

15.05 The Ark with the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:10–5:12)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- Chart of the tabernacle with furniture. Better, a chart of the basic tabernacle with separate furniture pieces that may be placed on the chart.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *ark of the covenant*: the piece of tabernacle furniture in the Holy of Holies that represented God’s presence
- *Ichabod*: a name meaning “the glory has departed”
- *glory*: the majesty and magnificence of something or someone, especially God

Scripture: (ESV)

1 Samuel 4:10 So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. 11 And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

12 A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head. 13 When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. 14 When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, “What is this uproar?” Then the man hurried and came and told Eli. 15 Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set so that he could not see. 16 And the man said to Eli, “I am he who has come from the battle; I fled from the battle today.” And he said, “How did it go, my son?” 17 He who brought the news answered and said, “Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great defeat among the people. Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.” 18 As soon as he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

19 Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. 20 And about the time of her death the women attending her said to her, “Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son.” But she did not answer or pay attention. 21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel!” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. 22 And she said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”

5:1 When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. 3 And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. 4 But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 5 This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

6 The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. 7 And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god.” 8 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” They answered, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath.” So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. 9 But after they had brought it around, the hand of the Lord was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. 10 So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, “They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.” 11 They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.” For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. 12 The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

Introduction/Review:

[Place tabernacle furniture correctly on a chart.] Identify the ark of the covenant. Remember that the ark of the covenant represented God’s presence with the Israelites. Was it actually God’s presence itself with them? [No.] But Israel thought it was, and Hophni and Phinehas brought it to the battle. What happened in the battle? Who won? [The Philistines won; Hophni and Phinehas were slain; the ark was taken.]

What was the sign the man of God had given to Eli—the sign that God would curse Eli’s family? [Both sons would die in one day.] That’s exactly what happened that day.

Story:

Eli

Back home in Shiloh, Eli sat on a seat by the road, worried. Remember, he was a fat man, but he was also 98 years old and blind. Anxious, “his heart trembled for the ark of God” (4:13). Wait. What was that noise coming from the city? “What is this uproar?” Eli asked. He had to wait a while to learn, for a messenger from the army with his clothes torn and dirt on his head (that’s the way people showed great grief) had announced devastating news to the inhabitants of Shiloh. Four tragic things had happened. (1) 30,000 men of Israel had been slaughtered; (2) Hophni and Phinehas had died; (3) The army was scattered; (4) The ark of God was taken.

The people were wailing loudly. Eli still didn’t know what was going on. Finally, the messenger came to Eli, saying, “I am he who has come from the battle; I fled from the battle today.”

Eli asked, “How did it go, my son?”

The messenger answered, “Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great defeat among the people. Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.”

Ichabod

All of this was disastrous news. Eli had lost his two sons, but it was the safety of God’s ark that most concerned him. When he heard the ark had been taken, he fell backward off his seat. That fall broke his neck, and he died. He had judged Israel 40 years.

That same day, Phinehas’s wife, who was nine-months pregnant, delivered her baby, a boy. When she heard her father-in-law, her brother-in-law, and her husband had died and that the ark of God was taken, she named her baby Ichabod. The meaning of *Ichabod* is “the glory has departed.” She said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”

Dagon

Now that they had God's ark of the covenant, what would the Philistines do with it? First, they took it all the way to Ashdod, a city south near the Mediterranean coast [locate on map], and put it in the temple of Dagon, their god. ✓We know from historical sources that this god had the body of a fish and the head and hands of a man. It was a false god, an idol. Imagine! God's ark in the temple of a fish god!

✓The Philistines went to bed, satisfied that they had Israel's God in their control. However, in the morning, when the Philistines went into Dagon's temple, Dagon "was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord." Well, that had never happened before. What was going on?

The Philistines took Dagon and set him up in his place again. What kind of power does a god that can't even set itself up have? Why couldn't Dagon set himself up in his place? [He was only an idol, a god, and not the true God.] Can you imagine worshipping a helpless god made to look like a fish?

