

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 4, 1 Samuel 5-6 – The Ark Does Some Damage, The Ark Heads Home

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 4, 1 Samuel 5-6 – The Ark Does Some Damage, The Ark Heads Home, [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org), BeL

Dr. Robert Chisholm's teaching session focuses on 1 Samuel 5-6, detailing the ark of the covenant's journey through Philistine territory and its eventual return to Israel. The lesson highlights the consequences the Philistines faced due to capturing the ark, demonstrating God's sovereignty even when his symbol of presence was seized. **The Philistines' god, Dagon, was humiliated before the ark, and the Philistines suffered plagues, leading them to send the ark back with a guilt offering.** Upon its return, the ark brought about further consequences, this time for the Israelites at Beth Shemesh who disrespected it. **The lecture emphasizes the importance of respecting God's holiness and acknowledges that He is not limited by physical representations.** Ultimately, the ark narrative illustrates God's power and the need for reverence in approaching Him.

2. 31 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Chisholm, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org) [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → 1 Samuel).



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3. Briefing Document: Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 4, 1 Samuel 5-6 – The Ark Does Some Damage, The Ark Heads Home

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Chisholm's lecture on 1 Samuel 5-6:

Briefing Document: 1 Samuel 5-6

Overall Themes:

- **God's Sovereignty and Invincibility:** Even when seemingly defeated (the Ark being captured), God remains sovereign and more powerful than any idol or tangible representation. The Ark is not God, but a symbol of His presence.
- *"...even when the Lord appears to be defeated...he remains sovereign and invincible because the ark is not God. It's simply a symbol of God's presence..."*
- **Respect for God's Holiness:** The holy God must be treated with respect. Disrespect for God's holiness has consequences.
- *"I think the main theme in this chapter is the holy God must be treated with respect."*
- **God is More Powerful than Pagan Gods:** Yahweh demonstrates his power over the Philistine god Dagon, reinforcing a theme present throughout Israel's history.
- *"We have the primary theme, but we find that the Lord is more powerful than the pagan gods."*
- **God Transcends Tangible Reminders:** God's power is not limited to or controlled by any physical object.
- *"...his power transcends any mere tangible reminder of his presence. So don't try to control God through an image."*

Key Events and Ideas from 1 Samuel 5:

- **The Ark's Capture and Placement in Dagon's Temple:** After the Israelites' defeat, the Philistines take the Ark to Ashdod and place it in the temple of Dagon, their primary deity.

- **Dagon's Humiliation:** Dagon's image falls before the Ark, first bowing, then decapitated and mutilated. This signifies Yahweh's victory over Dagon. The narrative is described as "a polemic against the god Baal and a polemic against the god Dagon."
- *"There was Dagon fell on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord...His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold. Only his body remained."*
- **The Lord's Affliction on the Philistines:** The people of Ashdod and later Gath and Ekron are struck with "tumors" (possibly bubonic plague or anal ulcers/hemorrhoids).
- *"The Lord's hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity. He brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors."* The mention of golden rats as part of the guilt offering suggests a connection to the plague.
- **Philistine Panic and Relocation of the Ark:** The Philistines, recognizing the source of their affliction, move the Ark from city to city, with each city experiencing similar devastation.
- *"...they have brought the Ark of the God of Israel around to us to kill us and our people."*

Key Events and Ideas from 1 Samuel 6:

- **Philistine Consultation with Priests and Diviners:** After seven months, the Philistines consult their religious experts on how to return the Ark. The role of "diviners" is discussed in detail, distinguishing between acceptable (inspired) and unacceptable (deductive) forms of divination according to Mosaic law.
- *"...what shall we do with the Ark of the Lord? Tell us how we should send it back to its place."*
- **Guilt Offering:** The Philistines are advised to send a guilt offering consisting of five gold tumors and five gold rats, representing the affliction and its source.
- *"...if you return the Ark of the God of Israel, do not send it away empty. But by all means, send a guilt offering to him."*
- **Testing God's Power:** The Philistines devise a test using cows that have recently calved. If the cows willingly leave their calves and head towards Beth Shemesh (Israelite territory), it will confirm that Yahweh is responsible for the disasters.

