

- Samuel became known as a great prophet throughout the land of Israel, and the Israelites go to war with the Philistines. The Israelites camp at a place called Ebenezer and the Philistines at a place called Aphek. (I Samuel 4:1)
- The Israelites aren't going to be successful here at first, but later when they are, Ebenezer will become important.
- The Philistines form an array or battle line against the Israelites, and they end up killing four thousand Israelites. (I Samuel 4:2) Remember, that is more than 10% of the army of 32,000 that we read Gideon had previously assembled (Judges 6:3) and we don't even know if the army was that big this time, so in percentage term might even have been more. Also, an array (which the KJV calls it) or a line (as the ESV calls it) is basically like a row. In math today, we use the term "array" of numbers to refer to a group or row or line of numbers.
- The Israelites don't understand why this is happening, so they send to get the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh where it is kept in the temple. Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas go with the Ark of the Covenant to where the Israelites are camped. (I Samuel 4:3-4)
- When the Ark gets to camp, the Israelites celebrate so much that the Philistines hear them. The Philistines realize what is going on and they are scared because they know the Israelite God has given them many victories. (I Samuel 4:5-8)
- It was predicted many times by God that the nations would see his power through them. Consider what God told Israel in Joshua 4:23-24 This is true of us today. We sing a song "The World's Bible" which basically points out that we are the only Bible some people will ever "read" and what if the type is crooked? Jesus also tell us that we need to be examples to others every day so they can glorify God. (Matthew 5:13-16)
- The Philistines encourage each other not to be afraid, and they: 1) killed off what was almost certainly the remaining Israelite army 2) also killed the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas and 3) took the Ark of the Covenant. (I Samuel 4:9-11)
- Remember that God had told Eli that Hophni and Phineas that they were both going to die the same day because of their disobedience (I Samuel 2:34)
- One man escapes, runs back and tells everyone what happened. Eli is old (98) but hears the cry of the people and asks the man to tell him what happened. The man does and Eli (who had been the judge over Israel for 40 years) falls off his seat and dies. It is worth noting that the Bible records specifically for us why he keeled over and died – it was the news that the Ark of the Covenant had been captured that really did him in (not the news of the death of his sons). (I Samuel 4:12-18)
- Phineas' wife was pregnant at the time. All this news really affected her too. She went into early childbirth and died. Before she died, another woman told her that she had born a son and Phineas' wife said to call him Ichabod because that means "the glory of the Lord has departed" and she notes that this should be his name because that it was happened when the Ark was captured. (I Samuel 4:18-22)
- We don't hear the name Ichabod very often. It is not really used in the real world. It was used in a fictional character - the guy who becomes the headless horseman's victim was named Ichabod Crane in Washington Irving's story "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."
- The Philistines don't really know what they were in for when they captured the Ark. First, they took the Ark to the temple they created for their God Dagon (their fish God who was top half man and bottom half fish like a male mermaid) and he fell over so they put him back up and the

next day his hands and head were all cut off by the threshold so that only his trunk was left. The Philistine priests of Dagon stopped walking on the threshold for that very reason. Then they all said "let's send it somewhere else then." (I Samuel 5:1-7)