The next morning, when the Philistines went into Dagon's temple, what did they see? "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 broken off upon the threshold (the doorway)." Only the ✓fishy part of Dagon was left.

Disease

Should the symbol of God's presence be in the enemy's land, even if their "god" bows before it? No. God began to destroy the people of Ashdod by disease. ✓Their sickness might have been something like bubonic plague that is spread by rats or mice and causes tumors (growths).

Terrified and afflicted with tumors, the people of Ashdod gathered all the five lords (princes) of the Philistines and asked, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god. What are we going to do with the ark of God? It can't stay here!"

The lords of the Philistines said, "Take it to Gath."

This they did, and what happened? "The hand of the Lord was against the city, causing a very great panic, and God afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. So the people of Gath carried the ark to Ekron."

When the Ekronites saw the ark coming, they cried out, "You're bringing the ark of the God of Israel to us to slay us and our people!"

This was serious business; all the lords of the Philistines gathered together and said, "We have to send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place so that it will not slay us and our people!" The Philistines could not deny that God had caused a deadly destruction throughout all the city. The Bible states, "The hand of God was very heavy there," and "The cry of the city went up to heaven."

What will happen to these people? What will happen to the ark? Our next lesson will tell us.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
"The kingdom of Satan will certainly fall before the kingdom of Christ, error before truth, profaneness before godliness, and corruption before grace in the hearts of the faithful. When the interests of religion seem to be run down and ready to sink, yet even then we may be confident that the day of their triumph will come. Great is the truth, and will prevail" (1 Samuel 5 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Complete) (biblestudytools.com)).
- We have learned that God honors those who honor Him. He helped get Israel out of Egypt, cross the Red Sea, *etc.* Now we see what He does to those who do not honor Him. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." God said, "Those who honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30). How does a person show he or she despises God? By not obeying, by wanting one's own way, *etc.* Fear God; honor Him. How does one show honor to God? By doing what

He says, by reading the Bible, by obeying.

Activities:

- Play dough: a fish
- Snack: Goldfish[®] snacks
- Review questions: (Game: Print on card stock and cut out the colored letters found below. For each correct answer, a student will randomly choose a letter and place it in a pocket chart. When all letters have been chosen, the students will rearrange the letters to spell the names of two characters in this story. Answers: *Phinehas*, *Eli*.
 1. Name one of the four things that happened in the battle against the Philistines. [(1) 30,000 men of Israel were slaughtered; (2) Hophni and Phinehas died; (3) The army was scattered; (4) The ark of God was taken.]
 2. How did the messenger's physical appearance show he had bad news? [His clothes were torn, and dirt was on his head.]
 3. How did the people of the city respond to the tragic news? [All the city cried out.]
 4. Who heard the uproar in the city as he sat beside the road? [Eli.]
 5. Tell one thing about Eli's physical condition at this time. [He was 98 years old and blind.]
 6. What happened to Eli when he heard the ark was taken? [He fell over, broke his neck, and died.]
 7. Who had a baby the same day her husband and father-in-law died? [The wife of Phinehas.]
 8. What name did the wife of Phinehas give her newborn baby? [Ichabod.]
 9. What does *Ichabod* mean? [The glory has departed.]
 10. What happened to the Philistine god, Dagon, when the ark was in its temple? [Dagon fell down before the ark; his head and hands broke off.]
 11. Why didn't the Philistines cities want the ark? [Because they knew it caused disease, tumors, and death.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- 1 Samuel 2:30: [God said,] "Those that honor me I will honor, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Handwork:

- Color a picture with the memory verse and the ark of the covenant on it. Use glitter or metallic marker.

