

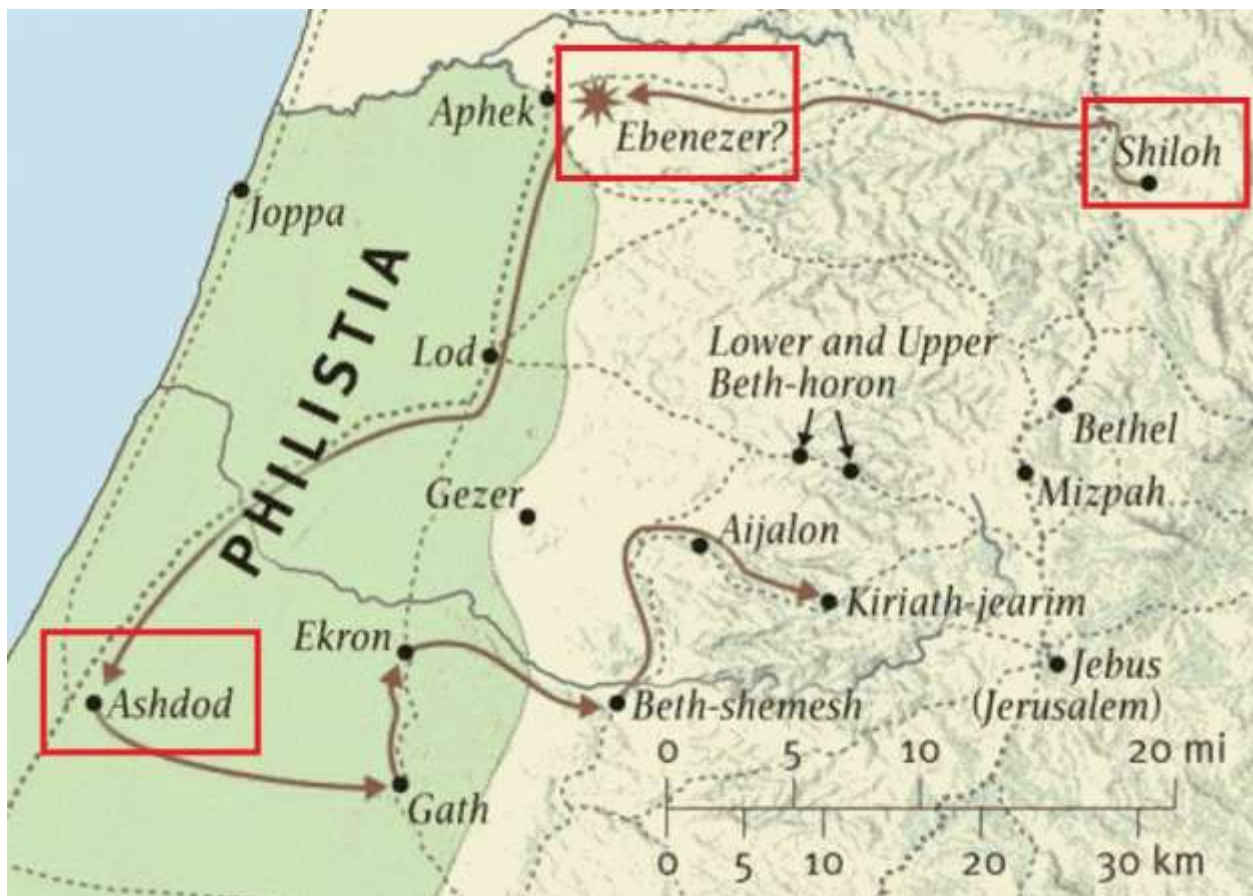
## 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 5

Verses 1 – 2

Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.  
<sup>2</sup> Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon, and placed it beside Dagon.

Ashdod was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines.

See map 505



Ashdod was 3 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. The name means stronghold or fortress.

Ancient writers described Dagon as, "half man and half fish."

See pic 510



The first mention of Dagon in the bible appears in Judges 16:23, where we are told that Dagon was the god of the Philistines. The Philistines offered “a great sacrifice” to Dagon, believing that their idol had delivered Samson into their hands.

His devotees touted him as the father of the Canaanite god Baal. There were temples erected to Dagon at Gaza and at Ashdod.

The Philistines' placing the Ark in the temple of their god was a way of proclaiming that their god was superior to the God of the Jews. God took that as a challenge.

Verse 3

**<sup>3</sup>When the Ashdodites got up early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him back in his place.**

The message to the Philistines was pretty simple. They should be worshipping the Lord just as their god was doing. However, the priests of Dagon did not comprehend or appreciate the message and put their god back where it belonged.

Verses 4 - 5

**<sup>4</sup> But when they got up early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. And the head of Dagon and both palms of his hands *were* cut off on the threshold; only the torso of Dagon was left. <sup>5</sup> For that reason neither the priests of Dagon nor any who enter Dagon's house step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.**

This may have become a superstition but it also became a custom that perpetuated the memory of Dagon's humiliation.

