

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 451

1 Samuel 5-6

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### Episode Summary

1 Samuel 5-6 continues the biblical saga of the loss of the ark of the covenant to the Philistines. Specifically, the chapters detail the fallout upon the Philistines as Yahweh chooses to punish them for taking the ark. The episode includes an interesting scene of cosmic geography and spiritual warfare (1 Sam 5:1-5). Most of the content, however, details Yahweh's judgment of the Philistines, a judgment that involves the Philistines offering a "guilt offering" to Yahweh. This offering included objects or emblems that were designed to cajole Yahweh into relenting, and so the objects in some way telegraph what the punishments included. English translations have these objects as golden mice and golden "tumors" or "hemorrhoids" (Hebrew term: 'ophalim). This episode follows recent archaeological research that demonstrate there is a better way to understand the nature of the 'ophalim, one that makes this episode for adults only.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 451: 1 Samuel 5-6. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

**MH:** Oh, so-so today, Trey, not too bad.

**TS:** Yeah.

**MH:** But I'm looking forward to this episode.

**TS:** Yeah, well, since we're a little late on this episode, we had the chance to watch your Packers beat my Cowboys. How did that make you feel?

**MH:** Yeah, that was the highlight of my day. I was shocked and amazed.

**TS:** Yeah, me too.

**MH:** I'll take it.

**TS:** Yeah, that was pretty rough.

**MH:** It looks like the Packers have rediscovered their offense.

**TS:** Yeah, at the expense of the Cowboys. That's not fun to say out loud. Well, Mike...

**MH:** Yeah, well you're still a playoff team. I don't think Green Bay is going to be there.

**TS:** True. True. Well, you say we are, but we magically find a way to fall apart. So hopefully we can keep it together. Alright, Mike, well chapter 5 and 6. It's going to be a big one today.

**MH:** Yeah, I think that we'll be around our usual time, but we want to cover two chapters because basically they're both related. It wouldn't make sense to separate them. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to start off by reading both the chapters. Again, they're not too long. I think we can get through this, just so that people are familiar with the story again. So I'm reading from the ESV.

**5** When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. <sup>2</sup> Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. <sup>3</sup> And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. <sup>4</sup> But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. <sup>5</sup> This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

<sup>6</sup> The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. <sup>7</sup> And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god." <sup>8</sup> So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. <sup>9</sup> But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. <sup>10</sup> So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of

God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people."<sup>11</sup> They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people." For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there.<sup>12</sup> The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

That's chapter 5, and you notice two times in that chapter it specifically said that the *men* of the city, young and old, were afflicted. So we'll come back to that point in a moment. Chapter 6:

6 The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.<sup>2</sup> And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place."<sup>3</sup> They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you."<sup>4</sup> And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords."<sup>5</sup> So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land.<sup>6</sup> Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed?<sup>7</sup> Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them.<sup>8</sup> And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way<sup>9</sup> and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence."

<sup>10</sup> The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home.<sup>11</sup> And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors.<sup>12</sup> And the cows went

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straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh. <sup>13</sup> Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. <sup>14</sup> The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. <sup>15</sup> And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the LORD. <sup>16</sup> And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

<sup>17</sup> These are the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron, <sup>18</sup> and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwalled villages. The great stone beside which they set down the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

<sup>19</sup> And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow. <sup>20</sup> Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?" <sup>21</sup> So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to you."

Then the first couple verses of chapter 7:

**7** And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

So that's the account of what happens to the ark in the wake of the Philistine capture of it. And we want to spend our time in both of these chapters today and,

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of course, following our pattern, we are going to ask first, well what are the chapters about? And that should be obvious enough. They're about the judgement and suffering of the Philistines while they were in possession of the ark of the covenant. There is also more than a hint here, it's pretty obvious—an assessment or a retelling of some spiritual warfare between Yahweh and Dagon. Or you could pronounce that name “Dag-AHN.” The English translations typically have Dagon (with an o); outside the Bible, the name is Dagan. But there is an obvious element of spiritual warfare here.

So on the big picture—the macro—level, Chisholm has a few observations here. We're going to spend most of our time on specific nuggets in the chapter, but let's read what Chisholm has to say about the bigger picture here first.

