

# Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 4

## 1 Samuel 5-6

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This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session number four, 1 Samuel 5-6. The Ark Does Some Damage. The Ark Heads Home.

Well, in this next lesson, we're going to be looking at 1 Samuel 5 and 1 Samuel 6, which tells the story of how the Ark went to Philistine territory. Things did not work out well for the Philistines when the ark arrived, and so they eventually sent it back to Israel. You will recall that in our last lesson, we looked at 1 Samuel 3, where the Lord calls Samuel to be his prophet, and then 1 Samuel 4, which describes how the Israelites decided to take the ark into battle with them.

Not a good idea. They lost the battle. Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, as predicted by the man of God back in chapter 2, were killed that day, and Eli himself died when he heard the bad news of Israel's defeat.

It was too much for him. He fell over backward, broke his neck, and died. Furthermore, his daughter-in-law was giving birth to a child whom she named Ichabod, whereas the glory or the glory is gone, and she died in giving birth to that child.

So, it was a very dark day for Israel. The Philistines captured the ark and took it to their territory. We're going to pick the story up in chapter 5. This particular chapter I've entitled, The Ark Does Some Damage.

I think the main theme of this chapter is, that even when the Lord appears to be defeated, after all, the ark, the symbol of his presence, had been taken captive by the Philistines, but 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, and the Philistines needed to learn this. So, we're going to pick up the story in chapter 5, verse 1. I'm reading from the NIV 1984 edition.

After the Philistines had captured the Ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer, where the battle had been fought, to Ashdod, one of the five Philistine cities. Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. Now, we need to stop and talk a little bit about the god Dagon.

He is the primary deity of the Philistines, and there has been some discussion over the years as to the nature of Dagon. An older view, a few people still hold to it, and you see it at the popular level. The older view is that Dagon is a fish god because Hebrew dog means fish.

It was a dog, for example, that swallowed Jonah. And sometimes in Hebrew, the "-on," ending, you hear that "-on," on the end, it can mean that something is like the word that comes before it, so fish-like. And so, the god Dagon is sometimes portrayed as a fish.

The Philistines, living on the coast, worshipped a fish god. But I really think that's not correct. I think it's more correct to see Dagon as either a weather deity or a grain god.

In the Ugaritic language, remember Ugarit was a site located on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel where we discovered tablets and we learned a lot about Canaanite religion from there. And there is a word in Ugaritic, daganu, which means grain. And so, Dagon is probably a grain god or maybe a weather god.

At any rate, he's a fertility deity, like Baal. And lo and behold, in these texts, Baal is referred to as the son of Dagon, or Dagon is his father. Now, in some passages, El, the high god, is Baal's father.

So how can he have two fathers? Some have suggested, well, there were two different traditions. I don't think that's correct. Sometimes in these Semitic languages, the father can just refer to a grandfather or an ancestor.

So, I think it's likely that El is the high god who spawned all of the gods and he would be the grandfather of Baal, but Dagon is his actual father. So, there's a close connection between Dagon and Baal in the thinking of the people. And so, he's basically a fertility deity and the Philistines have chosen Dagon as kind of their primary deity.

Now, you will remember in Judges that Samson had a lot of dealings with the Philistines. He was so upset when his bride from Timnah had been given to another man that he burned the Philistine fields down. Now, if it's correct that Dagon is a grain or weather fertility deity, then he burned down the crops that Dagon had provided for the Philistines.

So, they were upset. They wanted to get Samson. They eventually did capture him through his own foolishness and with help from Delilah.

And you'll recall, however, the story does have somewhat of a happy ending. Now, Samson dies in the process, so there is a dark cloud over it, but nevertheless, he brings the temple of Dagon down. In fact, the text describes it as falling.

And you'll recall that he killed more Philistines that day, on that occasion, than he had during his career, which was a significant amount. So, we've heard about Dagon

before in conjunction with the Philistines. And Dagon's temple had a great fall that day when Samson brought it down.

Well, Dagon himself is going to have a great fall in this passage. And so, there is a polemic that's running through here. A polemic against the god Baal and a polemic against the god Dagon.

And that polemic is going to be carried on in this passage. When we get to chapter 7, we'll talk about how that Baal polemic has developed through Judges and into 1 Samuel. So, let's continue reading here with that background information in mind.

Verse 3, When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon fell on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord. So, get the picture. They walk into the temple and there is Dagon's image bowing before the ark.

And, of course, when people bow before someone in this culture, it's usually a sign of submission or recognition of superiority. So, it's as if Dagon is recognizing the superiority of Yahweh who is represented by the ark. But, they took Dagon and put him back in his place.

So, they really don't understand the significance of this. So, they set Dagon back up in front of the ark. But, the following morning, when they rose, there was Dagon fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord.

Same thing, except there's a difference this time. His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold. Only his body remained.

So, Dagon has been decapitated and mutilated. And, this is significant because in battle, warriors would sometimes cut off the head of a defeated foe. So, you will recall that David did this to Goliath and kept the head.

It was kept as a trophy. And then, later, the Philistines did the same thing to Saul. They cut his head off.

So, warriors would sometimes do this. As far as the hands, same thing. Sometimes a defeated foe, their hands would be cut off.

They would sometimes pile up to count them. We actually have a text from these mythological texts from Ugarit, in which the goddess Anat, who is very warlike, seems to delight in battle. She has a necklace made out of the heads of her defeated foes.

And, she has a belt which is attached to the hands of her defeated foes. So, she is a victorious warrior, complete with her victims' heads and hands attached to her. And so, this isn't just violent imagery here.

This indicates that not only is Dagon inferior to Yahweh, but Yahweh has defeated Dagon in his very own temple and humiliated him. So, the Philistines hopefully got the point here. If they didn't, they soon will.

That is why there is kind of what we call an etiological comment. Sometimes, in a Hebrew narrative, you will find these. There will be an explanation for a present-day practice that is rooted in history.

There is a lot of this in Genesis 1-11. We call it etiology. It is an explanation for a present-day practice.

That is why, to this day, neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod step on the threshold. So, the head and hands were lying on the threshold, and so a god touched the threshold. And so, that makes it sort of sanctified and special.

It is not common anymore. So, it is kind of taboo. We can't touch what the god has touched.

That would be wrong. And so, apparently, at Dagon's temple in Ashdod, they would just step over the threshold and make sure they did not make contact with it. Well, it is going to get worse for the Philistines.

So, Yahweh, represented by his ark in Dagon's temple, has humiliated the Philistines' primary deity. Earlier, in the days of Samson, Dagon's temple had a great fall. Now, here in Ashdod, Dagon himself had a great fall.

And that word is used in the text, fall, for both of those. But it is going to get worse. Verse 6, the Lord's hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity.

He brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors. Now, there is a little bit of irony, maybe even humor here. I can see the author smiling as he writes this.

The Lord's hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod. Ironically, Dagon lost his hands. But the Lord has a powerful hand and it is heavy upon the people of Ashdod and he is afflicting them with tumors.

Now, there is some discussion as to the nature of this affliction that the Lord brought upon the Philistines. The term that is translated tumors literally means hills or mounds. So, it should probably be understood here as swellings.

And so, the Lord struck the Philistines with a disease of some kind, perhaps bubonic plague. One of the chief symptoms of that is inflamed lymph glands in the armpit and groin. And so, it may be that this is what the Lord brought upon them.

And in favor of that interpretation is the fact that when the Philistines decide to use a little magic to try to ward off the Lord's wrath, remember when they are going to send the Ark back, they don't send it back by itself. They make these little golden rats or mice and these golden tumors as a guilt offering to the Lord, a reparation offering as it were, to try to appease him. Well, rats are carriers of bubonic plague and that was a fact that was recognized in the ancient world.

So, it may be that these rats had showed up and the Philistines recognized that this affliction came through them so the Lord used the rats as his instrument to afflict the Philistines. Otherwise, why would they make these golden rats or mice? In fact, one Greek manuscript, which may not represent the original text, does read here, that he ravaged the Ashdodites and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its environs. He brought up mice upon them and they swarmed in their ships and then mice went up into the land and there was a mortal panic in the city.