- The Philistines tried sending the Ark of the Covenant to one city and then to another. In both places, a fatal plague of emerods (tumors) broke out (the original Hebrew makes it clear that this was on the groin) and there was great destruction in the cities (the Hebrew mentions the that this destruction was due to a sudden infestation of rats). (I Samuel 5:8-12)
- This went on for seven months. Finally, the Philistines were fed up and wanted to send the Ark back to Israel. They consulted some of their priests and diviners who said to make five gold tumors and five gold mice as a guilt offering and send that back along with the Ark. They said this was one gold tumor and one gold rat for each of the five Philistine Lords or rulers of cities. They then say that maybe the God of Israel will have mercy on them then and begged them not to harden their hearts like Pharaoh did in Egypt. (I Samuel 6:1-6)
- The priests and diviners then tell the rulers to create a new cart and hook two cattle which have never been used in labor before and to send everything back that way. They basically say if the cows make a beeline to Israel it means the plagues were from God and if the cows don't go directly to Israel it means the Ark wasn't responsible for it. (I Samuel 6:7-9)
- The cows do take the cart directly to Israel, a place called Beth-Shemesh in the land occupied by the tribe of Judah and about 19 miles from Jerusalem. At this point the Philistines who had been watching the cart go back home, the Levites take the Ark off the cart and make their own sacrifices. Some of the non-priestly types do make the mistake of staring at the the Ark of the Covenant and 70 people actually lose their lives as a result. There is some reason to believe it is actually 50,070 but there are some who say that the 50,000 was the total number of people in the town and 70 of those died. They finally tell a nearby town called Kiriath-jearim (about 9 miles from Jerusalem and on the border of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) by way of messenger to come and take the Ark which the Philistines returned. (I Samuel 6:10-21)
- They do take the ark to Kiriath-jearim and it is there for 20 years. During this time, they are still under the rule of the Philistines (I Samuel 7:1-2)
- Samuel tells the people if they want to be free of the Philistines they need to put away their gods so they do. (I Samuel 7:3-4)
- God has told us they he wants us to put Him first. It is easy for us to look back at them and recognize that they were worshipping idols. God's nature is to be jealous and anything we put ahead of our relationship with him, whether its sports, entertainment, money or even our families. Matthew 6:19-24
- Samuel gathers all the Israelite tribes together at a place called Mizpah. There he prays for them, and offers sacrifices on their behalf. (I Samuel 7:5-9)
- While Samuel is doing that, the Philistines attack. This time the Israelites win. Samuel raises up a stone at Ebenezer to commemorate the place. (I Samuel 7:9-14) We still have a phrase in the song we sing called "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" which says "here I raise my Ebenezer" and that's what it refers to.
- Samuel kept right on serving as a judge to Israel and goes to major cities throughout the country in a pattern. He always comes back to Ramah because his home is there. (I Samuel 7:15-17)
- Samuel eventually passes judgement leadership to his two sons Joel and Abiah. They were not godly men. (I Samuel 8:1-3) Note that this was the same thing that Samuel had witnessed with

Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas – because he saw Eli not disciplining his sons correctly, it is safe to assume that the pattern repeated itself with Samuel. It takes a real concerted effort and bravery to break the kinds of patterns we see in life, especially when it comes to family.

- The elders of the Israelites say to Samuel, your sons are not good judges, so give us a king like all the nations around us have. (I Samuel 8:5)
- Samuel didn't like hearing this, so he sought God's counsel. God told Samuel to give them a king because it meant they hadn't really rejected Samuel, they were rejecting God. (I Samuel 8:6-8)
- Samuel is very clear about how a king will oppress the Israelites. In fact, he discusses this in great detail. He basically is telling people "be careful what you wish for." (I Samuel 8:10-18)
- The people insist they want a king anyway, God tells Samuel to make it so, and so Samuel tells them to go home. (I Samuel 8:19-22)

Questions

1. Who did the Israelites go to war with in the beginning of I Samuel 4?
2. How many people died in the Israelites first encounter with the Philistines?
3. What is an array?
4. What were the Philistines so afraid of?
5. What were Eli's sons' names?
6. What three things happened when the Philistines routed Israel the second time?
7. What caused Eli to fall off his seat and die?
8. What does the name "Ichabod?" mean?
9. Who was Dagon?
10. What happened to Dagon when the Ark of the Covenant was placed in his temple?
11. What was happening to the Philistines everywhere the Ark of the Covenant was sent?
12. How long did the Philistines have the Ark of the Covenant?
13. What do the priests and diviners of the Philistines tell them to do when they are returning the Ark of the Covenant to Israel?
14. What happens to the Israelites in Beth-Shemesh who recover the Ark first?
15. How long was the Ark of the Covenant at Kiriath-jearim?
16. What did Samuel tell Israel they were to do if they wanted to be free of the Philistines?
17. What is did Samuel raise up at Ebenezer?
18. Where was Samuel's hometown?
19. What were Samuel's sons named?
20. Did Samuel's sons judge righteously?
21. What two reasons did the elders give Samuel why they should have a king?
22. Why did God tell Samuel to go ahead and give them a king?
23. How does Samuel warn the Israelites about having a king?