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During the period of the judges, the Israelites worshiped the gods of the neighboring peoples, including those of the Canaanites, Aramaeans, Sidonians, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines (Judges 10:6). But Israel's idolatry consistently brought defeat and humiliation. Some might misinterpret Israel's defeats as being due to the Lord's weakness or to the strength of the foreign gods. So in this section of the Former Prophets (Judges and 1 Samuel), the narrator affirms that Israel's defeats are punitive, not due to some deficiency on the Lord's part.

As part of his strategy, the narrator demonstrates the Lord's superiority to foreign gods, in particular Baal, the Canaanite god of the storm, and Dagon, the god of the Philistines. The Song of Deborah depicts the Lord as sovereign over the storm as he defeats the Canaanite armies (Judg. 5:4–5). The Gideon account, along with its sequel about Abimelek, contains a strong anti-Baal polemic, showing how Baal is unable to fully avenge Gideon's (Jerubbaal's) attack on his altar. The polemical dimension takes a different turn in the Samson story, where Samson burns the grain supposedly provided by the Philistine grain-god Dagon (Judges 15:4–5), who is viewed as Baal's father. Though Dagon seems to win the conflict (Judges 16:23–24), in the end Samson brings Dagon's temple to the ground (Judges 16:30).

The polemic against both of these gods continues in 1 Samuel. As noted above, Hannah celebrates the Lord's ability to give fertility (1 Sam. 2:1–10) in terms that echo the Baal myths. Now chapter 5 tells how the ark of God humiliates Dagon in the latter's very own temple and then continues to assault him and his people as long as it remains in Philistine territory.

Now we should note here that the polemic against Dagon also has something to do with fertility. So there's a grain element here that Chisholm mentions, but it also has something to do with fertility and we'll see that later on. We'll come back to that point.

In terms of specific nuggets on these two chapters (specific things that I think are interesting), first of all, there's the confrontation between Yahweh and Dagon, which is really an episode of cosmic geography. Leithart describes some of the irony in the details. He says:

The Philistines considered the ark as a war trophy, and by placing it in the temple of Dagon, they were proclaiming Dagon's victory over Israel (cf. Judg. 16:24). More fundamentally, they were making a theological statement. Dagon, the Philistines believed, was not only superior to Israel, but to Yahweh. The fact that they set the ark "beside" Dagon highlights the intention: Yahweh might prove useful, but henceforth whatever power He possessed would be harnessed to the purposes of Dagon. Like an honored palace servant, Yahweh was allowed to stand "beside" Dagon to serve him.

But Yahweh did not accept this subservient position for long. He humiliated the god of the Philistines, forcing Dagon to bow before His throne (5:3).

Leithart wants to draw the analogy between the decapitation of Dagon and Genesis 3:15, but I think he goes too far on that about the crushing of the head. The verbs are not the same, and the verb here in 1 Samuel (which is *karat*) is well understood as "cut," not "crush." So Leithart fares better with respect to the other details of Dagon's humiliation, though. I'll continue reading. He writes:

The priests of Dagon found him fallen before the ark in worship (face down before the Lord), incapable of getting himself up without help (5:3). This discovery occurred "early the next morning," about the time of Israel's morning sacrifice, and Dagon apparently was joining with Israel in prostrating himself before the throne of the God of gods. The next day, things were even worse. This time, Dagon had fallen over and broken in pieces, with his head and palms cut off. The breaking of the hands was also significant, since hands represent power. While the strong hand of the Lord was against the Philistines (5:7, 9, 11), Dagon's hands were made impotent.

That's the end of Leithart's observations. But we've referred to this passage before. And again, if you've read *Unseen Realm* you know... The key line here... After this is happening, we read in 1 Samuel 5:5,

**<sup>5</sup> This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.**

Again, when they find Dagon prostrate before the ark of the Lord and then the next day he has his hands and his head lopped off, the priests of Dagon knew that this territory, this turf, inside Dagon's temple had been conquered by Yahweh. And so it became part of Yahweh's domain. Again, this is cosmic

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geography. So they weren't taking any chances in the future. They literally walked around and would not step on the threshold of Dagon's own house when they went in to do his various sacrifices and worship. They understood the ground had been conquered by Yahweh, a superior deity.

Secondly, there's Yahweh's judgment of the Philistines on a wider scale. Yahweh was not content to merely dismember Dagon and make him prone in a worship posture. God would judge the land of Philistia, just generally. Yahweh's temporary exile from Shiloh would turn into a victory procession.

We need to understand two items to understand Yahweh's judgment on the Philistines here: (1) the nature of Dagan as a deity, and (2) the nature of the 'ophelim (which I believe is poorly translated "tumors" or "hemorrhoids" in some English translations; the ESV has "tumors"). But we'll take those in order.

The first one, on the nature of Dagon... DDD has a nice entry on Dagon. Let me read from that.

The etymology of the name Dagan is uncertain. Etymologies based on *dāg*, 'fish', *dāgān*, 'grain', and on a root meaning 'be cloudy' (Arabic) are all equally dubious and there is no contextual evidence from the Hebrew Bible or from Mesopotamian/West Semitic sources to give much support to these speculations. It is wiser to restrict oneself to what can be known from the evidence, principally that Dagan was a deity of major significance in the Mari region in the Old Babylonian period and that his worship appears to have spread widely in later times. He was thus adopted, no doubt in some syncretistic form, perhaps as a corn-god, by the Philistines.

Now one note here. This is me now. That's the end of the DDD quote. On the form Dagon/Dagan, like some other languages in the Semitic tree, long "a" eventually became long "o" in pronunciation. This is known among Semitic language scholars as the "Canaanite shift". Hence, Dagan became Dagon in Hebrew, but would have stayed Dagan in some Semitic languages, like Ugaritic.

According to Kyle McCarter in his *Anchor Yale Bible Commentary*, Dagan's cult is attested "from Early Bronze Age Ebla in northern Syria to Roman Gaza at the southern extreme of the Philistine Plain." That's McCarter page 121.

Now Tsumura in his commentary, who cites the DDD article by Healey, says this. He writes:

Two major etymologies have been suggested: (1) Medieval Jewish commentators (Rashi, Kimchi) explained its meaning as "fish" (\*dg), but this folk etymology is no longer accepted. (2) Others say it is from "grain" (\*dagan), and this would make him a vegetation deity. But Healey is cautious about positing this etymology, for

the connection with “grain” is secondary and based on the coincidence of the West Semitic word for grain. Since Dagon is Semitic and the Philistines were not, they presumably adopted Dagon sometime after their arrival, but how soon is not known. Biblical writers clearly consider Dagon as the Philistines’ national god, however (Judg. 16:23; 1 Chr. 10:10). Worship of Dagon at Ashdod still continued around 50 B.C. (cf. 1 Macc. 10:83–85; 11:4).

**Now let’s go back to DDD real briefly. Healey writes:**

Dagan is one of the most persistent deities of the world of Semitic religion. His worship is well attested from the third millennium B.C. in the Ebla texts and he appears in Sargonic personal names, but neither source gives any hint of the precise nature of this deity. Sargon attributed his conquest of Upper/Western Mesopotamia to Dagan and worshipped him in Tuttul. This confirms Dagan’s regional authority, leaving southern Mesopotamia to other deities, including Enlil. He is well attested in the Mari texts as one of the principal deities of the Amorites of Old Babylonian Upper Mesopotamia. The westward ‘migration’ of Dagan is already evident in the Ugaritic texts. He has a rather minor role in Ugaritic mythology. He has no active role in the main myths and legends and is merely mentioned as the father of *Ba’al*. His paternity of *Ba’al* might be interpreted as implying characteristics similar to *Ba’al*’s. Be this as it may, Dagan’s importance in Ugaritic religion is confirmed by his relative popularity in offering-lists and similar texts. It is noteworthy that in the Ugaritic texts Dagan is twice called *dgn ttl*, ‘Dagan of Tuttul’, a title which shows the continuity of the Ugaritic Dagan tradition with that of Mari. The fact of Dagan’s having no active part in the main *Ba’al* myths may reflect the relative lateness of his arrival on the Syrian coast. References to *Ba’al* as ‘son of Dagan’ also present considerable problems, since he is clearly also the son of El. Some have sought to resolve this by assuming that Dagan is to be identified with El, but this idea is hard to maintain in view of the fact that the two were separately worshipped. Others suggest the title ‘son of Dagan’ reflects an awareness of *Ba’al*’s foreignness and secondariness within the history of the Ugaritic pantheon. It may well be that the confusion arises from a lack of fixity in the genealogy of the Ugaritic gods.