That may really be an ancient interpretation of how this happened to try to reconcile the fact that no mice were mentioned but then lo and behold the Philistines are making golden rats. But it may be a correct tradition and interpretation. But there's another tradition which is preserved in the margin of the Hebrew Bible where we have an interpretation where the swellings, the tumors, are understood as anal ulcers and hemorrhoids.

Ouch! And so, some have suggested that the Lord afflicted the Philistines with dysentery which produces those kinds of sores. So, there is some debate as to the nature of this affliction but nevertheless, the Philistines were in trouble. And so, in verse 7, when the men of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, the Ark of the God of Israel must not stay here with us because his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagon, our God.

He's attacking us, he's attacked our God, he can't stay here. We've got to get rid of him. So, they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and asked them, what shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel? They answered, have the Ark of the God of Israel moved to Gath.

So, they moved the Ark of the God of Israel. So I can just see the residents of Gath saying, thanks a lot, rulers, why did you pick out us? But after they had moved it, the

Lord's hand was against that city, throwing it into a great panic. So, things are intensifying here among the Philistines.

The panic is getting greater, the situation is not good. He afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumors. So, they sent the Ark of God to Ekron.

They didn't bother to bring in the rulers and ask them, what should we do with it, as we saw in the first panel. Remember we talked about panels in an earlier lecture. That's what you've got here.

They just sent the Ark to Ekron, another one of their cities. And as the Ark of God was entering Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, they have brought the Ark of the God of Israel around to us to kill us and our people. So, they see the Ark arriving.

Apparently, the news has spread. They've heard about what's happening and they don't want it there. So, they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and said, send the Ark of the God of Israel away.

Let it go back to its own place or it will kill us and our people. For death had filled the city with panic. So, the Ark is bringing death and destruction to the Philistines.

God's hand was very heavy upon it. Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors and the outcry of the city went up to heaven. So, the Lord is doing some damage in Philistine territory.

And the Philistines are learning that you can't control a God simply by having his image, as it were. That God is bigger, at least Yahweh, the God of Israel, is bigger than the Ark that represents him. So, there are a couple of important themes that emerge here.

We have the primary theme, but we find that the Lord is more powerful than the pagan gods. He has demonstrated that throughout Israel's history prior to this in Egypt. Time and time again the Israelites were coming into Canaanite territory.

The Lord is more powerful than these pagan gods and his power transcends any mere tangible reminder of his presence. So don't try to control God through an image. That lesson is emerging quite clearly here.

Well, that brings us to verse chapter 6, which is of course the continuation of this story. I've entitled chapter 6, The Ark Heads Home. And I think the main theme in this chapter is the holy God must be treated with respect.

The Philistines recognize that and the Israelites do as well once the Ark arrives in their territory. And so, picking it up in chapter 6, when the Ark of the Lord had been in Philistine territory seven months, so it did spend some time there doing damage, the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, what shall we do with the Ark of the Lord? Tell us how we should send it back to its place. So, the priests and diviners are religious leaders.

They're the religious experts. Priests we're familiar with. They mediate between a god and his people.

Diviners, that may be a word you're not as familiar with. Divination was very common in the ancient Near Eastern world. And diviners were responsible for determining the divine will, the will of the god or gods.

And they had various ways of doing this. The Mosaic law prohibited divination or at least one type of divination in Deuteronomy 18:10. But in the ancient world, it was quite common. John Walton discusses this in one of his books.

And he said there really are two categories of what he calls divination in the ancient world. There's inspired and deductive. He says inspired divination is initiated in the divine realm and uses a human intermediary.

This type of divination took the forms of official and informal prophecy as well as dreams. Well, we're familiar with prophecy and prophetic dreams. The Lord operated that way.

John calls that divination. We would, I think, just call it prophecy. So, when the Bible outlaws divination, it's really outlawing this other type that John Walton talks about, and that's deductive divination, which also originates in the divine realm, but its revelation is communicated through events and phenomena that can be observed.

