

1 Samuel 6:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.

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

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

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

וְרִאֵיתִ מָ	אֶם	רָאָה	דָּרְךָ	גְּבוּלָה	עַלְלָה	יְתִי	בְּ
And see	H518	by the way		of his own coast	if it goeth up		H0
H7200		H1870		H1366	H5927		
שְׁמַשׁ	אֵת	הָא	שְׁמַשׁ	לְנָסָתָה	בְּרַעַת	הַגְּדוּלָה	
to Bethshemesh	H1931	then he hath done		H0	H853	evil	us this great
H1053		H6213				H7451	H1419
לֹא	בְּ	לֹא	לֹא	כִּי	לֹא		
H2063	H518	H3808	but if not then we shall know	H3045	H3588	H3808	
יְדֹן			יְדֹן עָנוֹת				
that it is not his hand	that smote		H0	us it was a chance		H1931	
H3027	H5060			H4745			
לְנָסָתָה							
that happened to us		H0					
לְנָסָתָה							
H1961							

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 15:10 (Parallel theme): And the border compassed from Baalah westward unto mount Seir, and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim, which is Chesalon, on the north side, and went down to Beth-shemesh, and passed on to Timnah:

Ecclesiastes 9:11 (Parallel theme): I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Luke 10:31 (Parallel theme): And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Joshua 21:16 (Parallel theme): And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.

1 Samuel 6:3 (Parallel theme): 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.

2 Samuel 1:6 (Parallel theme): And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

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