- *"If it goes up to its own territory toward Beth Shemesh, then the Lord has brought this great disaster on us."*
- **The Ark's Return to Beth Shemesh:** The cows successfully complete the test, heading directly to Beth Shemesh.
- *"Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way. They did not turn to the right or to the left."*
- **Unauthorized Sacrifice and Punishment:** The people of Beth Shemesh rejoice at the Ark's return, but they offer an unauthorized sacrifice and, more importantly, "look into" (possibly open and touch) the Ark. As a result, God strikes down some of the men of Beth Shemesh. The exact number is debated (70 vs. 50,070), with Dr. Chisholm favoring the lower number based on population estimates and the literary use of large numbers in the ancient Near East.
- *"God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, putting...70 of them to death because they had looked into the ark of the Lord."*
- **Fear of God's Holiness:** The men of Beth Shemesh, realizing the danger of God's holiness, send the Ark to Kiriath-jearim. This contrasts with Hannah's positive view of God's holiness, highlighting how one's relationship with God affects their perception of His holiness.
- *"Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?"*

Etiological Comments:

- The reason why priests of Dagon do not step on the threshold of Dagon's temple.
- The large rock in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh remains as a witness to the events.

Looking Ahead:

- Samuel will reappear in 1 Samuel 7, marking a more encouraging chapter in the narrative.

4. Study Guide: Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 4, 1 Samuel 5-6 – The Ark Does Some Damage, The Ark Heads Home

The Ark Narrative: A Study Guide to 1 Samuel 5-6

I. Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What was the older view about the nature of the Philistine god Dagon, and what is the more current and likely understanding of Dagon's identity?
2. Describe the initial event that humiliated Dagon when the Ark was placed in his temple.
3. How did the Philistines attempt to appease Yahweh and stop the plagues affecting their cities? What items did they create and offer as a guilt offering?
4. What test did the Philistines devise to determine if Yahweh was truly responsible for the disasters befalling them?
5. What ultimately happened to the cows and cart once they reached Beth Shemesh?
6. According to the lecture, what exactly did the men of Beth Shemesh do wrong when the Ark returned, leading to the death of some of the men of Beth Shemesh?
7. What is an etiological comment in the context of Biblical narrative, and where do we find examples of it in 1 Samuel 5-6?
8. According to Walton, what are the two categories of divination, and which one does the Mosaic law prohibit?
9. According to the lecture, how did the diviners advising the Philistines seem almost like prophets, and what message from them could an Israelite reader take to heart?
10. Why is it significant that the ark was in Philistine territory for seven months?

II. Quiz Answer Key

1. The older view was that Dagon was a fish god (due to the Hebrew word for "fish"), but more current understanding suggests he was likely a grain or weather

god, a fertility deity closely linked to Baal. This is supported by Ugaritic texts, where "daganu" means grain.

2. Initially, the image of Dagon was found fallen on its face before the Ark of the Lord, as if bowing in submission to Yahweh, indicating recognition of Yahweh's superiority. This humiliated Dagon, showing him in a subservient position.
3. The Philistines created five gold tumors and five gold rats as a guilt offering. These represented the tumors afflicting them and the rats associated with the plague, hoping to draw off the affliction through sympathetic magic.
4. They hitched two cows that had recently calved to a cart, placed the Ark upon it, and then watched to see if the cows would leave their calves and head towards Israelite territory. If the cows went in that direction it would be a sign that Yahweh was behind the disasters.
5. Once the cart reached Beth Shemesh, the people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. The Levites then took down the ark of the Lord together with the chest containing the gold objects and placed them on the large rock.
6. According to the lecture, the men of Beth Shemesh got in trouble for peering into the Ark, which likely meant they opened it up and touched it. This violated the holiness of the Ark, resulting in divine retribution and the death of some of them.
7. An etiological comment is an explanation within a narrative for a present-day practice or phenomenon, rooted in historical events. Examples in 1 Samuel 5-6 include the practice of not stepping on the threshold of Dagon's temple in Ashdod and the continued presence of the large rock in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh.
8. Walton identifies two categories of divination: inspired and deductive. Inspired divination is initiated in the divine realm and uses a human intermediary like a prophet. Deductive divination relies on interpreting omens and phenomena, and this type is what the Mosaic law prohibits.
9. The diviners' message to not harden their hearts and to honor Israel's God echoed the story of the Exodus and Pharaoh. This could remind Israelites to show proper respect to God, which they had failed to do at times.

10. The period of seven months is a significant amount of time for the Ark to be in Philistine territory. Additionally, the number seven suggests completeness and a thorough kind of destruction.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theological significance of the Ark narrative in 1 Samuel 5-6. How does it demonstrate Yahweh's power and sovereignty, even when the Israelites are defeated?
2. Analyze the role of the Philistine diviners in 1 Samuel 6. How do their actions and advice highlight both their understanding of the divine and the limitations of pagan religious practices?
3. Compare and contrast the responses of the Philistines and the men of Beth Shemesh to the Ark of the Covenant. What does each group's reaction reveal about their understanding of God's holiness?
4. Examine the use of etiology in 1 Samuel 5-6. How do these etiological comments contribute to the narrative's overall meaning and purpose?
5. Explore the various interpretations of the "tumors" that afflicted the Philistines. How do these interpretations impact our understanding of the narrative's historical and theological context?