It is this deductive type of divination that the law prohibits. The Lord communicated directly through prophets, through dreams, but he didn't authorize these deductive methods that were so popular in the culture. They would keep volumes of tablets and books cataloging all of this.

Deductive divination involves the interpretation of omens, which could be active or passive. They would sometimes look at the internal organs of animals like we're going to offer up an animal as a sacrifice. We cut it open.

We look at its internal organs to see if there's anything odd or maybe misshapen. And if there's an oddity, well, that means something. The gods are trying to communicate something about their will, and what's going to happen.

They would cast lots. They would sometimes look at the heavens for signs. If a fox went across the pathway, well, that might not be an ordinary occurrence.

And so, you watch very carefully to see what happens later in the day. And if something bad happens, then a fox going across the road is a bad omen. Actually, it might even depend on which direction.

If you move from left to right or right to left, they keep track of all of this. So, the next time a fox crosses the road in the same direction, you now know something bad is going to happen. And so, what they would sometimes do, they would have a counter.

They would have a way of countering this, maybe through magic. In Mesopotamia, they called these Namburbis, these counter omens. So, the god is communicating what will happen if people don't intervene.

But you can go before the god and try to counter what is happening. Because sometimes the gods are not on the same page. One god is intending to do something, but another god may be on your side.

And so, you've got to enlist his support. So, as you can see, this is a very complex kind of system. And the Lord said it's pagan.

And we are not going to determine the divine will in this way. I will speak directly through my prophets. And sometimes using dreams.

And you're not going to be using magic to try to ward things off. If you're afraid, just pray to me. So, these Philistine diviners, this is the kind of thing they do.

So, it's natural that they would be brought into the situation. That they would be consulted. Because they're the religious experts.

They know how to deal with gods. And so, they answered, 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.

Or a reparation offering. You need to make reparation. You've offended him, obviously.

We've got a lot of dead people. You have offended him by taking the symbol of his presence. And so, you need to make reparation by giving him an offering.



Then you will be healed. And you will know why his hand has not been lifted from you. And the Philistines asked, naturally, what guilt offering should we send to him? What should that offering look like? And they replied, five.

And I think five represent the five main Philistine cities. Some of which have been already mentioned in the story. Five gold tumors.

Remember, the affliction involved these tumors. So, we're going to make these golden tumors to represent that. It's kind of sympathetic magic here.

I think what they're trying to do is draw off the affliction. And five gold rats. And we talked about the rats or the mice earlier.

Which may have been the carriers of the plague that has afflicted them. According to the number of the Philistine rulers. So, they say that.

Because the same plague has struck both you and your rulers. Make models of the tumors and of the rats that are destroying the country. And pay honor to Israel's God.

Perhaps he will lift his hand from you and your gods and your land. They're not sure about this. But they are going to give him this reparation offering.

And of course, the gold suggests something of great value. And so they are trying to show respect for Yahweh by giving him these things. And I think they're also hoping to draw the plague off.

So, this is kind of the ad hoc solution that they've come up with. They probably hadn't encountered this one before. But they're experts.

And so, they've got some ideas on what to do. And then it's very interesting. As they speak here in verse six, they sound almost like prophets.

The message that they give to their own people would be a good one for the Israelites to hear. They say, why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? Interesting. They know about what happened down in Egypt with Pharaoh.

They're familiar with the story. It's as if they've read Exodus. And they're aware of what happened down there.

When he treated them harshly, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their own way? So don't harden your hearts. Show this God honor and respect. A

good message from the Philistine diviners to their own people that an Israelite reader later could take to heart.

Because the Israelites have not been showing the Lord that kind of respect. Now then, get a new cart ready. Now there's a proper way to carry the ark that's described in the law.

You don't load it on a cart. But the Philistines don't know all of this. Actually, you would put it on, and Levites would carry it with poles.

You don't put it on a cart. David's going to discover this later when he tries to move the ark to Jerusalem. But that doesn't happen until 2 Samuel chapter 6. And so, it'll be a while before we discuss that.

So, get a new cart ready with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart. But take their calves away and pen them up.

So, you see what's happening here. The mothers are going to want to be with their babies. And so, the Philistines are setting up almost a test here to verify that Yahweh, the God of Israel, really is the power that has come upon them.

