

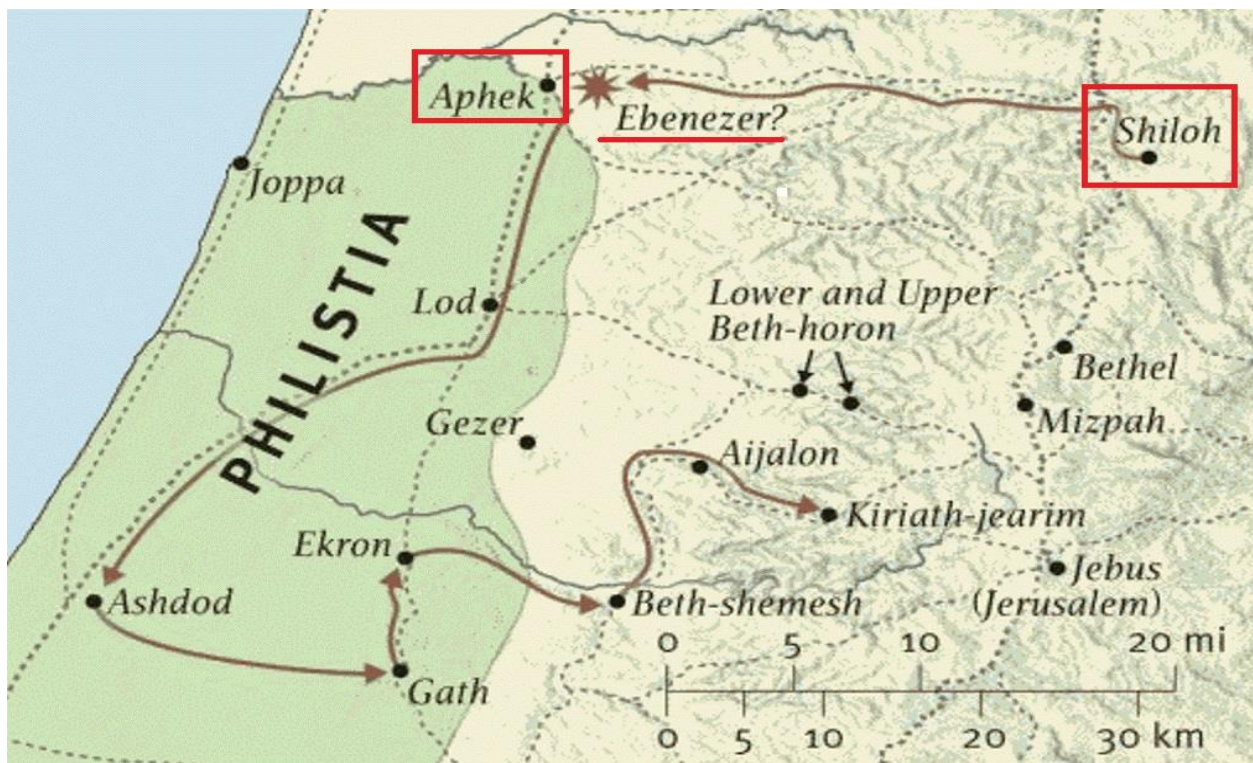
1st Samuel 4

Verses 1 - 4

Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek. ²The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. ³When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.” ⁴So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits *above* the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

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See Map 405



When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield.

We are not told how many troops were assembled for either side of this war but the loss of 4,000 men was enough to send the Israelites back to their camp.

³ When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.”

The elders were correct in saying the Lord had defeated them but they were wrong to assume the ark would deliver them from their enemy.

They went into this conflict without consulting God thru the High Priest or checking with Samuel who was known to be a true prophet of God.

Instead they tried to use the Ark as a good luck charm instead of turning to God.

⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits *above* the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

Could any two things be more incongruent than the sacred Ark of the Covenant and Eli's two reprobate sons?

Verses 5 - 9

As the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded. ⁶ When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, “What *does* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews *mean*?” Then they understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp. ⁷ The Philistines were afraid, for they said, “God has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. ⁸ Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all *kinds of* plagues in the wilderness. ⁹ Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight.”

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It was not unusual for warring parties to camp within a few miles of each other and the shout coming from the camp of Israel could easily be heard by the Philistines.

⁷ The Philistines were afraid, for they said, “God has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. ⁸ Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.

The Philistines knew about Israel's deliverance from Egypt but some of the facts had been misconstrued.

1. They thought that the Lord God was many gods.
2. They thought the plagues took place in the wilderness.

Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods

The Philistines held the ancient belief that there were many gods.

Each one benefitting or bringing disaster to the people of that area

⁹ Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight.”

The leader of the Philistines reminded his men that they needed to be courageous or they could lose the advantage they currently held over Israel.

Over the last 40 years the only success that Israel had against the Philistines was during the judgeship of Samson and that was because he was a one man wrecking crew.

See chart 410

1st Samuel Timeline

The two rows highlighted in yellow are from the book of Judges

Ch.	Event	Year
1	The birth of Samuel	1100
Judges 13	Samson the one man wrecking crew	1098
3	The Lord calls Samuel	1088
Judges 16	Samson brings Philistine temple down	1078
4	Israel defeated and Ark captured	1070
10	Saul becomes King	1050

The Philistines controlled Israel during the time of Samson.