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ark of the Covenant:** A sacred chest containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments, symbolizing God's presence.
- **Philistines:** A people who inhabited the coastal areas of Canaan and were often in conflict with the Israelites.
- **Dagon:** The primary deity of the Philistines, likely a grain or weather/fertility god.
- **Etiology:** An explanation for a present-day practice or phenomenon rooted in historical events.
- **Guilt Offering/Reparation Offering:** A sacrifice or offering made to atone for an offense or to make amends.
- **Divination:** The practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the divine will through various methods.
- **Tumors:** In the context of 1 Samuel 5-6, refers to swellings or possibly anal ulcers/hemorrhoids, potentially related to bubonic plague or dysentery.
- **Beth Shemesh:** An Israelite town to which the Ark was returned.
- **Kiriath-jearim:** The city to which the Ark was eventually moved after the incident at Beth Shemesh.
- **Pentapolis:** The five major Philistine cities: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.
- **Holy:** Set apart, unique, and distinct; often associated with God's nature and requiring reverence.
- **Polemic:** A strong verbal or written attack on someone or something.
- **Namburbis:** In Mesopotamian culture, rituals or actions performed to counter negative omens or divine intentions.

5. FAQs on Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 4, 1 Samuel 5-6, The Ark Does Some Damage, The Ark Heads Home, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on 1 Samuel 5-6: The Ark's Journey and its Consequences

- Why did the Israelites bring the Ark of the Covenant into battle, and what were the results?** The Israelites, facing defeat by the Philistines, brought the Ark into battle hoping it would guarantee them victory. However, this plan backfired spectacularly. The Israelites suffered a major defeat, losing the battle, and the Ark was captured by the Philistines. Additionally, Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed, and Eli himself died upon hearing the news. Eli's daughter-in-law also died while giving birth to a son she named Ichabod, meaning "the glory is gone." This marked a very dark period for Israel.
- Who was the Philistine god Dagon, and what happened when the Ark was placed in Dagon's temple?** Dagon was a primary deity of the Philistines, likely a grain or weather/fertility god, much like Baal. When the Philistines placed the Ark in Dagon's temple, the image of Dagon fell on its face before the Ark the next morning, as if bowing in submission. After the idol was placed back, it fell again the following morning, this time with its head and hands broken off, lying on the threshold. This was interpreted as Yahweh defeating and humiliating Dagon in his own temple.
- What afflictions did the Lord bring upon the Philistines, and what actions did they take in response?** The Lord afflicted the Philistines with tumors (possibly bubonic plague or anal ulcers/hemorrhoids), causing devastation and panic. In response, the Philistines initially moved the Ark from Ashdod to Gath and then to Ekron, hoping to alleviate the affliction. However, the disease followed the Ark to each city, intensifying the panic.
- What was the purpose of the golden tumors and rats that the Philistines sent back with the Ark as a guilt offering?** The Philistine priests and diviners advised sending a guilt offering with the Ark to appease Yahweh. The five golden tumors represented the affliction (tumors) that had struck them, and the five golden rats were likely included because rats were believed to be carriers of the plague causing the illness. This offering was an attempt to draw off the affliction and show respect to Israel's God.

- **What test did the Philistines devise to determine if Yahweh was truly responsible for their troubles?** The Philistines decided to hitch two cows that had recently calved and had never been yoked to a new cart. They placed the Ark on the cart and penned up the cows' calves. If the cows willingly left their calves and headed straight toward Beth Shemesh (an Israelite territory) and did not turn aside, it would be a sign that Yahweh was indeed the cause of the devastation they were experiencing.
- **What happened when the Ark returned to Beth Shemesh, and why?** When the Ark arrived in Beth Shemesh, the people rejoiced. However, some of the men of Beth Shemesh "looked into" (likely meaning they opened and touched) the Ark, violating its holiness. As a result, God struck down a number of them. The exact number is debated, but it led to great mourning and fear among the people of Beth Shemesh.
- **Why is the holiness of God viewed differently by Hannah and the men of Beth Shemesh?** Hannah, who had a close and devoted relationship with God, celebrated God's holiness as a positive attribute, signifying His uniqueness, justice, and intervention on behalf of His people. In contrast, the men of Beth Shemesh, by disrespecting the Ark and not showing proper reverence for God's holiness, experienced the negative consequences of His holiness. They viewed it as a scary and dangerous thing because they were in a position of violating God's standards.
- **What are the main theological themes emerging from the story of the Ark in 1 Samuel 5-6?** Several important theological themes emerge: God is sovereign and cannot be controlled or confined to an image (like the Ark); God is more powerful than pagan gods; God's power transcends tangible symbols of His presence; the holy God must be treated with respect; and people can experience the holiness of God differently based on their relationship to Him.