

How Big is Your God?

The journey of the child Samuel into the relationship of trust in GOD is accompanied by the reality of the circumstances around him. The nation of Israel is engaged in conflict with the Philistine nation and the times they are really difficult for the people who have confined the GOD who freed them from the slavery of Egypt. The Philistines are camped at Ephk and they attack and kill four thousand Israelites. The elders of Israel are confounded and desperate looking for the victory that they feel is so close but so far. The elders decide to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the equation with the battle.

How many times do I look for GOD to magically arrive in some form that can bring victory? I can bring the Ark that contains the items from my memory of the supernatural intervention into the battle. I am not limiting the power of the GOD I know to be able to provide for me, but this provision is more related to my faith in the circumstance to allow GOD to big as he is and myself to believe and move into the battle with faith.

Look at the statements from 1 Samuel 4: 3 from the Message Bible.

³When the troops returned to camp, Israel's elders said, "Why has GOD given us such a beating today by the Philistines? Let's go to Shiloh and get the Chest of GOD's Covenant. It will accompany us and save us from the grip of our enemies."

How do we limit the God of the Universe to the Ark? How could the Ark deliver the people from this trial? Remember that the keepers of the Ark at Shiloh are the wicked sons of Eli. The word that was delivered to Samuel concerned the removal of the priesthood from Eli and his sons. GOD is faithful. Please look at this as a statement of the power of GOD and not weakness. Not once is there a mention of the people crying out to the GOD who gave the blueprint for the Ark. The people are depending on something and not SOMEONE- GOD.

In verse 4 below again taken from The Message Bible we see the the plan to bring the Ark to the battle. Along come Hophni and Phinnehas with the Ark of the Covenant to bring salvation to the people of the Israel. These men knew what the Ark was but not the GOD of the Ark of the Covenant. How big is your GOD? Where is the battle fought in your life?

⁴So the army sent orders to Shiloh. They brought the Chest of the Covenant of GOD, the GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, the Cherubim-Enthroned-GOD. Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, accompanied the Chest of the Covenant of God.

In the battle of the mind there are moments when we see the things we think holds GOD and our shouts are so loud the enemy hears and wonders what is happening. See verse 5 below.

⁵When the Chest of the Covenant of GOD was brought into camp, everyone gave a huge cheer. The shouts were like thunderclaps shaking the very ground.

The enemies hear the shouts of the people. The deliverance and/or the victory are at hand. Now the power of GOD is limited and at the disposal of a people who have forsaken true relationship and really are not very different from the very enemy they are fighting. GOD is not a lap dog to be told what to do or ordered through some ritual to attack and bring victory. The nation had taken the gods of the nations that surrounded to their life and now the Ark would deliver.

The Philistines hear the shouts and the joy of the Israelites as the Ark is entering the camp. The word is communicated that the symbol of the covenant is in the camp and the Philistines make a desperate statement that the fight is on. Fight for your lives is the cry from the enemy.

See the scripture below starting in Verse 6.

⁶The Philistines heard the shouting and wondered what on earth was going on: “What’s all this shouting among the Hebrews?”

Then they learned that the Chest of GOD had entered the Hebrew camp. ⁷The Philistines panicked: “Their gods have come to their camp! Nothing like this has ever happened before. ⁸We’re done for! Who can save us from the clutches of these supergods? These are the same gods who hit the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues out in the wilderness. ⁹On your feet, Philistines! Courage! We’re about to become slaves to the Hebrews, just as they have been slaves to us. Show what you’re made of! Fight for your lives!”

The enemy has made the decision to fight. Notice that if the GOD of the Ark was going to bring victory the enemy is still going to fight.

Look now what happens in the battle between the Israelites and Philistines? See as we start in verse 10.

¹⁰And did they ever fight! It turned into a rout. They thrashed Israel so mercilessly that the Israelite soldiers ran for their lives, leaving behind an incredible 30,000 dead. ¹¹As if that wasn’t bad enough, the Chest of God was taken and the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas—were killed. **GLORY IS EXILED FROM ISRAEL**

The enemies and the chosen ones collide. The magical emblem is taken. The prophesy of GOD spoken to Samuel is truth. The sons of Eli are dead and now the Ark is taken by the enemy to reside in their land.

Have you ever wondered why it seems that the enemy wins sometimes? Why the pain and strife that is in this situation was allowed? Have you ever said I am Christian and the victory is mine? What happens when the victory is not what you envisioned?

The battle is over and one of the survivors is headed with the news of the defeat and the capture of the Ark. Remember that the news is sometimes not what we are expecting.

The word of the battle and victory of the Philistines is brought to Shiloh. The city cries out because of the loss of the Ark. Eli hears the tumult and asks what has happened. The man gives the news to Eli. In this order the news is delivered. The battle has resulted in a massive slaughter of Israelite men. His sons are dead. The Ark of the Covenant is taken by the enemy.

At this Eli falls backward on his stool. Elis is old and heavy and unable to maneuver and tragically the remainder of the prophesy is completed. Eli's neck is broken. The tragedy continues when the daughter-in-law of Eli is giving birth and complications arise. The midwives inform the woman that she gives birth to a son who is named Ichabod which means "The Glory has departed from Israel."

Such tragedy is not just in movies or soap operas. I speak to people every week who are in the midst of the same situations to some degree. We read our Bibles and sing the joyful songs as if they alone can bring us the victory. The Bible is the Word of GOD and just as David sang the songs of Praise he had journey through his losses to arrive at the victory. We must believe in the GOD we serve and quote the words of his book while singing the songs of his praise.

How big is your God?

Is it shaped like anything that limits GOD?

Who is your GOD?

As the story begins to unfold the reality of the Glory of the Lord that rested between the cherubim is not present. The Israelites did not cry to the GOD who could deliver. They did change their attitude or repent from their actions.

This is a very frank lesson in the truth of GOD.

Trust GOD.....