Perhaps they should have renamed him the god of the doormats. ☺

Verses 6 - 12

**<sup>6</sup> Now the hand of the Lord was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He made them feel devastated and struck them with tumors, *both* Ashdod and its territories. <sup>7</sup> When the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, because His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god." <sup>8</sup> So they sent *word* and gathered all the governors of the Philistines to them, and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" And they said, "Have the ark of the God of Israel brought to Gath." So they took the ark of the God of Israel away. <sup>9</sup> After they had taken it away, the hand of the Lord was against the city, *creating* a very great panic; and He struck the people of the city, from the young to the old, so that tumors broke out on them. <sup>10</sup> So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And as the ark of God came to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, saying, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!" <sup>11</sup> Therefore they sent *word* and gathered all the governors of the Philistines, and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel and let it return to its own place, so that it will not kill us and our people!" For there was a deadly panic throughout the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. <sup>12</sup> And the people who did not die were struck with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.**

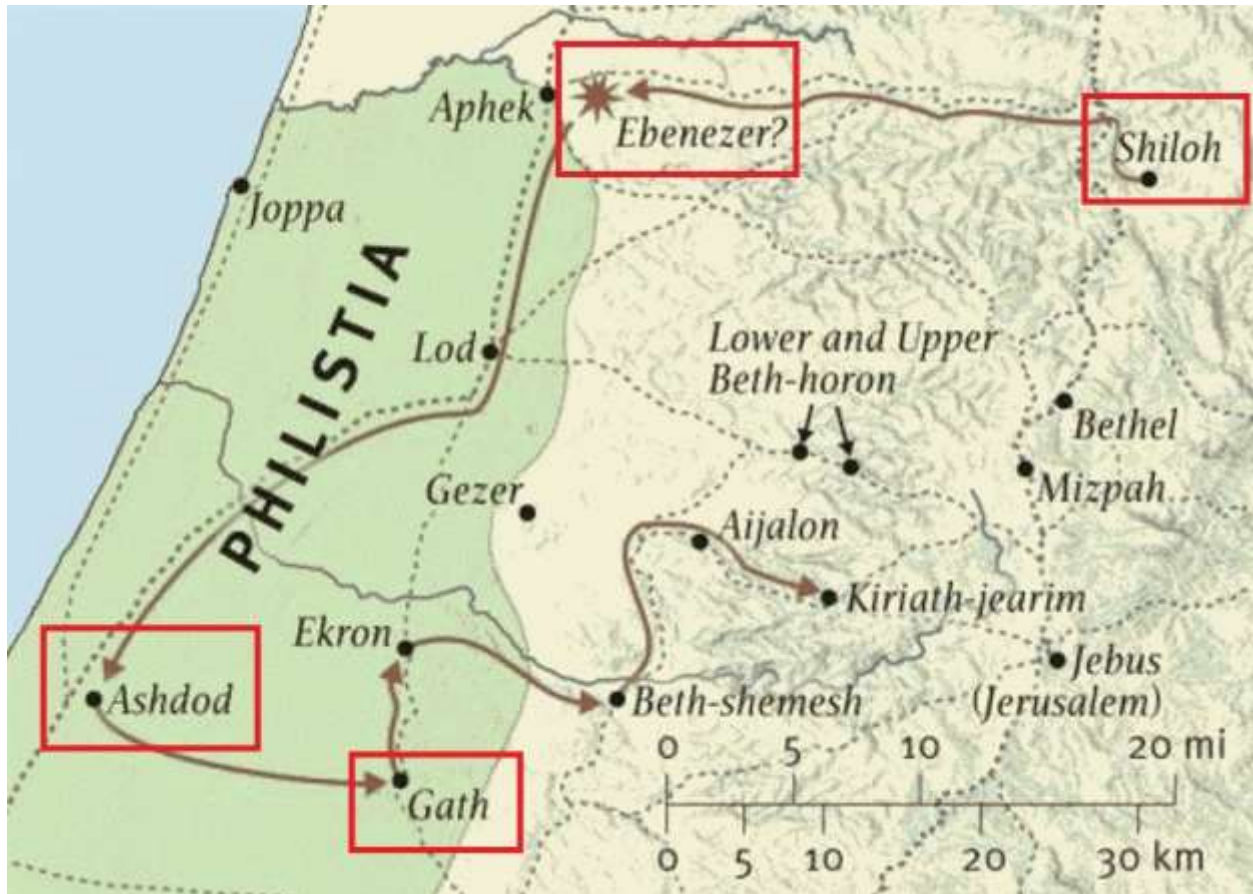
**<sup>6</sup> Now the hand of the Lord was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He made them feel devastated and struck them with tumors, *both* Ashdod and its territories.**

Since the people didn't comprehend the 1<sup>st</sup> sign (Dagon bowing down to the Ark of God) God chose a couple other signs that they could not ignore. The psychological effect on the people was real and the tumors confirmed their fears.



<sup>8</sup> So they sent *word* and gathered all the governors of the Philistines to them, and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” And they said, “Have the ark of the God of Israel brought to Gath.”

See map 515



The governors of the major cities met to decide where the Ark would go next and the governor of Gath drew the short straw.

