
1SAMUEL 6: 1 the LORD's ark was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

After the ark had been seven months in the land of the Philistines, they consult their priests and diviners about sending it to Shiloh, 1Sam 6:1, 1Sam 6:2. They advise that it be sent back with a trespass-offering of five golden emerods, and five golden mice, 1Sam 6:3-6. They advise also that it be sent back on a new cart, drawn by two milch kine from whom their calves shall be tied up; and then conclude that if these cows shalt take the way of Beth-shemesh, as going to the Israelitish border, then the Lord had afflicted them, if not, then their evils were accidental, 1Sam 6:7-9. They do as directed; and the kine take the way of Beth-shemesh, 1Sam 6:10-13. They stop in the field of Joshua; and the men of Beth-shemesh take them, and offer them to the Lord for a burnt-offering, and cleave the wood of the cart to burn them, and make sundry other offerings, 1Sam 6:14, 1Sam 6:15. The offerings of the five lords of the Philistines, 1Sam 6:16-18. For too curiously looking into the ark, the men of Beth-shemesh are smitten of the Lord, 1Sam 6:19, 1Sam 6:20. They send to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, that they may take away the ark, 1Sam 6:21.

1SAMUEL 6: 2 The Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do with the LORD's ark? Show us with which we shall send it to its place."

Verse 2

The diviners - **קוסמים** kosemim, from **קסם** kasam, to presage or prognosticate. See Deu 18:10. In what their pretended art consisted, we know not.

1SAMUEL 6: 3 They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, don't send it empty; but by all means return him a trespass offering: then you shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you."

Verse 3

Send it not empty - As it appears ye have trespassed against him, send him an offering for this trespass.

Why his hand is not removed - The sense is, If you send him a trespass-offering, and ye be cured, then ye shall know why his judgments have not been taken away from you previously to this offering.

It is a common opinion, says Calmet, among all people, that although the Supreme Being needs nothing of his creatures, yet he requires that they should consecrate to him all that they have; for the same argument that proves his independence, infinitude, and self-sufficiency, proves our dependence, and the obligation we are under to acknowledge him by offering him due marks of our gratitude and submission. Such sentiments were common among all people; and God himself

commands his people not to appear before him without an offering, Exo 23:15 : None shall appear before me empty.

1SAMUEL 6: 4 Then they said, "What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him?" They said, "Five golden tumours, and five golden mice, for the number of the lords of the Philistines; for one plague was on you all, and on your lords."

Verse 4

Five golden emerods, and five golden mice - One for each satrapy. The emerods had afflicted their bodies; the mice had marred their land. Both, they considered, as sent by God; and, making an image of each, and sending them as a trespass-offering, they acknowledged this. See at the end.

1SAMUEL 6: 5 Therefore you shall make images of your tumours, and images of your mice that mar the land; and you shall give glory to the God of Israel: perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.

Verse 5

He will lighten his hand from off you - The whole land was afflicted; the ground was marred by the mice; the common people and the lords afflicted by the haemorrhoids, and their gods broken in pieces.

1SAMUEL 6: 6 Why then do you harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had worked wonderfully among them, didn't they let the people go, and they departed?

Verse 6

Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts - They had heard how God punished the Egyptians, and they are afraid of similar plagues. It appears that they had kept the ark long enough.

Did they not let the people go - And has he not wrought wonderfully among us? And should we not send back his ark?

1SAMUEL 6: 7 "Now therefore take and prepare yourselves a new cart, and two milk cows, on which there has come no yoke; and tie the cows to the cart, and bring their calves home from them;

Verse 7

Make a new cart - It was indecent and improper to employ in any part of the worship of God any thing that had before served for a common purpose. Every thing in the worship of God is said to be sanctified: now the general meaning of that word is, to separate a thing from all earthly and common uses, and devote it solely to the service of God.

When David removed the ark from the house of Abinadab, he put it on a new cart, 2Sam 6:3.

Bring their calves home from them - So it appears that their calves had been with them in the fields. This was a complete trial: unless they were supernaturally influenced, they would not leave their calves; unless supernaturally directed, they would not leave their home, and take a way unguided, which they had never gone before.

1SAMUEL 6: 8 and take the LORD's ark, and lay it on the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which you return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by its side; and send it away, that it may go.

Verse 8

The jewels of gold - The word קלי keley, which our translators so often render jewels, signifies vessels, implements, ornaments, etc. A jewel of gold has an odd sound to those who always attach the idea of a precious stone to the term.

