

1 Samuel 6:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

Analysis

And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

The Ark narrative reveals that God's presence cannot be manipulated through religious symbols or ritualistic practices. Israel's superstitious use of the Ark as a magical talisman demonstrated fundamental misunderstanding of covenant relationship. The Ark's capture and Israel's defeat prove that external religious forms without heart transformation provide no protection from judgment. Yet even in captivity, the Ark demonstrates Yahweh's supremacy—Dagon falls, plagues strike, and the Philistines recognize a power they cannot control or domesticate.

Historical Context

The Philistines, part of the 'Sea Peoples' who settled the coastal plain around 1200 BCE, possessed superior iron technology and organized military forces. Their pentapolis (five major cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath) controlled coastal trade routes and threatened Israelite settlements in the hill country. The Philistine threat created the political pressure that would eventually lead to Israel's demand for centralized monarchy.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does this passage deepen our understanding of God's character, purposes, and ways of working in human history?
2. What specific heart attitudes, thought patterns, or life practices does this passage call you to examine or change?
3. How does this passage connect to the larger biblical narrative of redemption and point toward Christ and the gospel?

Interlinear Text

אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִאָמֶר וְאֶת תְּשַׁלֵּח 1 אֶת אָמֵן וְיִאָמֶר 1
And they said H518 If ye send away H853 the ark of the God H430 of Israel H408
H559 H7971 H727 H3478

לֹא תְשַׁלֵּח 1 אֶת אֹתָהּ כִּי קַיְמָה כִּי קַיְמָה כִּי קַיְמָה
If ye send away H853 it not empty H3588 but in any wise H7725 but in any wise H0
H7971 H7387 H7725 H7725

לֹא תְּכַפֵּר אֶת זָבֵחַ כִּי תְּכַפֵּר אֶת זָבֵחַ כִּי תְּכַפֵּר אֶת זָבֵחַ
him a trespass offering H227 then ye shall be healed H7495 and it shall be known H3045
H817 H227 H7495 H3045

לֹא תִּפְרַע כִּי תִּפְרַע כִּי תִּפְרַע כִּי תִּפְרַע
is not removed to you why his hand H4480
H4100 H3808 H5493 H3027 H4480

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 23:15 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)

Deuteronomy 16:16 (References God): Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

1 Samuel 6:9 (Parallel theme): And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us.

Exodus 34:20 (Parallel theme): But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

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