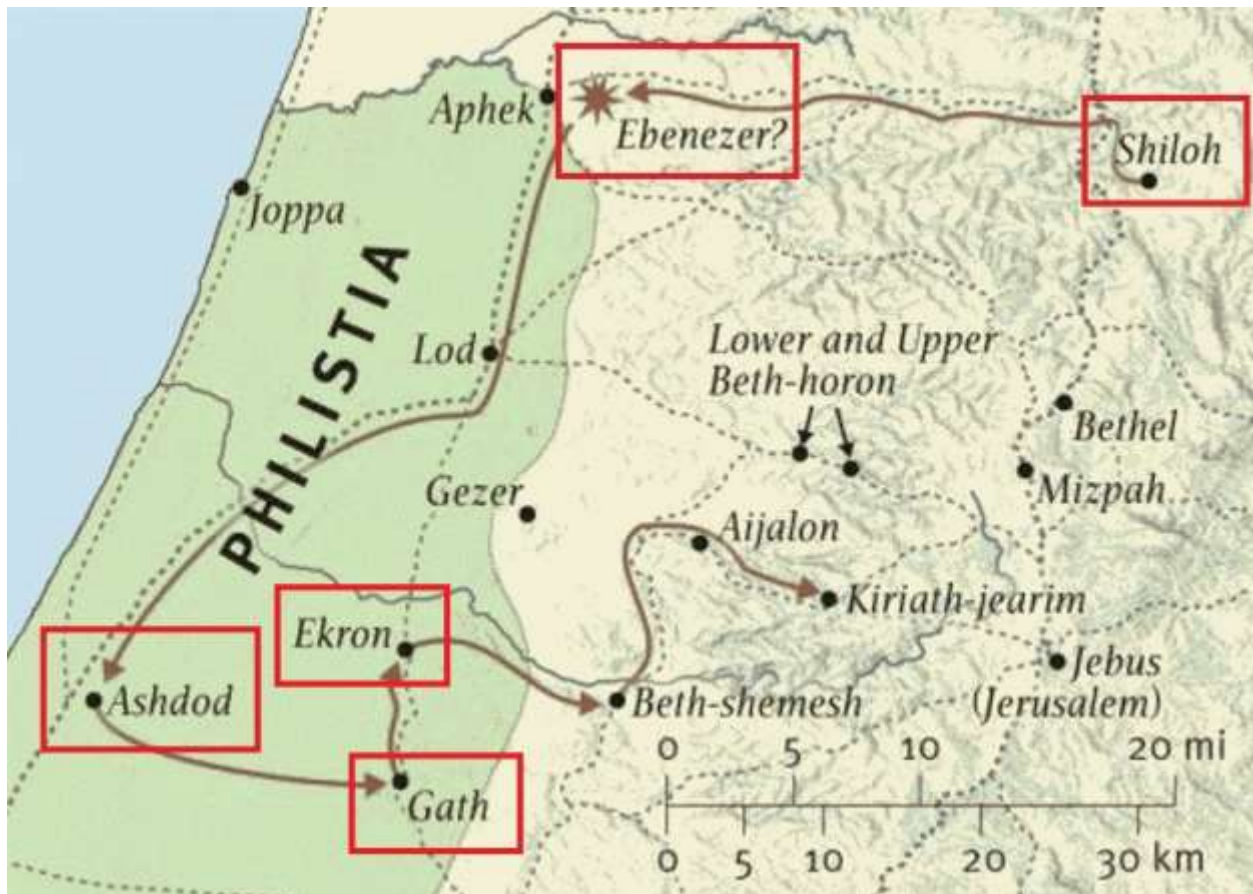
<sup>9</sup> After they had taken it away, the hand of the Lord was against the city, creating a very great panic; and He struck the people of the city, from the young to the old, so that tumors broke out on them.

God created the same effect in Gath that He had done in Ashdod. The one difference here is that it also affected the young. When parents see their sons and daughters afflicted it creates a whole new level of fear in the community.

<sup>10</sup> So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And as the ark of God came to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, saying, “They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!”

There was no meeting of the governors this time. The leaders of Gath had seen enough and they made the decision to have the Ark taken to Ekron.

See Map 520



And as the ark of God came to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, saying, “They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!”

The response of the people of Ekron was quite rational. The people of that time knew what would later become a well know saying, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

**11 Therefore they sent word and gathered all the governors of the Philistines, and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel and let it return to its own place, so that it will not kill us and our people!” For there was a deadly panic throughout the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. 12 And the people who did not die were struck with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.**

This time the people did not ask the governors what should be done. Instead they told them what they should do. Most people would like leaders to actually lead but most of the time leaders simply follow the path of least resistance. This is why the direction of a city or state often looks like a winding river.

The people made a wise decision that should have been made before all of this calamity came about. Send the Ark back to the Israelites.

There was a progression in the severity of the plagues in Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron.

1. First the people were affected
2. Then the young were also affected.
3. Then many of the people died.

The Philistines may not have prayed to God for deliverance in the way that we pray to Him as Christians but their outcry reached heaven and God heard their plea. This shows that God hears the concerns of pagan nations and is willing to help.