

1 Samuel 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

Analysis

The Philistines hear the shout and understand its significance: 'God is come into the camp.' Even pagans recognize that Israel's God is associated with the Ark. Their assessment, though coming from idolaters, is partially correct - except that God has not come to fight for Israel but to judge them. The Philistines' fear shows they know something of Yahweh's reputation. Their subsequent rally demonstrates that even pagan resolve can overcome religious showmanship. True spiritual power cannot be manufactured by bringing the right objects to battle.

Historical Context

Philistine religion centered on Dagon and other deities, but they had heard of Israel's God. The reputation of the Exodus and conquest had spread throughout Canaan. Their reference to 'Gods' (elohim, plural) may reflect polytheistic assumptions or the Hebrew word's plural form.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What do the Philistines' fear and eventual victory teach about spiritual reality versus reputation?
2. How can enemies of God's people sometimes perceive spiritual dynamics more clearly than God's people themselves?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּשְׁמַע	אַתָּה	פָּلָשִׁתִּים	קֹל	בַּתְּרוּשׁ	הַ
heard	And when the Philistines	H853	What meaneth the noise	of the shout	
H8085	H6430		H6963		H8643
מֵה	מֵה	מֵה	קֹל	בַּתְּרוּשׁ	הַ
they said	What meaneth the noise	of the shout	of this great		H2063
H559	H6963	H8643	H1419		
בְּמִקְרָבָה	בְּעֵבֶר יִם	וַיַּדְעָו	כִּי	אָרָן	הַלְּבָנָה
in the camp	of the Hebrews	And they understood	H3588	that the ark	of the LORD
H4264	H5680	H3045		H727	H3068
בְּמִקְרָבָה:	אֵלֶּה				
was come	in the camp				
H413	H4264				

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