Ichabod

glory



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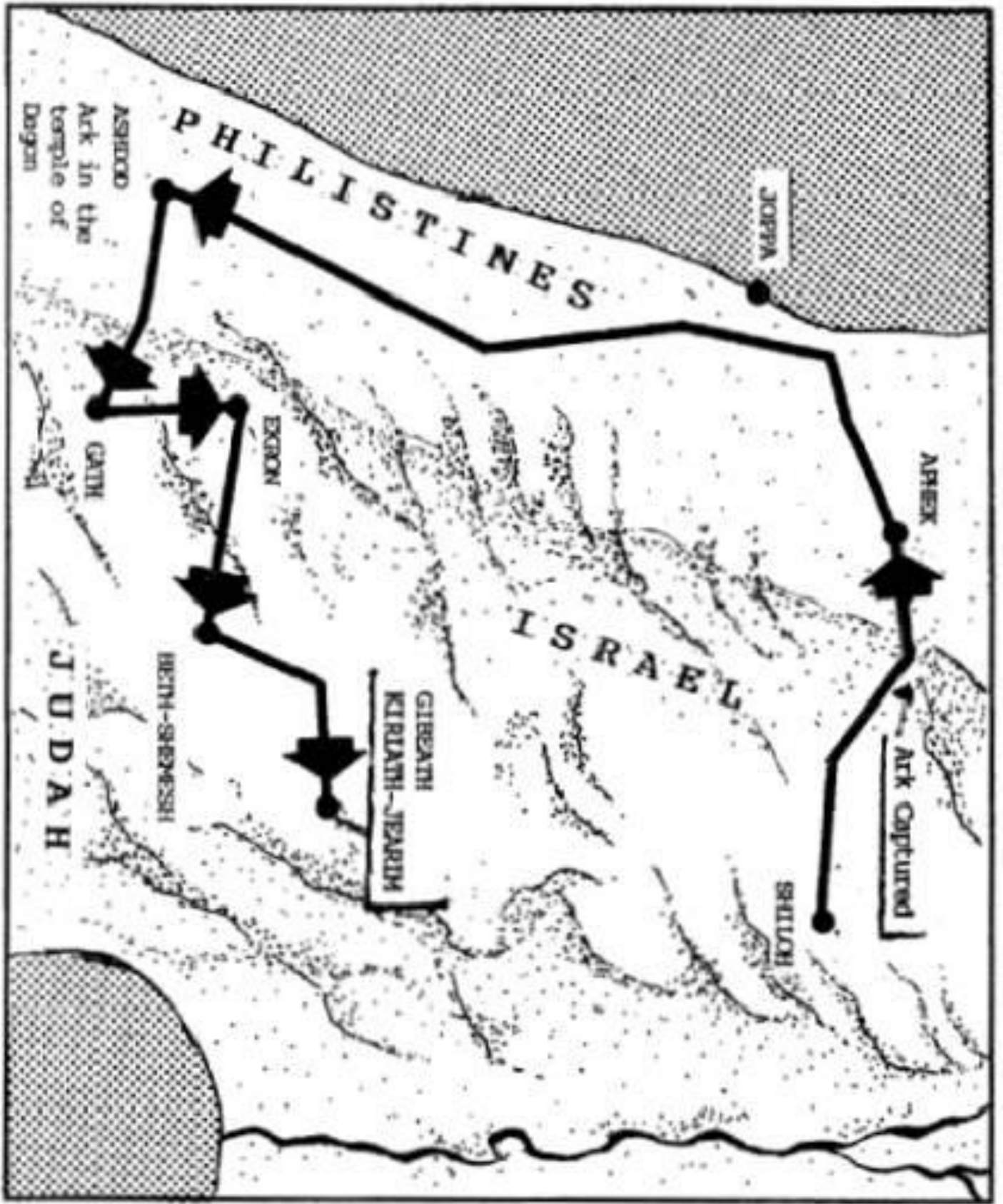