1SAMUEL 6: 9 Behold; if it goes up by the way of its own border to Beth Shemesh, then he has done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it was a chance that happened to us."

Verse 9

A chance that happened to us - The word מִקְרָה mikreh, from קָרָה karah, to meet or coalesce, signifies an event that naturally arises from such concurring causes as, in the order and nature of things, must produce it.

Thus a bad state of the atmosphere, putrid exhalations, bad diet, occasioned by any general scarcity, might have produced the disease in question; and to something of this kind they would attribute it, if the other evidences did not concur. This gives us the proper notion of chance; and shows us that it is a matter as dependent upon the Divine providence, as any thing can be: in short, that these occurrences are parts of the Divine government.

The word chance, though often improperly used to signify such an occurrence as is not under the Divine government, is of itself, not only simple, but expressive; and has nearly the meaning of the Hebrew word: it comes from the French cheoir, or escheoir, to fall out, to occur, to fall to. Hence our law-term escheat, any lands that fall to the lord of the manor by forfeiture, or for want of heirs: i.e., these are the occurrences which naturally throw the lands into the hands of the lord.

1SAMUEL 6: 10 The men did so, and took two milk cows, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home;

1SAMUEL 6: 11 and they put the LORD's ark on the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their tumours.

1SAMUEL 6: 12 The cows took the straight way by the way to Beth Shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Beth Shemesh.

Verse 12

Lowing as they went - Calling for their calves.

To the right hand or to the left - Some think they were placed where two roads met; one going to Ekron, the other to Beth-shemesh. It is possible that they were put in such circumstances as these for the greater certainty of the affair: to have turned from their own homes, from their calves and known pasture, and to have taken the road to a strange country, must argue supernatural influence.

The lords of the Philistines went after - They were so jealous in this business that they would trust no eyes but their own. All this was wisely ordered, that there might be the fullest conviction of the being and interposition of God.

1SAMUEL 6: 13 They of Beth Shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley; and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.

1SAMUEL 6: 14 The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they split the wood of the cart, and offered up the cows for a burnt offering to the LORD.

Verse 14

They clave the wood of the cart - Both the cart and the cattle having been thus employed, could no longer be devoted to any secular services; therefore the cattle were sacrificed, and the cart was broken up for fuel to consume the sacrifice.

1SAMUEL 6: 15 The Levites took down the LORD's ark, and the coffer that was with it, in which the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day to the LORD.

Verse 15

The Levites took down - It appears there were some of the tribe of Levi among the people of Beth-shemesh: to them appertained the service of the tabernacle.

1SAMUEL 6: 16 When the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day.

1SAMUEL 6: 17 These are the golden tumours which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering to the LORD: for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Ashkelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;

Verse 17

These are the golden emerods - Each of these cities, in what may be called its corporate capacity, sent a golden emerod.

1SAMUEL 6: 18 and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities and of country villages, even to the great stone, whereon they set down the LORD's ark. That stone remains to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh.

Verse 18

And the golden mice - The desolation that had been made through the land by these animals had excited a general concern; and it appears from the text, that all the cities of the Philistines, as well fenced as without walls, sent a golden mouse as a trespass-offering.

Remaineth unto this day - Some think the ark is intended, which continued on the stone of Abel for some considerable time after it was placed there; and that the memoranda from which this book was afterwards compiled, were made before it was removed: but it is not likely that it remained any time exposed in the open field. Therefore it is most natural to suppose that it is the stone of Abel which is here intended; and so our translators have understood the place, and have used supplementary words to express this sentiment: "Which stone remaineth unto this day."

1SAMUEL 6: 19 He struck of the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the LORD's ark, he struck of the people fifty thousand seventy men; and the people mourned, because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.

Verse 19

He smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men - The present Hebrew text of this most extraordinary reading stands thus: ויך באנשי בית־שמש - ויך בעם שבעים איש חמשים אלף איש vaiyach beanshey Beith-shemesh - vaiyach baam shibim ish, chamishshim eleph ish; "And he smote among the men of Beth-shemesh, (because they looked into the ark of Jehovah), and he smote among the people Seventy men, Fifty Thousand men."

From the manner in which the text stands, and from the great improbability of the thing, it is most likely that there is a corruption in this text, or that some explanatory word is lost, or that the number fifty thousand has been added by ignorance or design; it being very improbable that such a small village as Beth-shemesh should contain or be capable of employing fifty thousand and seventy men in the fields at wheat harvest, much less that they could all peep into the ark on the stone of Abel, in the corn-field of Joshua.