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That’s the end of the DDD entry. Now the point here is there’s a possible and somewhat plausible connection of Dagon to grain or corn, and that is of interest since one of the two afflictions Yahweh brings upon the Philistines is mice. The choice may have been an attempt to destroy Philistine crops. 1 Samuel 6:5 has the mice ravaging the land. That could be a general plague of destruction, but it could be aimed at Dagon specifically, as in Yahweh destroying the grain upon which the Philistines depend and which they thought was due to the power of their god.



The second item to understand is the meaning of *'opalim*. This term is translated “tumors” in ESV and something similar in other English translations. It occurs at 1 Samuel 5:6, 5:9, 5:12, and 1 Samuel 6:4-5. The archaeologist Aren Maier points out that the root of the term (in Hebrew, *ayin-pe-lamed*, which is the same as the word for Ophel, as in the acropolis or the upper city of ancient Jerusalem) means “high” or “rise,” hence a swelling. This is where the “tumor” or “hemorrhoid” idea comes from—a swelling on the body.

But in two articles Maier disputes this. He has what I think is demonstrably a better theory. Of the two articles, one is popular (written for a popular audience) in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, and the other one is a scholarly article on the same subject. But the one in *Biblical Archaeology Review* (and I will send that along so we can put it on the episode website or this episode web page)... The two are authored by Aren Maier. The first one in *BAR* is entitled, “Did the Captured Ark Afflict the Philistines with E.D.”—as in erectile dysfunction. That’s *Biblical Archeological Review* 34:3 (2008). And the scholarly version of this article (which I do not believe is publicly available on the internet) is Aren Maier, “A New Interpretation of the Term *Opalim* in Light of Recent Archaeological Findings from Philistia.” That’s in the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 32:1 (2007): 23-40.

Maier’s *BAR* article on *'opalim* notes as follows. I’m going to quote him here at length. He says:

The history of the Hebrew text also suggests that *'opalim*’ is in some ways a strange or at least unusual word. Until about the tenth century A.D or C.E., Hebrew was written essentially without vowels (in modern Israel it still is). At that time a group of Hebrew textual scholars called Masoretes gathered in Tiberias and developed a series of superscripts and subscripts, called pointing [MH: those little dots and dashes], to indicate the proper vowels in the Hebrew text. Hence, the authoritative Hebrew text is referred to as the Masoretic Text, or simply MT. The Masoretes also included elaborate notes on the text, called the Masorah.

In these notes, the Masoretes indicated that some words *written* in the text were to be *read aloud* entirely differently. In their terms, they distinguished between the *ketib* (what is written) and the *qere* (what is read aloud). What is written is one thing, but what is read aloud in the synagogue may be entirely different.

Biblical passages containing the word *'opalim*’ are still read aloud in synagogues on Sabbath in the annual cycle of Bible Readings. But *'opalim*’ is one of those words that is not pronounced. The Hebrew word *tehorim* is substituted instead. That is the modern word for hemorrhoids; it appears nowhere in the Bible. It is the word for hemorrhoids used in polite society.

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There is, however, another possibility. Based on recently recovered archaeological evidence, I believe that *'opalim'* refers not to hemorrhoids or tumors or the bubonic plague, but to the male sexual organ. The Philistines were afflicted in their *membra virile*.

That's the end of Maier for that portion. So Maier there refers to a variety of archeological digs at Ashkelon conducted by Harvard's Lawrence Stager years ago where seven small vial-shaped vessels called *situlae* were discovered. *Situlae* is the plural of *situla*, a Latin term for either a decorated bucket or an elongated container for water or other liquids. So Maier writes at another point in his article:

The *situlae* were found in what was apparently a "cultic corner," along with other cult objects and a votive offering table. The *situlae* were apparently votives, much like the arms or legs that are often found in Egyptian and Greek (Aegean) cultic contexts.

The most prominent depiction on the Ashkelon *situlae* is of the Egyptian god Min...