During that time Israel was unable or unwilling to war against them.

However, Samson won a number of battles against the Philistines but he did this as a one man wrecking crew.

Verses 10 - 11

So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. ¹¹ And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

When Israel went into Canaan (1406 BC) they had 600,000 troops. In chapter 20 of Judges (1375 to 1350 BC) Israel only had 425,000 troops. It is safe to assume many of the 175,000 were lost during the takeover of Canaan.

However, in the Civil War between Israel and the tribe of Benjamin in The Book of Judges chapter 20 (1375 to 1350 BC), we are told that Israel lost 40,000 soldiers and Benjamin lost 26,000 men. This means that as Israel entered the time of the Judges (1350 BC) they were down to 360,000 troops.

Now they have just lost another 34,000 troops. In 1 Samuel 11 Saul will gather an army of 330,000. The size of Israel's army had been in decline for some time now.

The Ark was taken and would never again sit in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle.

See chart 415

Location of the Tabernacle after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River					Location of the Ark after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River				
Scripture	Place	Began	Ended	Years	Scripture	Place	Began	Ended	Years
Joshua 5:10	Gilgal	1406	1396	10	I Sam 4:3	Shiloh	1396	1070	326
Joshua 18:1	Shiloh	1396	1070	326	I Sam 4:5	Battle at Ebenezer	1070	1070	Days
Jeremiah 7:14	Shiloh destroyed	1070			I Sam 4:11	Ark Captured	1070	1070	
					I Sam 5:1	Ashdod	1070	1070	7 months
					I Sam 5:8	Gath	1070	1070	in
					I Sam 5:10	Ekron	1070	1070	Philistia
					I Sam 6:12	Beth Shemesh	1070	1070	
					I Sam 7:2	Kiriath Jearim	1070	1050	20
	Not sure	1070	1020	50		Not sure	1050	1000	50
I Sam 21	Nob	1020	1000	20	I Chron. 13:13	Obed Edom	1000	1000	3 months
I Chron. 16:39-40	Gibeon	1000	959	40	I Chron. 16:1	City of Jerusalem	1000	959	40
I Kings 8:3-4	Temple	959			I Kings 8:3-4	In the Temple	959		

Ark separated from the Tabernacle for 110 years

Just to be clear the Ark was brought back to Israel after 7 months when the Philistines realized that God was punishing them. But the Ark and the Tabernacle were in separate locations for the next 110 years. This was true even during David's reign. He brought the Ark to Jerusalem in 1,000 BC but the Tabernacle was in Gibeon at that time.

When the temple was completed by Solomon in 959 BC the Ark was put in the most holy place of the temple but the Tabernacle was no longer needed.

Isn't it strange that the centerpiece of the Jewish religion, the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant, would be separated and never again be brought back together?

When Hophni and Phinehas died it was the beginning of the fulfillment of God's prophecies against the house of Eli. But this was also the beginning of God's judgement of Israel. The army was defeated, the Ark was captured, the two sons of Eli died and Eli their High priest will die very soon. When judgment comes to a nation it comes with many signs.

Verses 12 - 18

Now a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head. ¹³ When he came, behold, Eli was sitting on *his* seat by the road eagerly watching, because his heart was trembling for the ark of God. So the man came to tell *it* in the city, and all the city cried out. ¹⁴ When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, “What *does* the noise of this commotion *mean*?” Then the man came hurriedly and told Eli. ¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set so that he could not see. ¹⁶ The man said to Eli, “I am the one who came from the battle line. Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today.” And he said, “How did things go, my son?” ¹⁷ Then the one who brought the news replied, “Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken.” ¹⁸ When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years.

Now a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head.

The battle occurred about eighteen miles from Shiloh but in the days to come the Philistine army will come to Shiloh and destroy the city.

¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set so that he could not see.

This explains why Eli had to ask the messenger the outcome of the battle. If he could see, he would have known from the messenger's torn cloths and the dust on his head that the battle had been lost.

¹⁷ Then the one who brought the news replied, “Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken.”

This was 3 major blows to Eli who had been a leader (judge) of Israel for 40 years

That is a lot of painful news to suffer thru in one sitting.

18 When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years.

Eli's chief concern was for the Ark of God and this disastrous news destroyed him.

We can only hope that Eli did some good things during those 40 years as a judge of Israel because the little we do know is not good.

Verses 19 - 22

19 Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas's wife, was pregnant and about to give birth; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she kneeled down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. ²⁰ And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son." But she did not answer or pay attention. ²¹ And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband. ²² She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken."

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The news about the Ark, her father-in-law, and her husband caused her to go into labor.

20 And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son." But she did not answer or pay attention.

The joy that would normally be experienced by the news that she had a son was completely overshadowed by the horrific news that she had just heard.

We need to remember that this poor woman was married to a guy that was cheating on her with other woman at the gate of the Tabernacle. Then she dies giving birth. ☹

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Ichabod means the glory has departed from Israel.

The ark was a symbol of God’s presence and for it to be taken away by the Philistines (their most hated enemy) symbolized the great divide between Israel & God.