

General Church Education



The Ark Is Captured

1 Samuel 4:1-18; 6:1-13, 19-21

Lesson 3

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 5: The Lord Is King of Kings

For ages 10-11

The Ark Is Captured

1 Samuel 4:1-18; 6:1-13, 19-21

Teacher Background

The Ark was the most precious thing the children of Israel possessed because it housed the Ten Commandments written on two tablets of stone. The Ark had the power to part the waters of the Jordan River, and to bring down the walls of Jericho. In this story, the Israelites misused the power of the Ark and took it into battle against the Philistines, thinking it could bring victory. But instead, they lost the battle and the Philistines captured the Ark. The Philistines placed the Ark in the temple of their god Dagon. Dagon fell down and its head and hands broke off. The Philistines endured terrible plagues, and sent it away.

The Ark is a symbol for the Word. Like the Israelites, we are to cherish the Word for the Lord's purposes and should not use it for our own selfish purposes. The Philistines represent a state in which we have the Word but are not doing what it teaches. The severing of Dagon's head and hands symbolize that this kind of faith has no intelligence or power. It is not enough for the Ten Commandments to be in our minds. They must also be in our hearts, in how we are living our lives and treating our neighbors. When we are not living according to the Word, we tend to distance ourselves from it, as the Philistines did with the Ark.

Focus Points

- Israel took the Ark of the Covenant into battle against the Philistines and it was captured.
- The Philistine idol Dagon fell before the Ark and its head and hands broke off.
- The Philistines suffered terrible plagues and sent the Ark back to Israel.

Readings from the Writings

“The ark...was a most holy thing...for it was believed that Jehovah dwelt there.” *Arcana Coelestia* 9485

“Because of the Lord's presence in and around the law, miracles were performed by means of the ark.... For example, the waters of the Jordan were cut off, and...the people crossed over on dry ground. The walls of Jericho fell because the ark was carried around them. Dagon, the god of the Philistines, fell before the ark and later lay on the threshold of the shrine with its head broken off.” *Doctrine of Life* 55

“The Philistines...meant people who have faith but lack goodwill. Dagon was a portrayal of their religion. The hemorrhoids that afflicted them meant earthly loves that become unclean when separated from spiritual love. The rats meant...devastation...by people falsifying the truth. The new cart meant the earthly teaching of the church.” *True Christianity* 203

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

Recitation

Learn the Lord's Word by heart.

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” (Psalm 20:7)

Projects and Activities (see back of lesson for answers)

Choose one or two.

Israel Takes the Ark into Battle Multiple Choice Questions
Circle the best answer for each question.

Journey of the Ark Maze
Trace the journey of the Ark as it is returned to Israel. Complete the maze, starting at Shiloh and ending with Kirjath Jearim. Only pass through cities which the Ark passed through.

Additional Project and Activity Choices

Trace the Path of the Ark
The children of Israel took the ark from Shiloh into a battle against the Philistines. Trace the path of the ark from Shiloh into battle, its journey through the land of the Philistines and its return to Kirjath Jearim. Look at 1 Samuel 4-6 for more details on the journey of the ark. At <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-trace-the-path-of-the-captive-ark-1samuel4-6.pdf>

Noah's Ark and the Ark of the Covenant
This lesson is about something that happened to the ark of the covenant. Earlier in the Word there is a story about an ark built by a man named Noah. We often call this ark “Noah's ark”. Complete a Venn diagram to compare Noah's ark with the Ark of the covenant. In what ways these arks similar? In what ways are they different? At <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-noahs-ark-and-the-ark-of-the-covenant.pdf>

Read the Word Challenge
The Ark of the Covenant was powerful because it contained the Ten Commandments. The Word has similar power in our lives! Set up a time and place to read the Word so it becomes a habit. Read a few verses or a whole chapter. Spending even a few minutes with the Lord can make a difference.