That the words are not naturally connected in the Hebrew text, is evident; and they do not stand better in the versions.

1. The Vulgate renders it thus: - Et percussit de populo Septuaginta viros; et Quinquaginta Milla plebis; "And he smote of the (chief) people Seventy men, and Fifty Thousand of the (common) people." This distinction, I suppose, St. Jerome intended between plebis and populus; which he might think was warranted by the אנשים anashim, and אישי ish, of the Hebrew text.
2. The Targum of Jonathan is something similar to the Vulgate: - "And he smote עמא בסבי besabey amma, of the elders of the people Seventy men; ובקהלא ubekahala, and of the congregation Fifty Thousand men."
3. The Septuagint follow the Hebrew text: Και επαταξεν εν αυτοις εβδομηκοντα ανδρας, και πενηκοντα χιλιαδας ανδρων; "And he smote of them Seventy men; and Fifty Thousand men." εκ του λαου, of the people, is added by some copies.
4. The Syriac has forty-five thousand less! It is as follows: wamacho Morio beamo chamesho alapin weshabein gabrin; "And the Lord smote among the people Five thousand and Seventy men."
5. The Arabic is nearly similar: "And the Lord smote among the people; and there died of them Five thousand and Seventy men." We have no other versions from which we can receive any farther light.
6. Josephus is different from all the rest, and has fifty thousand less, for he renders the place thus, Antiq. Jud. libe. vi., cap. i., sect. 4: Θρηνη δε και χολος του Θεου μετεισιν, ωστε εβδομηκοντα των εκ της Βηθσαμης κωμησβαλων απεκτεινεν "But the displeasure and wrath of God pursued them so, that Seventy men of the village of Beth-shemesh, approaching the ark, which they were not worthy to touch, (not being priests), were struck with lightning." Here we find the whole fifty thousand is omitted.
7. Rabbi Solomon Jarchi, giving the opinion of other rabbins as well as his own, says, "Our rabbins say Seventy men, and each of them was worth fifty thousand men; or fifty thousand, every one of whom was worth the seventy of the Sanhedrin." This only shows embarrassment, but gives very little light.

All these discordances, together with the utter improbability of the thing, lead us to suppose there must be a corruption in this place, either by adding or omitting.

Dr. Kennicott has found three very reputable MSS. in which the words אלף חמשים אישי chamishshim eleph ish, fifty thousand men, are wanting. The 1st, No. 84, a MS. from Holland; the 2d, No. 210, one of the Parisian MSS.; the 3d, No. 418, a MS. belonging to Milan; all three written about the beginning of the twelfth century, and numbered as above in Dr. K's Bible.

Perhaps the omission in these MSS. was occasioned by a mistake of the transcriber, which might have easily happened, because of the word אישי ish, which occurs both after שבעים shibim and after אלף eleph; for, having written the first, and taking his eye off, when he recommenced he might have supposed he had written the latter, and so proceed, leaving the words in question out of his copy. Two, three, or more persons might have been thus deceived, and so produce the above MSS.; or the mistake once made, all the MSS. copied from that would show the same omission. The common reading may be defended, if we only suppose the omission of a single letter, the particle of comparison כ ke, like, as, or equal to, before the word חמשים chamishshim: thus כחמשים kechamishshim; the passage would then read: "And he smote of the people Seventy men, equal to Fifty Thousand men;" that is, they were the elders or governors of the people.

Some solve the difficulty by translating, "He slew Seventy men Out Of fifty thousand men." There are various other methods invented by learned men to remove this difficulty, which I shall not stop to examine; all, however, issue in this point, that only Seventy Men were slain; and this is, without doubt the most probable. The Fifty Thousand, therefore, must be an interpolation, or be understood in some such way as that mentioned above. But the omission of the particle of similitude solves every difficulty; and this would account for the reading in Josephus, who in his recital would naturally leave out such an explanation of the worth of the seventy men, as his Roman readers could not easily comprehend such comparisons.

With a great slaughter - Seventy men slain, out of an inconsiderable village in a harvest day, was certainly a great slaughter.

1SAMUEL 6: 20 The men of Beth Shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? To whom shall he go up from us?"

Verse 20

Who is able to stand - Why this exclamation? They knew that God had forbidden any to touch his ark but the priests and Levites; but they endeavored to throw that blame on God, as a Being hard to be pleased, which belonged solely to themselves.

