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The Ark Narratives part 1
1 Samuel 4

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Reviewing the prophecies heard by Eli

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Unnamed Man

Chapter 2

- I will cut off your strength
- There will not be an old man in your house
- Eli will weep
- Hophni & Phinehas will die
- I will raise up a faithful priest

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Chapter 3

- I will fulfill all I have spoken against Eli's house
- I will punish his house forever
- The iniquity of Eli's house will not be atoned for

Battles Against the Philistines

First Battle 1-4

- **Israel is defeated**
- **The elders wonder, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?”**
- **Solution:** bring the ark



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Could bringing the ark work?

- Why the ark?
 - Visible sign of the presence of Yahweh
 - The ark has been used before
 - Led Moses and Israel from Egypt
 - Used in the defeat of Jericho
- Why not the ark?
 - God hadn't instructed them to bring the ark
 - This is not a holy war at all

WHY has the LORD led us to defeat?

- The pattern of success early in Judges:
 - Israel sins against Yahweh
 - Yahweh turns them over to an enemy
 - **The people repent**
 - God delivers them through a judge he raises up
- By Judges 13, Samson is judge and the pattern is being abandoned
- Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Battles Against the Philistines

Second Battle 5-11

- Philistines are scared
 - They know God's reputation
 - But they take courage & fight
- Israel is defeated
- Mass casualties
- Hophni & Phinehas killed
- The ark is captured



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Bringing the ark was an attempt to manipulate God's favor.

We cannot invoke God's name like a utility for our usage.

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Eli's Reaction

- Eli is sitting, watching, waiting; “his heart trembled for the ark of God”
- A man from Benjamin brings the news 4:16–17
- “As soon as he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy.” (4:18)

Eli's Failures

- Hophni & Phinehas were blaspheming God, and Eli did not restrain them (3:13)
- Eli was twice told that Hophni & Phinehas were evil and would die
 - We see no record of Eli telling them this
 - They are still allowed to take the ark to Ebenezer
- “the man was old and heavy” (4:18)

The Reaction of Phinehas's Wife

- Upon hearing that her husband, father-in-law, brother-in-law all dead
 - She gives birth
 - As she is about to die, she is told, “Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son.”
 - Ichabod, “the glory has departed from Israel!”
 - Contrast: Ben-oni, son of my strength (Gen 35:16–19)

What changed?

- The prophecies predicted judgment for Eli's house
 - Instead, the ark is captured
 - All Israel has been judged
- Leaders bear unique responsibility
 - But leaders do not bear all responsibility
- Indications of Israel's Pervasive Wickedness:
 - Judges 21:25
 - Eli didn't recognize sincere praying in Hannah (1:14)
 - The elders call for the ark (and perhaps Hophni & Phinehas too)

“Divine judgment, then, is not so much the *vengeful presence* of an angered God, but the *imposed absence* of the loving and protecting God. He has been driven away by the sin of his people, and with his departure the nation also loses his grace.”

-Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary 1&2 Samuel*

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