The Ark Is Captured

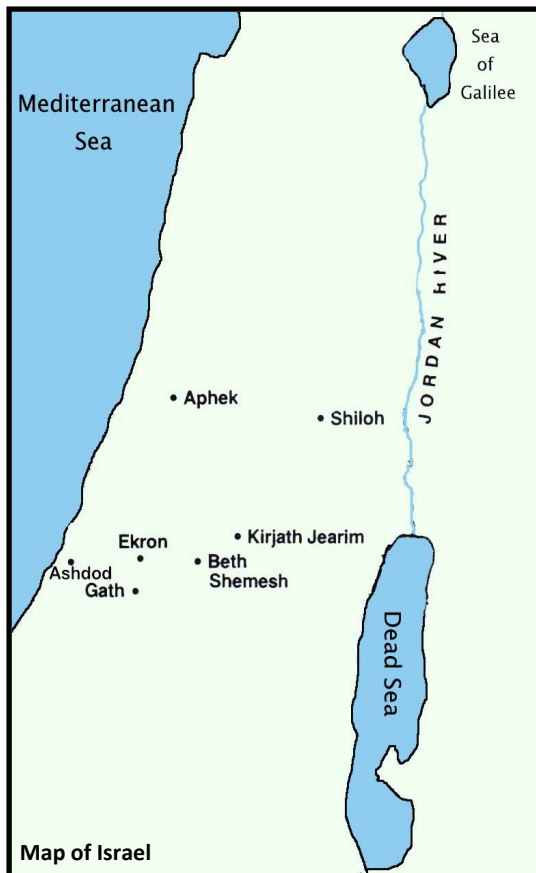
1 Samuel 4:1-18; 6:1-13, 19-21

Vocabulary

tabernacle—a holy tent where the children of Israel worshiped the Lord
Ark of the Covenant—a precious gold covered box where the Ten Commandments were kept in the tabernacle
emerods—painful swellings or hemorrhoids

The Philistines

After Samuel grew up, the Israelites were at war with the Philistines. The Philistines were a rich, war-like people who lived by the Mediterranean Sea. They worshiped many statues of false gods. They even carried their idols with them into battle hoping their gods would bring them victory.



The Israelites went out to fight the Philistines when they were camped near Aphek. The Philistines won the battle and killed four thousand Israelite soldiers. The Israelites wondered why the Lord had allowed this to happen.

The Israelites Send for the Ark

The Ark of the Covenant was very precious to the Israelites. The two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them were kept safely inside it. The ark was kept in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. The Lord's power was with the Ark.

The Israelites remembered that their ancestors had won a huge battle when they carried the Ark into battle at Jericho. The Lord told the Israelites to march around the city for seven days, carrying the Ark with them. On the seventh day, the walls of the city fell down!

So, the Israelites thought the Ark would save them from the Philistines. They did not ask the Lord, but said, "Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant of the

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Lord from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies.” (1 Samuel 4:3) As Eli’s wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas arrived at the camp with the Ark the Israelites cheered so loudly that the earth shook.

Would the Ark Bring Victory?

The Philistines heard their shouts and realized that the Ark of the Covenant was now in the Israelite camp. They were afraid of the power of the God of the Israelites. They had heard how He struck the Egyptians with plagues. But their fear did not stop them from fighting hard against the army of Israel.

The battle was a disaster. The Israelites expected the Lord to defeat the Philistines for them when they brought the Ark into battle. But they forgot that they needed to ask the Lord for His help. He would have told them what to do. Instead, they used the Ark in their own way, not in the Lord’s way. So, thirty thousand Israelite soldiers died. The Philistines captured the Ark, and Hophni and Phinehas died in the battle.

Eli’s Death

After the defeat, a messenger ran to tell Eli that the Philistines had captured the Ark and killed his sons. The prophecy that the Lord told young Samuel had come true. The news was such a great shock to Eli that he fell backward off his seat and died!



Dagon Lies Before the Ark

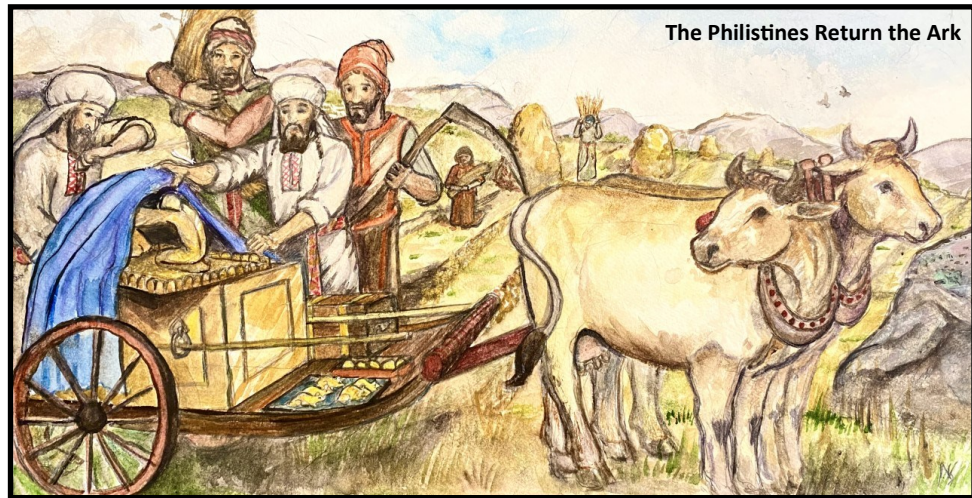
The Ark Troubles the Philistines

After capturing the Ark, the Philistines took it to the city of Ashdod. They put it in the temple of their idol Dagon, which was part man and part fish. They wanted to prove that Dagon was more powerful than the God of Israel.