And this will be a good test to determine that. Take the ark of the Lord and put it on the cart. And in a chest beside it, put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering.

Send it on its way, but keep watching it. If it goes up to its own territory toward Beth Shemesh, then the Lord has brought this great disaster on us. In other words, if these cows are willing to leave their babies and head off in the Israelite direction, then that will be a sign to us that, yes indeed, Yahweh was behind this.

But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us and that it happened to us by chance. They seem to have some kind of an understanding of chance or luck. Maybe they simply mean by that it just happened to us for an unknown cause.

I find it hard to believe that they would not believe in some cause, but it wouldn't be Yahweh. So, this is a good test. So, they did this and they took two such cows hitched them to the cart, and penned up their calves.

They placed the ark of the Lord on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumors. Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way. They're not happy about it, but they're moving in the right direction.

They did not turn to the right or to the left. So, mooing cows, taking the ark back to Israel, leaving their babies behind. So, the rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh.

So, they're watching all of this to see how it plays out. So, the ark is now back in an Israelite town. Verse 13, Now the people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley.

And when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced at the sight. The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock. So, a lot of detail here.

The author is trying to help you visualize the scene. The people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. I do not believe that that was really an authorized sacrifice.

You're supposed to offer a male bull. Nevertheless, this is what they did. The Levites, this is good, the Levites handle the ark.

So, the Levites took down the ark of the Lord together with the chest containing the gold objects and placed them on the large rock. On that day, the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the Lord. The five rulers of the Philistines saw all this.

They were watching from a distance and then returned that same day to Ekron. So, their plan has worked. And they have verified the fact that, yes, indeed, it was Yahweh, the God of Israel, who was doing all of this damage in Israel.

These, verse 17, these are the gold tumors the Philistines sent as a guilt offering to the Lord, one each for Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, the pentapolis, the five cities of the Philistines. And the number of gold rats was according to the number of Philistine towns belonging to the five rulers, the fortified towns with their country villages. The large rock on which they set the ark of the Lord is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh.

Another etiological comment. That rock is special. If you go down there, you might want to stop and take a look at it in your travels because it's still there as a witness of what happened.

And you can look at it and be reminded of this story and its theological significance. But the story doesn't have a real happy ending for the people of Beth Shemesh. God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, putting, and this particular translation is following a tradition that has a lower number, putting 70 of them to death because they had looked into the ark of the Lord.

The people mourned because of the heavy blow the Lord had dealt them, and the men of Beth Shemesh asked, Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here? Then they sent messengers to the people of Kiriath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have returned the ark of the Lord. Come down and take it up to your place. We don't want it around.

The ark's doing some damage in Philistine territory and back home in Israel. Now what exactly did the men of Beth Shemesh do? The text says they looked into the ark of the Lord. It's interesting, however, that that phrase in Hebrew sometimes, more often actually, means look at.

But I don't think that's the idea here. I don't think they got in trouble simply because they looked at the ark. I mean, that happened when it arrived.

How could they help by looking at it? I think it probably does mean they looked into it. They were peering into it, which means they opened it up. They touched it.

No, you don't want to do that. Later in 2 Samuel chapter 6, when David is improperly transporting the ark, a man named Uzzah is going to steady the ark to prevent it from falling. He seems to be good-intentioned, well-intentioned, but nevertheless, the Lord strikes him dead for touching the ark in this manner.

So, I think they probably touched the ark, looked into it, and people died. How many people? Well, that's kind of a debate. If you look at other translations, you'll see a larger number.

And you get some variation on this. In the ESV, it says 70, but if you go to the NASB, for example, you're going to get a larger number. It's going to be 50,070 men.

So that's quite a variation. Is it 50,000? That's what the Hebrew text says. Or is it just 70? 50,070 or just 70? That's the problem.

And the textual evidence for this is kind of meager for the lower number. Josephus uses that number. And I think one Greek manuscript, but a few Hebrew, medieval Hebrew manuscripts, my notes tell me, and Josephus has that smaller number.

