

**The Inscrutable Question: 1st & 2nd Battles of Aphek, 1 Sam 4:2-10; The Ark is Captured, Hophni & Phinehas Are Killed, Eli's Death, 1 Sam 4:11, 15-18**

- 30- The response to such a crisis can be a restorative revival which is the divine intent, or it can be a reaction that intensifies the two categories of negative volition, (1) increased asceticism or (2) intensified licentiousness.
- 31- Guilt motivates increased asceticism. This includes those who are already involved in “good works” motivated by energy of the flesh. They calculate that they have not done enough and thus increase their human-good activities.
- 32- Fear motivates intensified licentiousness. This includes those who are already involved in an immoral lifestyle. They calculate that they are going to die and determine to “eat, drink, and be merry” in case tomorrow they do die.
- 33- The absence of divine thought has created a vacuum into which was sucked the cosmic lie and the nation is in spiritual decline. The challenge for recovery is provided by national discipline.
- 34- On the occasion found in our passage this opportunity is provided by the Philistines. The biblical account of this conflict and the aftermath of its first two battles is found in 1 Samuel 4:1-18. A synopsis of this passage is provided by:

**Rasmussen, Carl G. *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 110:**

The Philistines mustered their forces at the city of Aphek / A-fek /, located at the headwaters of the Yarkon River, to prepare for an invasion into the hill country. To meet this threat, the Israelites set up camp near Ebenezer.

**1 Samuel 4:2** - And the 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.

After an initial defeat, the Israelites believed that if the visual symbol of the presence of God would go with them into battle they would be victorious. Thus they brought the ark of the covenant from Shiloh to Ebenezer, much to the consternation of the Philistines.

**1 Samuel 4:3** - When the people came into the camp, the elders [ זקן / *zaqen* /: **tribal leaders and old men** ] 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.”

Only the Lord makes the decision when the ark is to be transported from one location to another and only then to the priesthood. It is apparent that no such order was given to Hophni and Phinehas since their last communiqué from the Lord was a curse.

**1 Samuel 4:4** - 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.

**v. 5** - And it happened as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, that all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded.

**v. 6** - And 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.

**v. 7 -** And 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.

**v. 8 -** Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods?”

- 35- The people of Israel assumed that the ark was a good-luck charm they could count on to deliver them in time of crisis. Up to then they had not paid very much attention to the ark, the Shekinah Glory, or the fact the priesthood was in apostasy.
- 36- But now they need a quick fix for the fact they have been irreverent toward the Lord and irresponsible about their spiritual lives. They were hit with a wake-up call and found wanting. So before the second battle they sent for the ark to be brought down to the battlefield, convinced its mere presence would insure victory.
- 37- On the ark’s arrival into their camp the Israelites “stand up, salute, and sing ‘God Bless America.’”
- 38- Not really. But this is a carbon copy of what is presently going on in the United States. The wall of fire has been lifted and the Barbarians have penetrated the walls of Fortress America. Rather than inspire a true revival we imitate the Jews and cling to good-luck charms, have pep rallies, and sing songs that implore the God we have for too long ignored to bless us.
- 39- It needs to be made clear that God is not about to bless us. He is in the process of disciplining us! We are a client nation whose pastors have for half a century fed their sheep heresy. The sheep have bought the lie and become apostate. The result is blasphemy and degeneracy.
- 40- We are under a curse that will not be lifted until we have a meaningful submission to divine policies manifest by principles of order in two categories, the establishment code for a client nation and the spiritual code for believers in the Church Age.
- 41- We are becoming a nation divided. The loss of thought has become evident revealing the ever-widening cracks, fissures, and fractures in the commonwealth.
- 42- If we believe that flag flying, song singing, and fund raising are going to defeat Islam, we are mistaken. As mistaken as the Hebrews were about the Greeks who had invaded their land.

**1 Samuel 4:10 -** So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent [ **afraid to go to the theater, go on vacation, or shop at the mall** ], and the slaughter was very great; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand infantry.

**v. 11 -** And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

- 43- Principle: A client nation cannot ignore God, rebound, and Bible doctrine and expect to maintain divine protection. Further, the very fact that the wall of fire was lifted permitting the Philistines to attack was in itself a warning that things were spiritually out of order in Israel.
- 44- When the Second Battle of Aphek was over not only had Israel been soundly smitten, the Philistines had captured the ark of the covenant and killed the priests, Hophni and Phinehas. After the battle a messenger from the tribe of Benjamin was sent from Aphek to Shiloh to inform Eli of the day’s events.

**1 Samuel 4:15 -** Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set so that he could not see.

**v. 16 -** And the messenger said to Eli, “I am the one who came from the battle line. Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today.” And Eli said, “How did things go, my son?”



**v. 17** - Then the messenger who brought the news answered and said, "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."

**v. 18** - And it came about when he mentioned the ark of God that Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and obese.

- 45- For the Philistines it was the permissive will of God that these events took place. For Israel, its army, Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas it was the directive will of God.
- 46- Those who were responsible to teach the citizens of Israel the will, plan, and purpose of God perished. The nation Israel was given a wake-up call that left 34,000 of its army dead.
- 47- There was still yet one more casualty. Phinehas's wife was pregnant. When she heard the news that her father-in-law had died, her husband had been killed, and the ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines, she went into labor, gave birth to a son, and then died.