So let me break in here. We have a Philistine object. It's this long tube-ish sort of container (again, the article will have pictures of this), and they would be filled with liquid and they were decorated most prominently with a depiction of the Egyptian god Min.

The most prominent depiction on the Ashkelon *situlae* is of the Egyptian god Min, closely associated with male sexual potency. He is depicted on the *situlae* with an erect penis, which probably reflects the cure that the depositors of the votive *situlae* were seeking. Stager suggests that these *situlae* may have been filled with semen, milk or water symbolizing the life-giving force that the votive was intended to induce.

Stager's interpretation has been strengthened and, I believe, can now be elaborated on based on the recent finds from Tell es-Safi/Gath.

In the 2004 excavation season at Tell es-Safi/Gath, we found two clay *situlae* in the shape of phalluses in a destruction level from the late ninth or early eighth century B.C.E. (This destruction was apparently the work of Hazael, king of Aram Damascus, as mentioned in *2 Kings 12:17*.) Each of the *situlae* is hollow. Each is cylindrical with a bulbous-like thickening at the closed end. The identification of these vessels as *ithyphallii* [MH: the Latin term for erect penises] has been confirmed by several urologists. Like the *situlae* from Ashkelon, they, too, were found in what appears to be a cult-related context.

These phallic-shaped objects from Ashkelon and Gath are clear indications of the symbolic importance of the phallus [MH: again, that's the erect penis] in Philistine culture. While such depictions are relatively common in Egyptian and Greek (Aegean) religious iconography, they are very rare in Semitic religious iconography. The Philistines are, of course, widely believed to have originated in the Aegean area and arrived in Canaan via Egypt, and the phallus is known to be an attribute of various ancient Greek, Anatolian and Cypriot goddesses.

With this background, I suggest that the '*opalim*' with which the Philistines were afflicted after they captured the Ark of the Covenant and placed it in the temple of Dagon involved penises rather than hemorrhoids. It is unclear precisely what the nature of the affliction of the Philistine *membra virile* was. Perhaps it was the failure to attain erection, the condition referred to today as E.D., or erectile dysfunction. Or perhaps it was some malady causing penile pain.

Again, one more quote from Maier and this is from his other article, the scholarly article in *JSOT*. He writes:

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Admittedly, interpreting the term *opalim* as referring to the male sexual organ is somewhat problematic, since this is not the word used for this organ in other instances, either in Hebrew or in other Semitic languages. On the other hand, however, the alternative interpretations (for example, 'swellings') do not have many comparanda either. [MH: In other words, they have nothing to compare it to either.] In addition, the cognate word *cpl* (*ophel*) has a meaning of high, lofty, raised, etc. (e.g. Jean and Hoftijzer 1965: 219; BDB, 779; KB, 2004: 814-15), which would fit well as a euphemistic reference to the male sexual organ.

The reference in 1 Sam. 5:6 to golden *opalim* clearly indicates a recognizable object. Interpreting these as golden replicas of 'swellings' (haemorrhoids) is somewhat problematic, since it is difficult to imagine how such an 'object' would be depicted, not to mention that none of the various known Philistine cult-related objects fit such an interpretation. On the other hand, understanding the *opalim* as related to the male sexual organ and the golden *opalim* as being an imitation thereof has, as we have seen, excellent parallels in the archaeological record.

So the bottom line of the point of this is that the Philistines decide to send the ark away in 1 Samuel 6 with a "guilt offering" after consulting their priests and their diviners. Again, we read 1 Samuel 6. We won't read it again. Well, maybe we should read it again. I'll read parts of it here. 1 Samuel 6:

**<sup>4</sup> And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him [Yahweh]?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same**

**plague was on all of you and on your lords. <sup>5</sup> So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land.**

And so [audio breaks up] they would have been in the shape of the penis. Again, in Maiers... Once you look at the pictures, I mean, you can kind of tell what is going on here. You have an uncircumcised phallus in these objects. Since these are likely the objects that were put on the cart in the box next to the ark with the five golden mice, the chances are very strong that it is, especially when twice in the passage you have very specifically the men being afflicted. You have a good case for Yahweh either afflicting them with E.D., which would have been alarming because then you can't have children or would have caused some pain during intercourse or some pain during erection that would have made intercourse impossible. But either way, Yahweh is afflicting them at the source of life. And if he is also afflicting their grain, which would be the logic behind sending images of mice (that the mice are destroying the grain, they're destroying crops), that is also an assault on the very livelihood—the very sustainability—of the Philistines.

