

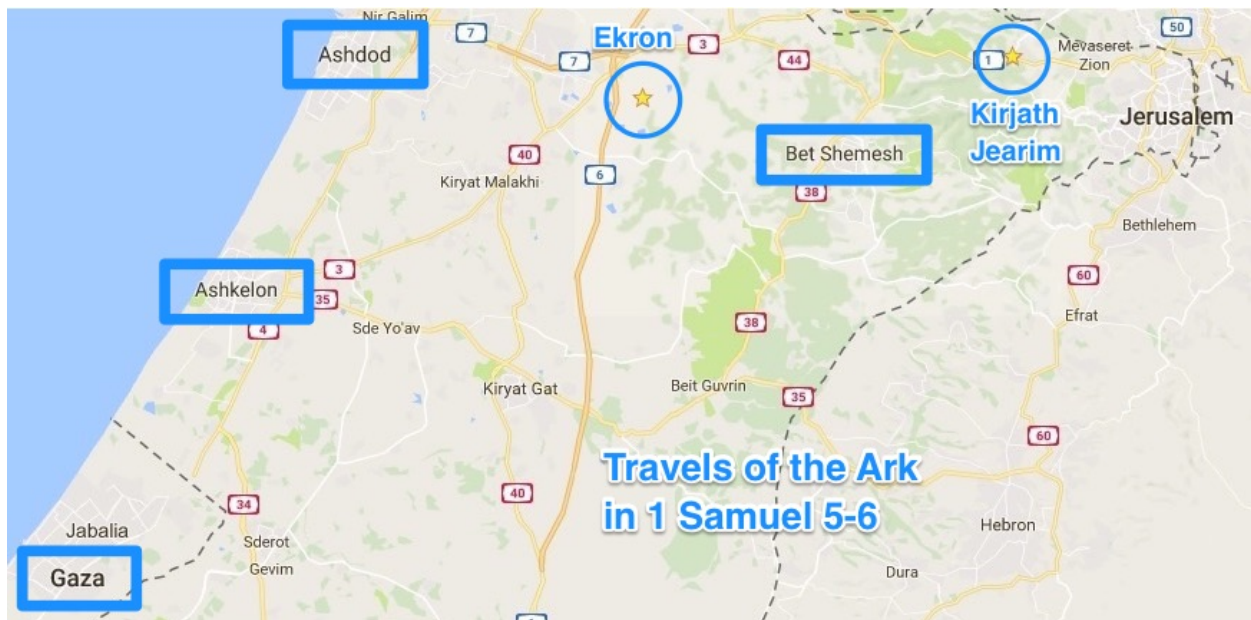
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Return To The Lord

Send The Ark Away (1 Sam. 6:20-21)

20 And the men of Beth Shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall it go up from us?” 21 So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim, saying, “The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up with you.”

- Why was the Ark not brought back to Shiloh? Remember Psalm 78.
- Kiriyyat Ye’arim (City of Woods) was about 10 miles away from Beth Shemesh.



Map courtesy: Google

A New Temporary Resting Place (1 Sam. 7:1-2)

1 Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. 2 So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

- We don't know who Abinadab was. His name means *my father is noble*, or *my father is willing*. Neither do we know who his son was.
- The Ark would stay there for many years, until David was king.
- After 20 years, people were finally lamenting after the Lord.

Samuel Addresses The Nation (1 Sam. 7:3-4)

3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." 4 So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

- Samuel has not been heard of for more than 20 years. He has been judging Israel since the death of Eli.
- Samuel is now bringing a message of repentance to the nation.
- The idea of repentance in the Hebrew mindset has to do with turning around and turning towards God.

Samuel's Message

- Samuel's message of repentance had three parts. First, he said if you return to Yahweh, then you have to put away all the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths. Every idol has to go.
 - The Ashtoreths had been a problem for Israel for centuries: *10 When all that generation [i.e., the generation of Joshua] had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. 11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. 14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So, He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. (Judges 2:10-14)*
 - Ashtoreth (or Astarte, or the Queen of Heaven) was the wife of Baal. She and Baal were the chief gods of the Canaanites.
- Second, Samuel says to prepare (commit) your hearts for the LORD.
- The final ingredient was that they should serve the Lord only. He will not share His glory!
- The good news here is that the people finally repented.

A National Revival Prayer Meeting (1 Sam. 7:5-6)

5 And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you."

6 So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.

- Now, Samuel knows the time is ready for a national prayer meeting. Repentance will lead to reform.
- Mizpah was an important gathering place in Israel’s history, both for prayer and for assemblies. The name Mizpah means a watchtower or an overlook. Perhaps Samuel chose Mizpah to impress upon the people that God was watching.
- The people engaged in fasting, possibly extreme fasting.
- Samuel judged the people there, perhaps for a while.

The Stone Of Help (1 Sam. 7:7-12)

7 Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 So the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines." 9 And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. 10 Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. (Continue on next page.)

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. 12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

- Notice that Israel is now afraid of the Philistines. Perhaps they didn't dare to hope that God would help them. They asked Samuel to pray, maybe not thinking God would receive their prayers.
- Notice the change in the hearts of the people. Their hearts have become humble, and soft before the Lord. Notice that their prayer is different – they are looking to God instead of the Ark.
- Samuel makes powerful intercession, and God seems to answer with a supernatural storm.
- Samuel a stone to mark how far God had helped them. The word or the name Ebenezer means, "Stone of Help."

Recovery (1 Sam. 7:13-14)

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

- The hand of the Lord, which previously had struck both the Philistines and Israel, was now turned against the Philistines.

- After repentance and revival comes reformation and recovery. God began to restore to His people what the enemy had taken.
- Not only that, but God gave them peace with the Amorites.

Samuel As Judge (1 Sam. 7:15-17)

15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. 17 But he always returned to Ramah, for his home was there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

- Samuel judged Israel, riding circuit.
- The closing picture is of a land that has some measure of peace and probably renewed economic health.
- This temporarily happy state would soon end, because the people will decide that they want to be like the surrounding nations.

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