

## Wednesday, April 29, 2020 ▫ Read 1Samuel 6:1–12

*Questions from the Scripture text: Where was the ark of Yahweh and for how long (v1)? For whom did the Philistines call (v2)? What did they ask? What did the Philistine religious experts say not to do (v3)? What did their priests say they should offer? What follow-up question is asked in v4? And what do the priests answer to offer as a trespass offering? Why (v4–5)? What did they think that this would give to the God of Israel? From what three objects did they hope He would lighten His hand? What question do their priests now ask the Philistines in v6? What kind of cart do they say to use (v7)? What kind of cows do they say to hitch to it? Where do they say to take their calves? What do they say to do with the cart (v8)? And for what do they say to watch (v9)? What do they say to conclude, based upon the result? What do they do in vv10–11? And what is the result in v12?*

In this passage, the Lord both vindicates His Name and also shows surprising mercy to the Philistines. Their priests' and diviners' ideas are offensive to Him of course. Golden tumor idols and golden rat idols as a trespass offering?! Putting Him to the test with calf-separated milk cows pulling an untested cart in the wrong direction?!

But the Lord condescends (stoops down) to fulfill their “sign” and sends those cows straight to Beth Shemesh, lowing all the way.

Even Philistines know that devastation comes from the hand of the one, true God. They learned the lesson of Pharaoh and Egypt, asking one another, “Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?” We must shake our heads when Philistine idolaters are better at understanding and responding to the providence of God than nations where profession of the true religion once abounded. Better even, perhaps, than much of what calls itself the “evangelical church.”

For, the Lord afflicts us, and rather than seeking how we may have offended Him and what He seeks from us, we merely seek relief from the affliction. We fill our prayers with requests for deliverance, rather than repentance—and that’s when we pray at all. The bulk of our effort is spent not crying out to heaven but figuring out how to navigate the situation on earth.

But God does highly prize the glory of His Name and has a history of surprising displays of marvelous grace. This doesn’t encourage us to engage in Philistine-style idolatry and sign seeking, but surely it should drive us into Scripture to rest upon the Lord’s glorious grace and do according to all His good commands!

By what situations has the Lord gotten your attention? What has your response primarily been?
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**Suggested Songs: ARP32AB “What Blessedness” or TPH557 “Great King of Nations, Hear Our Prayers”**