

*Who is your
raison d'être?*

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LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE)

GOD HAS HEARD—THE “KING EXPERIMENT” FAILS, FOR NOW
 (1 Samuel 5&6) Lord’s Day, June 19, 2016



OVERVIEW

“Session 3” for this week in the *Explore the Bible Series*

Chemists learn very quickly to record in precise detail their amalgamations, manipulations, and combinations of molecules. Not all experiments succeed, and the true measure of success is more often determined by what “failed,” not what “succeeds.”

A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:
WHY DO WE WANT FASCISM WHEN WE'RE FRIGHTENED, BUT LIBERTINISM WHEN WE'RE FAT & HAPPY?

And so it is with our experiment with fascism in the promised land. We wanted the comfort of a sovereign king—as long as he didn’t press us too hard. We wanted the fealty hierarchy of a kingdom—as long as it didn’t get in the way of building our herds and families. We wanted the security of a king—as long as our deployment on the lines was limited. And so it is with Holy Spirit’s record recorded in what we call “1 Samuel.” An experiment. A failed experiment, yes, but one which is detailed, down to the molecule. Let us learn from the great Chemist.

We see a great example of the “tall man” thesis—tall men think everything should be given to them; after all, it’s always been that way. Saul, the tall one thought he could disobey the Lord God and stay king. Nuts.

We also see a great example of the “short man” thesis—short men are always starting something to prove something. David learned to slay, and slay well. And, he died in the arms of a girl brought to him just to keep him warm.

Listen carefully to 1 Samuel. As the rise and fall of Saul with the rise of David, we see in politics what would become the true contest between people and the Lord God Jehovah. Better to obey than sacrifice? Better even than burnt offerings? You betcha!



1 SAMUEL

CONTEXT¹

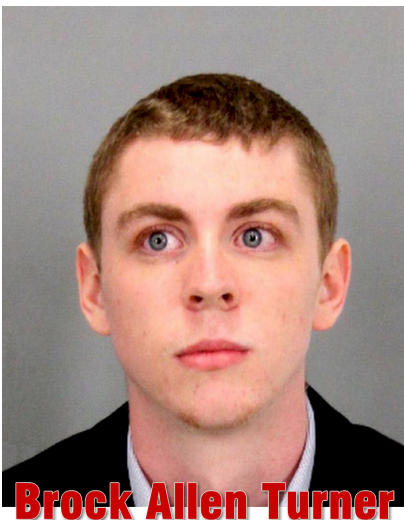
Humans are not all that smart. Nonetheless, we think we are. Such was the case with our first few generations in the land promised to Abraham, and his descendants—us.² The Lord God gave us clear direction through a variety of judges—from Yeshua (*Yahweh saves*), son of Nun, to Samuel (*God hears*), son of Elkhanah—we decided we knew best. Sure some of the judges were great—Deborah created 40 years of peace. Some were lousy with short hair—Samson loved Delilah more than the Lord God.

In the midst of all this disobedient chaos, the presumably wise among us said we need a king. We had one, of course, but did not recognize Him. We thought His judges were the authority, rather than regents for the real King. Nonetheless, we persisted. We want a king! We want a king! We want a king! We want a king! We want a king! We want a king!



I'm sure the Lord God smiled. Wryly. You know how your father smiled when you told him you were going to climb that elm tree, the tree which had no stepping or holding limbs... And, so the Lord God prepared us for a king. Of course, none of us knew then, we were being prepared for the King.

1 Samuel tells the tale of two of our first kings—Saul from the tribe of Benjamin, the very tribe who had just stolen wives from Shiloh, and David from the tribe of Judah. Even his heritage wasn't pure—his great grandmother wasn't even Hebrew. Yes, the great woman Ruth revered by all as noble was a Moabite. Saul would pretend not to hear sheep bleating. David would murder, tolerate idols in his house, and commit a heinous act of adultery and cover up. And, these were just the first of our two “kings.”



What gave rise to the patience of the Lord God with us? He had a long, tedious lesson to teach. May we learn it well. The writer of Judges summed it up the lesson to be learned quite well...

Everyone did as he saw fit.

And so do we, when we allow the powerful to ravage the weak.

¹See <http://DThomasPorter.com/BibleStudies>

²Galatians 3:28-29 reads... “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Jesus. Okay, and the Benjamites get massacred, and their homes are burned down and all their ANIMALS are slaughtered, for some reason.

And everyone makes a vow not to let their daughters get married to Benjamites, so the whole tribe will go extinct.

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not in favour of gangrape and murder, but I'd say genocide is officially an overreaction.

And... and the other tribes agree with me, apparently, but they can't go back on their word and let the Benjamites marry their daughters...

So the Benjamites show up at a festival and start kidnapping the female dancers? And the dancers' relatives agree to LET them? What?

And... and wow, that's the end of the book of Judges. Way to end on a high note.