I do believe the smaller number is probably correct. 50,000 is just too large a figure. These large numbers are tricky in the historical books, because archaeologists are able to estimate, based on their studies, how many people lived in Israelite territory during this time period.

During this time period, there are probably only 75,000 Israelites in total. So, I don't think two-thirds of the population died that day in Beit Shemesh. So, there are

different explanations that are offered by evangelical scholars for these large numbers.

Some will argue that these numbers are intentionally inflated. It's a literary device. One of my colleagues here at Dallas Seminary, Ron Allen, has written a commentary on numbers, and he takes this view.

One of my former students, David Fouts, did a dissertation. He demonstrated that in the ancient Near Eastern world, especially in military contexts, yes, they did inflate numbers. It was something that was done.

So, we can't judge the Bible by our own modern standards of historiography. We have to allow the Bible to operate in its own cultural context. So perhaps that's what we have going here.

It may also be that we don't understand this word that's translated, thousand. We don't understand it properly. It may just refer to some type of unit of people, not a thousand, but a smaller number.

So, we're still debating and discussing. Scholars and interpreters are still debating and discussing what's going on with these numbers. But I think that number, 50,070, is just too large.

There's another example of this kind of thing in 1 Kings 20, verse 30, where the Arameans flee to the Israelite city of Aphek, and a wall falls down. Now, we're told that Israel has killed 100,000 Arameans in battle. They go into this town, and these towns are relatively small.

They're not like big modern cities. And a wall collapses and kills 27,000 men? Really? I don't think so. And we're not suggesting that the Bible is inaccurate.

What we're suggesting is the Bible is perhaps using a rhetorical device, inflating numbers for, it's just hyperbole. It's a case of exaggeration for the sake of emphasis. An accepted literary device in the culture that people would have understood.

Or, we just don't understand the word *eleph* thousand properly. It could be 27 military units or something like that would be much smaller. So, that's a problem.

That's an interpretive problem. And I don't think that we have the solution at this point. We've got some options.

Nevertheless, whether it's 50,000, 70, or just 70, which would, by the way, as a multiple of seven, suggest completeness and a thorough kind of destruction. The Ark is doing some damage, and people are afraid of it. And it's also interesting that the

men of Beit Shemesh, who have had the audacity to touch and peer into the Ark, say, who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? The fact that the Lord is holy, he's set apart, he's unique, he's distinct, scares them.

It's a scary thing to stand before the holy God. But Hannah wasn't afraid. Remember, Hannah celebrated the fact that the Lord is holy in her song that we studied in an earlier lesson.

She said, who is holy among, you know, the Lord is unique among the holy ones. He is the only one who is really holy. And for her, that was good news.

The Lord is distinct. He's unique. And he intercedes for his or intervenes on behalf of his people and provides for their needs.

And so, the holiness of God can be a very scary thing, especially if you are in the position of being an enemy of God or one who has violated his standards and not respected his sovereignty and holiness. But on the other hand, the holiness of God can be a very positive thing that we celebrate. We have a holy, just God.

And that means that he will carry out justice on behalf of his people. So, how you view the holiness of God really depends on your relationship with him. Hannah had a good relationship with the Lord.

She was a godly woman. And she was not frightened by the holiness of God. She celebrated it.

The men of Beth Shemesh, not so much. They were not showing the proper respect for God's holiness. And so, in this ark narrative, we learn a lot of things.

We learn that God cannot be confined to a box or an image. He may choose to reveal his presence through the ark. But just because you have the ark in your possession does not mean you control him.

He's bigger than the ark. He is sovereign. And the Philistines couldn't control him.

And you have to show the proper respect for this holy God. The Philistines learned that. To their credit, the diviners told the people, to show respect for him.

Honor him. And the men of Beth Shemesh learned that lesson as well. These chapters have been kind of negative.

Samuel has disappeared. He hasn't been here since chapter 3. Well, he's going to reappear in 1 Samuel chapter 7, which is one of the more encouraging chapters in the books of Samuel. And we'll look at that one in our next lesson.

This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session number four, 1 Samuel 5-6. The Ark Does Some Damage. The Ark Heads Home.