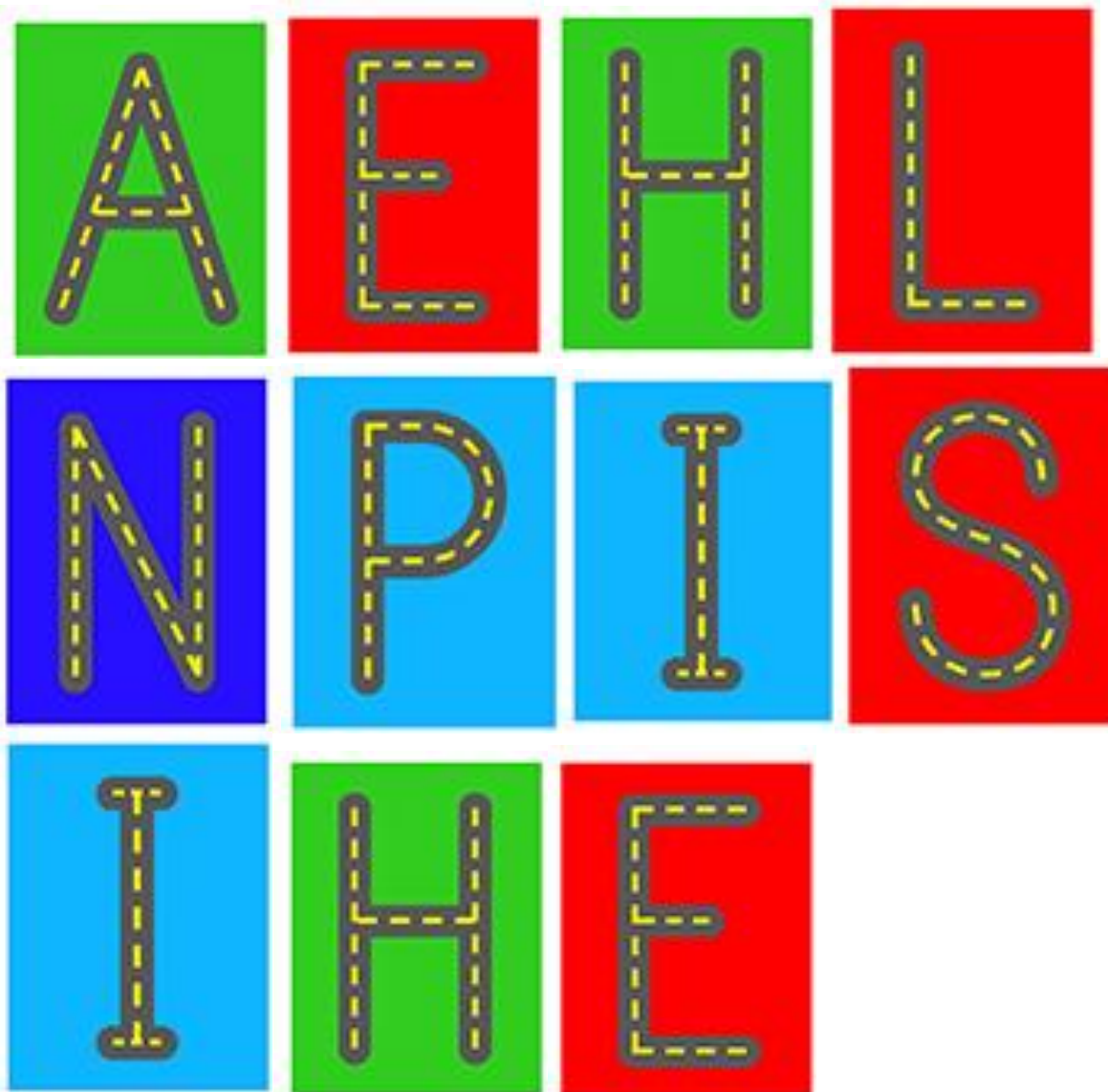
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Them that honor Me, I will
honor" (1 Samuel 2:30).