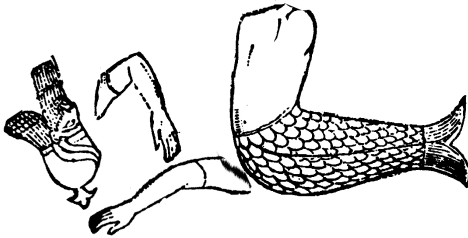
So what do you think?

I think I know why Pastor Tim at the Friday youth group never did a lesson on this one.

Context. Due to our nonsensical attitude toward the Lord God, He permitted the icon of His presence—the ark of the covenant—to be captured in a battle with the Philistines. Initially, the Philistines were afraid of the “Hebrews” for the ark was known to be in their midst. But, the enemies of the Lord God prevailed—they often do when believers start believing in themselves. Eli’s sons were killed, and about 30,000 of our foot soldiers were killed. When Eli the priest for forty years heard about the news, he fell off his chair and broke his neck. Obesity has its own rewards...

1 Samuel 5:1-6. *Yahweh sends a strong message—do not mess with what I have made holy.* The Philistines took the ark of God from Ebenezer into deeper Philistine territory at Ashdod. Ashdod was the place where the temple of Dagon was located and it was there—stupid, stupid, stupid—they placed the ark of the Lord God.

Early the next morning when they came to the Dagon temple, “he” had *fallen on his face*. They put him back. And, the next morning? There was Dagon, on the floor, *fallen on his face*—this time with his head and hands broken off. What a sad torso.



1 SAMUEL 5:1-6

After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ²Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. ³When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. ⁴But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen 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. ⁵That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod step on the threshold.

⁶The LORD's hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors. ⁷When 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." ⁸So 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.

⁹But after they had moved it, the LORD's hand was against that city, throwing it into a great panic. He afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumors [or *tumors of the groin*]. ¹⁰So they sent the ark of God to Ekron.

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." ¹¹So 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 [or He] will kill us and our people." For death had filled the city with panic; God's hand was very heavy upon it. ¹²Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.



They were freaked, so much that the writer indicated that as of this writing in 1 Samuel, the Philistines would not even broach the threshold of the Dagon temple.

Yahweh was not happy—the people of Ashdod had all manner of devastation visited upon them, even “tumors.”³ While mean, the Philistines were not too stupid, this time. The hand of the god of Israel is heavy, on

³tumors. The Septuagint adds... “*And rats appeared in their land, and death and destruction were throughout the city...*”

us, and on Dagon—let’s move the ark to Gath. Again, Yahweh was not pleased—He moved against Gath—panic ensued with tumors of the groin. Next, let’s move it to Ekron. Not so fast, they yelled! We’ve heard about Gath and Ashdod. Send it back. Send it back. It was the right thing to do for those who didn’t die had been afflicted with tumors of the groin. Their “outcry went up to heaven.”

- Q What caused the Philistines to change their language from “god of the Hebrews” to “god of Israel?”
- Q In what position did the face of the idol of Dagon fall, both times?
- Q Why were tumors of the groin so devastating to the Philistines?
- Q Why did the Lord God permit the ark to be captured in the first place?
- Q What should we do with the ark of the covenant, if found before the Christ returns?

1 Samuel 6:11-16. After consulting their best minds, the Philistines decided to return the ark, but with gifts—models of rats and tumors *in gold*. This *god of Israel* may no longer hurt us if we gift Him back.

So they put the ark and the gifts inside on a cart and went straight to Beth Shemesh.⁴ The cows complained all the way, but they turned neither to the left nor the right. Five Philistine leaders followed the cow cart as far as the border to Beth Shemesh.

1 SAMUEL 6:11-16

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. ¹²Then 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. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh.

¹³Now 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.

¹⁴The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock. The people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. ¹⁵The 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. ¹⁶The five rulers of the Philistines saw all this and then returned that same day to Ekron.

The inhabitants were harvesting wheat, and looking up, there it was—the ark of the covenant. They rejoiced as the cart came to the field of *Joshua* of Beth Shemesh—it stopped beside a large rock. The cart was broken up for a fire and the cows were sacrificed as a *burnt* offering [holocaust]. The Levites took the gold objects and placed them on that rock. Also, the people also offered burnt offerings, and made sacrifice to the Lord God Yahweh. The Philistines were watching, and returned then back to Ekron.

- Q Why did they think the Lord God would be impressed with golden images of rats and groin tumors?
- Q Why were the people of Beth Shemesh encouraged by the return of the ark?
- Q What did they do with the gold objects? And the cart? And the cows? So?
- Q Do you suppose the five Philistine leaders will be “re-elected?”
- Q Why do you suppose the Lord God Yahweh killed seventy citizens of Beth Shemesh for looking into the ark?

⁴The termination of the trip at Beth Shemesh is just as much a revelation of the hand of God as the journey itself, because it was one of the towns of Judah assigned to the priests at the time of the conquest (see Joshua 21:13-16).