Next morning the Philistines found Dagon lying before the Ark. This might have frightened them, but they set their idol back in its place. However, the following morning they found it on the ground. This time its head and hands were broken off! The power of the Ark had destroyed their god. This miracle showed the Philistines how helpless their idol really was. It had no head and no hands, no wisdom and no power! Their god was just a statue made of clay baked in a fire!

Plagues

Next, the Ark caused terrible plagues to break out among the Philistines. Some of them died in terrifying ways. Others broke out with painful tumors. There were rats everywhere. At first, they thought they could



stop the plagues by sending the Ark to other cities. So they sent it to Gath. But horrible hemorrhoids or emerods broke out there too. So they sent it to the city of Ekron. The people of Ekron did not want the Ark because they were afraid it would kill them.

The Philistines became desperate to get rid of the Ark. They knew that the hand of the Lord was against them. When people are doing evil things they can feel the same way about the Word. People who want to behave selfishly do not like to hear that what they are doing is wrong. They fear the consequences, but do not want to change.

The Ark is Returned

The Philistines knew that the plagues would stop when the Ark left them, but returning it was not easy. They knew that they would die if they touched it. They asked their priests what they should do. The priests told them to hitch two milk cows to a new cart, put the ark on the cart, put golden images of the tumors and rats that had plagued the land into a chest and put it on the cart beside the ark. Amazingly, the cows left their calves. Without anyone leading them, the cows headed straight to Beth Shemesh in Israel. This was a message to the Philistines that the God of Israel wanted the Ark to be returned.

The people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting wheat when the Ark arrived. However, they did something that they knew the Lord had forbidden. They touched the Ark! They took off the mercy seat and looked inside. For their disobedience the Lord struck down 50,000 Israelites. This was a terrible punishment, but the Israelites could not be allowed to forget the power of the Ark, or the importance of obeying the Lord. Now the men of Beth Shemesh wanted the Ark taken away. They sent messengers northeast asking the men of Kirjath Jearim to come and fetch it. They took it to the house of Abinadab in Kirjath Jearim. It stayed there for twenty years.

Activity Overview

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” (Psalm 20:7)

Projects and Activities (answers are at the back of this lesson)

Choose one or two.

Israel Takes the Ark into Battle Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer for each question.

Journey of the Ark Maze

Trace the journey of the Ark as it is returned to Israel. Complete a maze which starts at Shiloh and ends with Kirjath Jearim. Make sure you only pass through the cities through which the Ark passed on its journey.

