

1 Samuel 4:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

Analysis

Chapter 4 opens with a transition: 'the word of Samuel came to all Israel.' Samuel now speaks with prophetic authority, though the narrative quickly shifts to the Philistine crisis. Israel's battle against the Philistines near Ebenezer results in catastrophic defeat. The geographic markers (Ebenezer, Aphek) locate the conflict in the central hill country, Philistine territory encroaching on Israelite land. This military crisis becomes the context for theological judgment - God will use foreign enemies to discipline His people and remove the corrupted priesthood.

Historical Context

The Philistines, part of the Sea Peoples who arrived around 1200 BCE, posed the greatest military threat to early Israel. Their superior iron technology and organized military structure gave them significant advantages over the loosely confederated Israelite tribes.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God use external crises to address internal spiritual problems?
2. What relationship do you see between Israel's military situation and their spiritual condition?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּהָיֶה י	דָּבָר	שְׁמוּאֵל ל	לְכָל	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וַיֵּצֵא א	יִשְׂרָאֵל
H1961	And the word	of Samuel	H3605	Now Israel	went out	Now Israel
	H1697	H8050		H3478	H3318	H3478
לְקֹדֶם אֶת	וּפְלִשְׁתֵּי יָם	לְמַלְחָמָה ה	חָנּוּ ו	עַל	בְּנֵי	בְּאֶפְקָיִם
against	and the Philistines	to battle	and pitched	H5921	H0	
H7125	H6430	H4421	H2583			
בְּעֵי זֶר	וּפְלִשְׁתֵּי יָם	חָנּוּ ו	בְּאֶפְקָיִם			
beside Ebenezer	and the Philistines	and pitched	in Aphek			
H72	H6430	H2583	H663			

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 29:1 (References Israel): Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

1 Samuel 7:12 (Parallel theme): Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

1 Samuel 5:1 (Parallel theme): And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod.