would have found the tables of stone and the pot of Manna which had been placed there in the days of Moses, along with the rod of Aaron which budded (Exodus 16:33, Numbers 17:10). All this trespass offering was carefully placed on the cart along with the Ark itself.

8. *Where was Beth-Shemesh?* 6:9

Beth-Shemesh is a place now called Aim Shems. The road to Beth-Shemesh from Ekron runs along a straight smooth bed of a valley in which a meandering brook makes a crooked line through the middle. The name of the town signifies "house of the sun." It was a priestly city (Joshua 21:16) in the tribe of Dan on the northern boundary of Judah (Joshua 15:10). The location would be on the northwest slopes of the mountains of Judah, and pottery remains found there indicate that the city was occupied from about 2000 B.C. through the seventh century of the

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same era. The town was evidently destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar II.

### *The Ark Returned.* 6:10-18

10 And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

11 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.

12 And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, *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 Beth-shemesh.

13 And *they of* Beth-shemesh *were* reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see *it*.

14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, 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.

15 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 Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the Lord.

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

17 And these *are* the golden emerods which the Philistines returned *for* a trespass offering unto the Lord; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;

18 And the golden mice, *according to* the number of all the cities of the Philistines *belonging to* the five lords, *both of* fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto

the great *stone* of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the Lord: *which stone remaineth* unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Beth-shemite.

9. *Was the plan successful?* 6:9-12

The plan was successful. The Philistines knew that it was because the cows took a beeline right through Beth-shemesh, never turning to the right hand or the left. The apparent redundancy is due to the author's desire to make the miracle plain. The lowing of the kine shows their natural desire to return to the calves. The cows stopped in the field of Joshua, the Beth-shemite. When the men of Beth-shemesh stood in unrighteousness and looked into the Ark, God smote them; the men of Kirjath-jearim were called to take the Ark to their land. It remained here for twenty years.

10. *What time of year was it when the Ark was returned?*  
6:13

It was the time of reaping in the wheat harvest when the Ark came back to Israel. This would be about the height of the growing season in Palestine, and would be in the time we mark as late June or early July. This would permit the people to be out in the fields where they would soon catch a glimpse of the strange sight.

11. *Who was Joshua the Beth-shemite?* 6:14

This man is unknown except for this reference. He is called Joshua the Beth-shemite to distinguish him from Joshua the son of Nun, who was the leader of the people of Israel following Moses (Joshua 1:1). The fact that he owned the field would indicate that he was not a Levite himself, but a farmer in Judah.

12. *What kind of offering did the men make?* 6:15

The fact that they offered the female animals would indicate that this was a peace offering. The specifications of the peace offering are found in Leviticus 3. It is stipulated there that the peace offering might be either



male or female, but it was to be without blemish. If these men offered this sacrifice in an acceptable way, they must have followed the regulations laid down in this chapter.

13. *What was the stone of Abel? 6:18*

The Hebrew word Abel is translated with the phrase "grassy place." We might define it as a meadow. The word is used as a prefix in a number of cases. Here it signifies the marker which located the spot where the offering was made as the Ark was returned. The fact that the stone remained unto the day of writing would indicate that it was there for a number of years—throughout the judgeship of Samuel and into the reign of Saul.

*The Men of Beth-shemesh Smitten. 6:19-21*

19 And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, 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.

20 And the men of Beth-shemesh 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 Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord; come ye down, *and* fetch it up to you.

14. *Why did God smite the people of Beth-shemesh? 6:19*

The people of Israel were glad to have the Ark back within their border. They were evidently overly familiar with the sacred chest, and God smote them. The number slain at this instance for irreverently examining this holy shrine is recorded as 50,070. The fact that the 50,000 is separated from the threescore and ten has caused some to wonder about the total number. But the text enjoys very

good integrity. The sin they committed was very gross, and God punished them accordingly.

15. *Why was the Ark taken to Kirjath-jearim?* 6:21

Kirjath-jearim was not a Levitical city. It was the nearest large town on the road from Beth-shemesh to Shiloh. The people of Beth-shemesh were anxious to get it out of their community and evidently sent to a nearby town for help. The town was in the rugged wooded highland which looked down on the valley of Sorek. The exact site is not known with certainty, but some archaeologists believe it is the present Kuriet Enab to the north of Mount Jearim. Once the Ark was set in this new location, it was off the border line of the Shephelah, and within Israel's proper territory. Here in the fields of the woods it rested until the day David brought it up to Jerusalem (II Samuel 6:2, 3, 12; I Chronicles 15:1-29). cf. Psalm 132.

## CHAPTER 6 IN REVIEW

1. What offerings did the Philistines send back by the ark? \_\_\_\_\_
2. On what conveyance did they return it? \_\_\_\_\_
3. To what point in Israel was the ark first brought? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What time of year was it when the ark came back? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the name of the man who received the ark? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Of what tribe was he a member? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What kind of offering did the Israelites make when the ark came back? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What name was given to the place where the offering was made? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many men were smitten when the Israelites looked in the ark? \_\_\_\_\_
10. To what point was the ark taken after the tragedy? \_\_\_\_\_