

Dagon Face Down and Helpless

Well the last time we were in the Book of 1 Samuel we had left the Ark of the Covenant with the Philistines. The Ark is taken to the city Ashdod in Philistine country and placed in the house of Dagon the Philistine God.

Now this was a custom where the booty taken in the wars or battles would be offered to the Gods of the victor in the battle. Now the faithful Dagonites awoke early and what a surprise. They find the image of Dagon is found face down in the dirt in the house of Dago. The Ark is not disturbed. Can you see the awesomeness of GOD that makes the image submissive?

See the scripture below.

¹Once the Philistines had seized the Chest of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod, ²brought it into the shrine of Dagon, and placed it alongside the idol of Dagon.

³Next morning when the citizens of Ashdod got up, they were shocked to find Dagon toppled from his place, flat on his face before the Chest of GOD. They picked him up and put him back where he belonged.

⁴First thing the next morning they found him again, toppled and flat on his face before the Chest of GOD. Dagon's head and arms were broken off, strewn across the entrance. Only his torso was in one piece.

⁵(That's why even today, the priests of Dagon and visitors to the Dagon shrine in Ashdod avoid stepping on the threshold.)

Face down in the presence of the Ark. The GOD of the Bible will not share a throne or a place of residence with a hand made imitation of man's image of what God looks like.

The people set the image back on its feet. How many times do we see GOD topple the images that draw us away from the promise of his way? The idols are toppled and we prop them up. Then the next morning we arrive and find the image broken and dismembered and what do we do? We find a reason not to step on the area where the image has been laid prostrate before the GOD of eternity.

Now as if to make a point to the Philistines GOD comes into there towns and there are tumors or a break down of the normality of the life they enjoyed. This people has chosen to believe in something that has not provided for them and certainly cannot heal them.

What to do with the Ark?

I know from personal experience that when the pain of rejection comes into my life I look for the reason that I must focus on the things I know to be constants. In this image of the heathen peoples the GOD of the Israelites is stating a point of his superiority.

The people of six cities are assaulted with the tumors and rats that bring severe sickness. In the suffering of these days that are being stated in the scripture referenced from The Message Bible below. The verses are from 1 Samuel chapter 6: 1-10.

¹After the Chest of GOD had been among the Philistine people for seven months,
²the Philistine leaders called together their religious professionals, the priests, and experts on the supernatural for consultation: “How can we get rid of this Chest of GOD, get it off our hands without making things worse? Tell us!”

How do we rid ourselves of this GOD? What can we do to return to the normal way of life we have knowm?

³They said, “If you’re going to send the Chest of the God of Israel back, don’t just dump it on them. Pay compensation. Then you will be healed. After you’re in the clear again, God will let up on you. Why wouldn’t he?”

⁴“And what exactly would make for adequate compensation?” “Five gold tumors and five gold rats,” they said, “to match the number of Philistine leaders. Since all of you—leaders and people—suffered the same plague,

⁵make replicas of the tumors and rats that are devastating the country and present them as an offering to the glory of the God of Israel. Then maybe he’ll ease up and not be so hard on you and your gods, and on your country.

Make images of your problems. Send them back to the place they came from.

⁶Why be stubborn like the Egyptians and Pharaoh? God didn’t quit pounding on them until they let the people go. Only then did he let up.

Don’t be stubborn. Learn from the past and the experiences of those around you.

⁷“So here’s what you do: Take a brand-new oxcart and two cows that have never been in harness. Hitch the cows to the oxcart and send their calves back to the barn.

⁸Put the Chest of GOD on the cart. Secure the gold replicas of the tumors and rats that you are offering as compensation in a sack and set them next to the Chest. Then send it off.

⁹But keep your eyes on it. If it heads straight back home to where it came from, toward Beth Shemesh, it is clear that this catastrophe is a divine judgment, but if not, we’ll know that God had nothing to do with it—it was just an accident.”

Not that the assault of the tumors and rats leads the Philistines to request their leaders to develop a plan to deliver them from the curse of the Ark. No mention of repentance is expressed in the Philistines. The people want to get rid of the Ark and relieve themselves of the pain. How do we get rid of the pain of sin and rebellion?

Note that the Philistine leaders manufactured gold rats and tumors to send to the GOD of the Israelites to relieve the curse. They also constructed a new way to transport the Ark. Also there are the milk cows that have calves that have never been yoked or placed into labor before.

How many times do construct a new way to do the things?

How many images of the pain do we construct to provide a visual image of the situation so we can be delivered?

How door jams are we jumping over?

How unyoked cows are we hitching to the cart containing the image of our faith?

Note the GOD of the Israelites is bringing the Ark back where it belongs with the assistance of the Philistines as well as an offering to remove the pain and burdens. I admit that there are symbolic images here that I do not fully understand, but I have read the rest of the story and see the power of GOD making a statement to the Philistines.

Now as we have read the cart is hitched to the cows and here they go. The Philistines are observing the behavior of the cows since with newborn calves there has to be something working here other than chance. I was raised on a farm and I assure the bond between the mother and her calf is strong. The cow does not just walk away. See the scripture below from 1 Samuel 6.

¹¹and placed the Chest of GOD and the sack of gold rats and tumors on the cart.

¹²The cows headed straight for home, down the road to Beth Shemesh, straying neither right nor left, mooing all the way. The Philistine leaders followed them to the outskirts of Beth Shemesh.

The cries of the cows for their young accompany them as they head for their appointment with the will of GOD. The cows do not wander from the journey.

How many times do we have to leave something that is the deepest connection we have behind to reach GOD?

Choices are the roads our journeys must take place on. The very words of GOD are the lessons we need to know so we can know the GOD of the words.

Where are you at the time you are reading this?

What are the choices you are making?

Can you really make choices without considering the consequences?

Questions – Questions – Questions and more Questions –Who has the answers?

Now look at the cart as it arrives and the people of this Israelite community see it. They are harvesting grain. Going about the normal everyday activities when out of nowhere the lowing of the cows attracts their attention.

What could this be coming down the road?

Oh my here comes the Ark! It is back. Oh let us celebrate the return.

See below the reaction.

¹³The people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley. They looked up and saw the Chest. Jubilant, they ran to meet it.

¹⁴The cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth Shemeshite, and stopped there beside a huge boulder. The harvesters tore the cart to pieces, then chopped up the wood and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to GOD.

¹⁵The Levites took charge of the Chest of GOD and the sack containing the gold offerings, placing them on the boulder. Offering the sacrifices, everyone in Beth Shemesh worshiped GOD most heartily that day.

The cows not only deliver the Ark, but are sacrificed as a burnt offering to GOD. The priests take charge of the Ark and the people worshiped GOD heartily, jubilantly with a full heart.

Worship is the gasoline that powers the engine of our faith on the roads of our choices. Note that the return of the Ark is the catalyst for the people to celebrate their GOD, the only TRUE GOD.

Take time to look at the place where you are.
How did you arrive there?
What is taking place?

Now let us proceed in the next studies into the repentance and turning of the people to GOD in a full joyful turning of there attitude and choices.

Take the first step in the return from you Ashdod experience. Are you experiencing the pain of the rejection of the GOD who is I AM? If so why not look into the eyes of the situation and choose to have the faith that can move mountains.

Step up mooing all the way to the place where YOU all belong.

More to come....