So they can't have children and now their crops are being destroyed. So Yahweh is really gunning for the Philistines. The hand of the Lord was heavy against the Philistines. He is afflicting them right where it matters in sustaining their own people, their own population. I mean, they're suffering a lot of losses in these battles and wars as well, and it's the men that are being killed, not the women, because the men are engaged in hand-to-hand combat. So you have a real problem here. Yahweh is after the men of the five cities of the Philistines to make sure that their population dwindles and they don't have enough to eat.

So I think this is a far better interpretation than hemorrhoids. Again, the Masoretic notes substitute that term for *opalim* in the text. So this is a very ancient tradition, but one that only goes as back as far as we know to when they added the vowels, but it could have been much earlier than that, too. To not read *opalim*, again, because sensibilities or... You wouldn't want to read the text when it refers to the penis in the synagogue. You wouldn't want to do that in the synagogue worship, so you have a euphemistic substitute—"the swelling" or this elongated thing. This would be a good way to euphemistically read the text in the synagogue. Again, it makes a lot of sense and has a lot of explanatory power. Again, I think it really is the point with the whole of these two chapters, in chapters 5 and 6.

So when we read the rest of it, they prepare the new cart with two milk cows which had never taken a yoke and they yoke them together and they send the calves back home and then they send the ark of God on its way. And it goes to Beth-shemesh, so there's no mistaking that Yahweh was behind this harm—what

was going on in the Philistines. The ark goes to Beth-shemesh where, unfortunately, some of the people not only did the logical thing of offering sacrifice, but unfortunately some of the men looked inside the ark, which would have required them touching it, and they paid with their lives.

Verses 19-20:

**19 And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow.**

This is going to happen elsewhere in scripture, too. It's okay to look at it, but if you touch it in some way (and the academic speculation is that they looked inside of it rather than just looking at it)... You can translate the proposition there "upon" as "within" or something like that. This explains why the Lord struck them down at Beth-shemesh. But again, the ark of God stays there for a while, and eventually there's a trickle into chapter 7. The men of Kiraiath-jearim came and took up the ark of the Lord and that's where it stays for the next 20 years. So it is separate from the Tabernacle at Shiloh, again, for the next 20 years. But again, this is all a result of the Philistines taking the ark, which, of course, was ultimately the result of Eli and his sons being so wicked that God handed them over to the Philistines.

So this is a good place to stop with the ark being transported into Kiriath-jearim. But our focus today in chapters 5 and 6... I think as you look at the article that we will post and think about the considerations of what Maier's arguing for, there is a lot of explanatory power here to make sense of what is going on not only with the words (this obscure word, '*opalim*—or at least sensitive word, '*opalim*) in the chapter and in Jewish tradition, but also just archeologically. I mean, this is a good place where archeology really does shed light on the text and gives us a reading or an understanding of the text. Like I said before, it has explanatory power for what is going on.

**TS:** So, Mike, just so that I'm hearing things right, if you look into the ark of the covenant, it gives you hemorrhoids. That's what you said.

**MS:** [laughs] No, it gives you worse than that.

**TS:** Okay, alright. So don't look.

**MS:** That's pretty much it for you.

**TS:** No matter what you hear, keep your eyes shut is what you're saying.

**MS:** Didn't you see the movie?

**TS:** That's what I just quoted. No matter what you hear, keep your eyes shut.

**MS:** Yeah, okay.

**TS:** Alright. Good deal. Alright. Well, Mike, real quick I wanted to promote our advent book because it is November. December is just a few weeks away. If you're a pastor or a leader and you want specific artwork for promoting it or using in sermons or what not to let them know. You can e-mail him at [anadventforthecosmos.com](mailto:anadventforthecosmos.com). He has coloring books there for sale as well, or you can get the link at our [nakedbiblepodcast.com](http://nakedbiblepodcast.com) or just search for Advent for the Cosmos on Amazon, authored by Jeffrey Pitts, and he'll be more than happy to hook you up. Alright, then. Well, we're looking forward to chapter 7 next week, and with that I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.