1SAMUEL 6: 21 They sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the LORD's ark. Come down, and bring it up to yourselves."

Verse 21

To the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim - They wished the ark away out of their village, but why they sent to this city instead of sending to Shiloh, does not appear: probably Shiloh had been destroyed by the Philistines, after the late defeat of Israel. This is most likely, as the ark was never more taken back to that place.

It was a very ancient usage, when a plague or other calamity infested a country, city, etc. for the magicians to form an image of the destroyer, or of the things on which the plague particularly rested, in gold, silver, ivory, wax, clay, etc., under certain configurations of the heavens; and to set this up in some proper place, that the evils thus represented might be driven away. These consecrated images were the same that are called talismans, or rather telesms, among the Asiatics. Mr. Locke calls the diviners talismans, but this is a mistake; the image, not the fabricator, was called by this name.

I have seen several of these talismans, of different countries; and such images were probably the origin of all the forms of gods which, in after times, were the objects of religious worship. It is well known that Ireland is not infested with any venomous creature; no serpent of any kind is found in it: - "No poison there infects, no scaly snake

Lurks in the grass, nor toads annoy the lake."

This has been attributed to a telesm, formed with certain rites under the sign Scorpio. Such opinions have been drawn from very ancient pagan sources: e.g.: A stone engraved with the figure of a scorpion, while the moon is in the sign Scorpio, is said to cure those who are stung by this animal. Apollonius Tyaneus is said to have prevented flies from infesting Antioch, and storks from appearing in Byzantium, by figures of those animals formed under certain constellations. A brazen scorpion, placed on a pillar in the city of Antioch, is said to have expelled all such animals from that country. And a crocodile of lead is also said to have preserved Cairo from the depredations of those monsters. See Calmet.

Virgil refers to this custom, Eclogue viii., ver. 80, where he represents a person making two images or telesms, one of wax, another of clay, which were to represent an absent person, who was to be alternately softened or hardened, as the wax or clay image was exposed to the fire: -

Limus ut hic durescit, et haec ut cera liquescit

Uno et eodem igni: sic nostro Daphnis amore. "As this clay hardens, and this wax softens, by one and the same fire, so may Daphnis by my love."

This thought is borrowed from Theocritus, Idyl. ii., ver. 28.

A beautiful marble figure of Osiris, about four inches and a quarter high, now stands before me, entirely covered with hieroglyphics; he is standing, and holds in each hand a scorpion and a snake by the tails, and with each foot he stands on the neck of a crocodile. This I have no doubt was a telesm, formed under some peculiar configuration of the heavens, intended to drive away both scorpions and crocodiles. This image is of the highest antiquity, and was formed probably long before the Christian era.

Tavernier observes that something like what is mentioned in the text is practiced among the Indians; for when a pilgrim goes to one of the idol temples for a cure, he brings the figure of the member affected, made either of gold, silver, or copper, according to his circumstances, which he offers to his god. This custom was common among the heathens, and they consecrated to their gods the monuments of their deliverance. From heathenism it was adopted by corrupt Christianity; and Theodoret informs us that in his time there might be seen about the tombs of the martyrs figures of eyes, hands, feet, and other parts of the body, which represented those of the offerers which they supposed had been healed by the intercession of those holy persons! This degrading superstition is continued among the papists to the present day: I have seen at St. Winifred's well, in Holywell, Flintshire several staves, crutches, and handbarrows, hung up in different places, which were reported to be the votive offerings of the maimed, the halt, the withered, etc., who had received their cure by the virtue of the saint! It is true the crutches are such as no man or woman could ever walk with; and the barrows are such as most evidently never carried any human being. But they serve the purpose of superstition, and keep up an idolatrous reverence for the well and the legendary virgin.

After all, I need not say that the system of judicial astrology is vain, unfounded, absurd, and wicked. It in effect presumes to take the government of the world out of the hand of an all-wise God, and to abandon it to the most fortuitous and unconnected occurrences of life; for the stars have their influences according to this pretended science, conformably to the occurrences here below: e.g., if a child be born but one hour sooner or later than a particular configuration of the heavens, his destiny will be widely different from what it otherwise would have been; and as an almost infinite number of casualties may accelerate or retard a birth, consequently the whole destiny of man is influenced and ruled by these casualties: to say nothing of the absurdity, that those omnipotent stars ever can

affect the infant while invested with a thin covering of flesh in the womb of its parent. But the whole science is a tissue of absurdities.