

STUDIES IN SAMUEL

4. What name did the Philistines call the Israelites? _____
5. How many Israelites were killed in the first battle? _____
6. How many Israelites were killed in the second battle? _____
7. How old was Eli? _____
8. Of what tribe was the messenger who brought news of the battle? _____
9. What was the name of Eli's grandson? _____
10. To which of Eli's sons was the grandson born? _____

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 5

- Vv. 1- 6 *The Ark in the temple of Dagon.* The Philistines treated the Ark of the Lord as if it were a part of the spoils of war. Since they worshiped the false god, Dagon, they took the Ark to the temple of Dagon. It was installed there as a trophy of war and as a sign of the superiority of their god over the God of the Israelites.
- Vv. 7- 9 *The Ark in Gath.* From the temple of Dagon in Ashdod, the Ark was carried to the city of Gath. This was one of the most important cities in Philistia and is famous in later times as the home of Goliath.
- Vv. 10-12 *The Ark in Ekron.* When an affliction from the Lord came on the inhabitants of Gath, they asked that the Ark be removed from their community. The men of Ekron were horrified when they saw the Ark had been brought to their city. They, too, asked to have it removed.

FIRST SAMUEL
LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God alone is God.* Men have invented many false gods for themselves. All of men's inventions are sheer folly. They are nothing more than the figment of their imaginations or the products of their hands. The prophet Isaiah described the folly of making graven images and molten idols (Isaiah 44:9-20). This foolishness is borne out in the activity in the house of Dagon. God demonstrated His superiority over the god of the Philistines by throwing down the image of Dagon.
2. *Sinners cannot escape from God.* Though sinful men flee from God, their sins will find them out. Though they strive to drive God from their homes and communities, He will pursue them. The repeated afflictions in Philistia were sign enough that God was punishing the Philistines for their mishandling of the Ark.

The Captivity of the Ark, 5:1—7:17.

The Ark in the Temple of Dagon. 5:1-6

And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands *were* cut off upon the threshold; only *the stump* of Dagon was left of him.

5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

6 But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even* Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

1. *Where did the Philistines take the Ark? 5:1*

They thought they had captured the God of Israel, and they wanted to place this God by their god and glory in the triumph. As we should expect in the case of a remarkable trophy, they brought it to the temple of Dagon. Dagon was the national god of the Philistines, if we gather anything from his prominence here. The temple alluded to here existed until the time of the Maccabees (I Maccabees 10:83 ff; 11.4).

2. *Who was Dagon? 5:2 (cf. Judges 16:23)*

The nature and attributes of Dagon are not certainly known. He is a god of the Philistines in whose honor a great feast was held (Judges 16:23). If the name is Semite, it may be related either to the word for fish or to a word for corn. The adoration of a fish-god or corn would be at home in the fine grain-growing land of the Shephelah. A bas-relief in Khorsabad, Sargon's Assyrian capital, depicts a figure swimming in the sea. The upper part of the body resembled a bearded man, wearing the ordinary conical tiara of royalty and was adorned with elephants' tusks. The lower part of the body resembled the body of a fish. Since the whole scene is the picture of a battle between the Assyrian king and the inhabitants of the coast of Syria, this is in all probability a representation of the god of Ashdod, namely, Dagon.

3. *What happened while the Ark was in Philistia? 5:3-7*

Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord on the first morning. On the second morning, both the palms of Dagon's hands were cut off,

his head was cut off, and the remaining stump was lying upon the threshold of the temple. The visitation of God was not restricted to the demolition of the statue of Dagon, but affected the people of Ashdod as well. The desolation included diseases and also the withdrawal or diminution of the means of subsistence, the devastation of the fields, and such like. From Ashdod, the Ark was sent to Gath, thence to Ekron. There was a deadly panic. No part of the country wanted the Ark deposited in its borders, so they finally decided that something would have to be done about it. The tumult was not caused merely by fear or death, but it was a result of their actual suffering.

4. *Where was Ashdod?* 5:6

Ashdod was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. Together with Gaza, Gath, Ekron, and Ashkelon it formed what was known as the Philistine pentapolis. These cities were at the very height of their power at the time of Saul and continued to be important after the time of David. Ashdod was situated between Ashkelon, a seaport, and Ekron, the city inland on the caravan route east to Lydda and west to Joppa.

The Ark in Gath. 5:7-9

7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that *is was so*, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about *thither*.

9 And it was *so*, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

5. *Where was Gath?* 5:8

Gath was also one of the cities of the Philistine pentapolis. The name means "wine press." The site has not been uncovered, and the city probably disappeared because of the disaster hinted at in Amos 6:2. Many archaeologists favor a site at Telles-Safiyeh; ten miles east of Ashdod and ten miles southeast of Ekron. The Crusaders stopped here, and Richard the Lionhearted made his raids on caravans near Beersheba from this point. The city was the nearest of the large Philistine towns to Hebrew territory. It is known as the home of Goliath (I Samuel 17). Achish was king of the city at the time of David and befriended him during Saul's persecution. David later captured the city (I Chronicles 18:1).

6. *What were Emerods?* 5:9

The Hebrew word signifies a tumor (Deuteronomy 28:27). An affliction of emerods was considered a painful disease. It was especially promoted by the sedentary habits of the Orientals and hence very common among them. Although the affliction is rather easily cured by the advanced skill of the Western people, the popular medicine of the East had no cure for it. It was therefore a very terrible visitation. The affliction struck the men in their secret parts and made them very uncomfortable.

The Ark in Ekron. 5:10-12

10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

11 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

12 And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

7. *Where was Ekron? 5:10*

Ekron was about eleven miles from Gath. It had belonged at one time to Judah (Joshua 13:3). It was also possessed by the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:43). The Philistines had jurisdiction over it in the time of Eli as we see here. The archaeologists have found its site at Akir, ten miles northeast of Ashdod. From what has been found, it has been concluded that the fly god was worshipped here. This is also brought out in the Scripture (II Kings 1:2).

8. *Why did the people say that the Ark would slay them? 5:10b*

Wherever the Ark had gone, the people had been afflicted. The men of Ekron therefore felt that they would all be killed. People are naturally afraid of deities. They may even fear the servants of God. This was the attitude of the widow of Zarephath when Elijah came to her. She felt that Elijah's coming had resulted in the death of her son (I Kings 17:18). The Philistine people were afraid that the presence of the Ark of the Lord in their midst would bring death to them.

9. *Who were the lords of the Philistines? 5:11*

The lords of the Philistines were the kings of the various city-states. One lord would rule in Gath. Another would have jurisdiction in Ashdod. Still another would be the ruler of Ekron. Some of them are known to us. Achish was king of Gath in David's day (I Samuel 21:10). These lords of the Philistines had come to Delilah to offer her money to deliver Samson into their hands. (Judges 16:5). They held a council to decide their strategy; and they were addressed on this occasion by the citizens of Ekron, who asked that the Ark be taken from their city.

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