Israel Takes the Ark into Battle Multiple Choice

1 Samuel 4:1-18; 6:1-13, 19-21

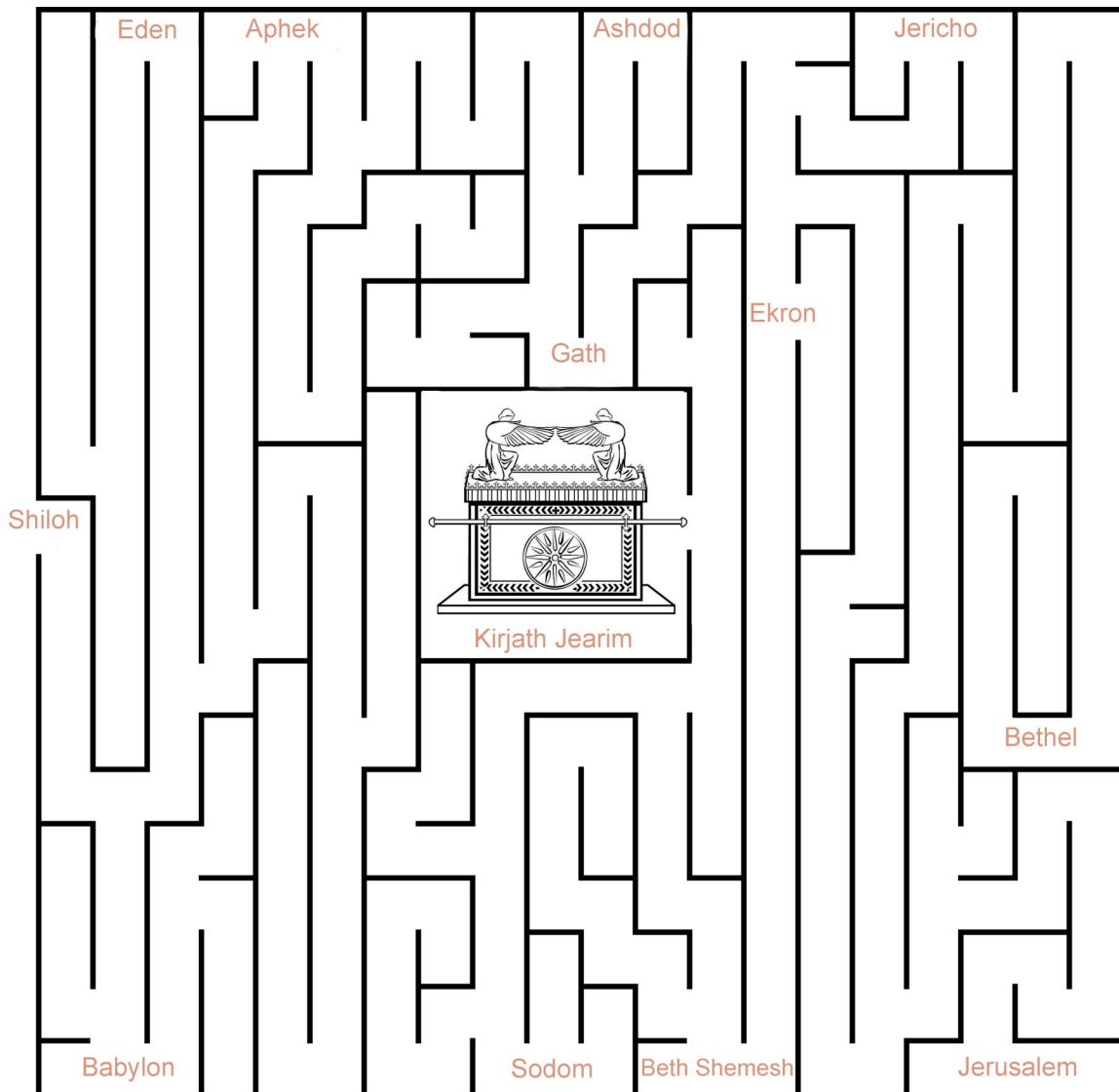
Circle the best answer for each question.

1. Ancient armies carried statues of their gods into battle because...
 - a. They didn't want to leave the statues at home.
 - b. They believed the statues could give them victory.
 - c. They thought the statues would scare their enemies.
2. The Philistines could beat the Israelites in battle because...
 - a. They had more soldiers.
 - b. They were smarter.
 - c. The Israelites weren't obeying the Lord, so He wasn't protecting them.
3. What did the children of Israel decide to carry into battle to protect them?
 - a. Their family idols.
 - b. The Ark.
 - c. Extra weapons.
4. What prophecy came true when the Israelites fought the Philistines near Aphek?
 - a. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and Eli all died on the same day.
 - b. A son was born to Hannah who had been barren all her life.
 - c. The sun stood still for the battle.
5. What happened to the Philistines when they captured the Ark?
 - a. They won all their battles.
 - b. They stopped fighting with the children of Israel.
 - c. Plagues and sickness.
6. How did the Philistines return the ark to the children of Israel?
 - a. They floated it down a river to them.
 - b. Two milk cows left their calves to deliver it back to them.
 - c. The Israelites beat them in a battle and took it back.
7. What would happen to someone who touched the Ark?
 - a. They would die.
 - b. They would be healed from any disease they had.
 - c. They would be strong in battle.
8. Where did the Children of Israel keep the ark after the Philistines sent it back to Israel?
 - a. It stayed in the city of Kirjath Jearim for twenty years.
 - b. In a temple in Jerusalem.
 - c. They hid it in a cave.

Journey of the Ark Maze

1 Samuel 4:1-18; 6:1-13, 19-21

Trace the journey of the Ark as it is returned to Israel. Start at Shiloh and end with Kirjath Jearim. Make sure you only pass through the cities through which the Ark passed.



Answers

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Israel Takes the Ark into Battle Multiple Choice

1. b, 2. c, 3. b, 4. a, 5. c, 6. b, 7. a, 8. a.

Journey of the Ark Maze