5:1 *Ashdod.* One of the five major cities of the Philistines (Jos 13:3), it was located near the Mediterranean coast about 35 miles west of Jerusalem.

5:2 *Dagon.* In Canaanite mythology the son (or brother) of El and the father of Baal. He was the principal god of the Philistines and was worshiped in temples at Gaza (Jdg 16:21,23,26), Ashdod (here) and Beth Shan (31:10-12; 1Ch 10:10). Veneration of this deity was widespread in the ancient world, extending from Mesopotamia to the Aramean and Canaanite area and attested in non-Biblical sources dating from the late third millennium B.C. until Maccabean times (second century B.C.; in the Apocrypha see 1 Maccabees 10:83-85). The precise nature of the worship of Dagon is obscure. Some have considered Dagon to be a fish god, but more recent evidence suggests either a storm or grain god. His name is related to a Hebrew word for "grain."



5:5 *this day.* The time of the writing of 1,2 Samuel. *step on the threshold.* Apparently the threshold was considered to possess supernatural power because of its contact with parts of the fallen image of Dagon. Zep 1:9 appears to be a reference to a more general and rather widespread pagan idea that the threshold was the dwelling place of spirits.

5:6 *The LORD's hand was heavy.* Dagon's broken hand lay on the ground (v. 4), but the Lord shows the reality and strength of his own hand by bringing a plague (see note below on 6:4) on the people of Ashdod and the surrounding area (see vv. 9,11). God would not be manipulated by his own people, nor would he permit the Philistines to think that their victory over the Israelites and the capture of the ark demonstrated the superiority of their god over the God of Israel.

5:8 *rulers.* Of the five major cities of the Philistines (see 6:16; Jos 13:3; Jdg 3:3).

Have the ark of the god of Israel moved to Gath. Evidently the leaders of the Philistines did not share the opinion of the Ashdodites that there was a direct connection between what had happened in Ashdod and the presence of the ark; they seem to have suspected that the sequence of events was merely coincidental (see 6:9). The removal of the ark to Gath put the matter to a test.

5:10 *Ekron.* The northernmost of the five major Philistine cities, located 11 miles northeast of Ashdod and close to Israelite territory.

5:11 *Send the ark of the god of Israel away.* After three successive towns had been struck by disease upon the arrival of the ark, there was little doubt in the people's minds that the power of the "God of Israel" was the cause of their distress.

6:2 *priests and . . . diviners.* The experts on religious matters (priests) and the discerners of hidden knowledge by interpretation of omens (diviners) were consulted (see Dt 18:10; Isa 2:6; Eze 21:21).

6:3 *guilt offering.* The priests and diviners suggest returning the ark with a gift, signifying recognition of guilt in taking the ark from Israel and compensation for this violation of the Lord's honor (see v. 5). For the guilt offering in Israel see Lev 5:14-6:7.

6:4 *Five gold tumors.* Corresponding to the symptoms of the plague (see 5:6). *five gold rats.* The disease was accompanied by a plague of rats (v. 5). The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint) includes this information earlier in the narrative. It is likely that the rats were carriers of the disease, which may have been a form of the plague.

⁵Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.

6:5 *Make models . . . and pay honor to Israel's god.* The golden models were an acknowledgment that the disease and the rats were a judgment from the hand of the "God of Israel" (see note on v. 3).

6:6 *the Egyptians and Pharaoh.* The plagues that God inflicted on the Egyptians at the time of the exodus made a lasting impression on the surrounding nations (see 4:8; Jos 2:10).

6:7 *have never been yoked.* Have not been trained to pull a cart. *take their calves away.* Normally cows do not willingly leave their suckling calves.

6:9 *Beth Shemesh.* A town near the Philistine border, belonging to Judah (see Jos 15:10). Its name means "house (or sanctuary) of the sun(-god)."

6:13 *harvesting their wheat.* The time of wheat harvest is from mid-April until mid-June.

6:17 *guilt offering.* See note on v. 3.

6:18 *witness.* A kind of monument to the event. *this day.* The time of the writing of 1,2 Samuel (see Introduction: Literary Features, Authorship and Date).

6:19 *seventy.* The additional 50,000 in most Hebrew manuscripts is apparently a copyist's mistake because it is added in an ungrammatical way (no conjunction). Furthermore, this small town could not have contained that many inhabitants.

looked into the ark. The men of Beth Shemesh (Levites and priests among them) were judged by God for their irreverent curiosity. Because God had so closely linked the manifestation of his own presence among his people with the ark, it was to be treated with great honor and respect (see 2Sa 6:7; Nu 4:17-20). This attitude of respect, however, is quite different from the superstitious attitude that led the elders to take the ark into battle against the Philistines, thus treating it as an object with magical power (see 1 Samuel 4:3).

6:20 *To whom will the ark go up from here?* The inhabitants of Beth Shemesh respond to God's judgment in much the same way as the inhabitants of Ashdod, Gath and Ekron (see 5:8-10).