

### 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL

#### Week 8, chapter 6

2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel chapter 5 concluded with David's 2<sup>nd</sup> and more decisive victory over the Philistines. The Philistines had been more than a thorn in Israel's side for the past 3 centuries; they had prevented Israel from living peacefully enough to be able to establish nation status with sovereign borders.

The Holy Scriptures often present some of the greatest history changing events in the most subdued way. It was and remains Yehoveh's pattern that whatever the nations observed as their customs and social conventions and religious practices, the customs and social conventions and religious practices observed by the members of God's Kingdom would be different or even the opposite. The victorious gentile kings of old had teams of writers who would record and embellish every detail of each military victory (often even turning a draw or a loss into a win), and usually for the purpose of glorifying and crediting the king for his god-like invincibility. Therefore even the most resounding Israelite triumphs in battle are usually recorded with little detail or fanfare, and the battle leader mentioned only as a matter of record. And this is because when Israel obtained a great victory it was to be seen as more of a triumph of Israel's God than Israel's army. So to glorify the gory battle (itself) or its leader would be precisely the wrong attitude for both the participants and the historian. And it would also be wrong for the reader of these events to put the emphasis on brilliant battle strategy or the exceptional courage and skill of the Hebrew warriors. So even though very little is said about these 2 battles between David and the Philistines as recorded in chapter 5, the impact of David's victories represented a sea change in Israel's progress. And of course it is the Lord who is given credit for these victories because it is the Lord who won them before a single arrow was shot in anger.

One of the things that seem to have endeared David to God was his proper attitude in just such circumstances. The defeat of the Philistines caused David to exclaim:

***“ADONAI has broken through my enemies for me like a river breaking through its banks. (2Sa 5:20 CJB)***

And so the place where the battle was fought was named **Ba'al P'ratzim**: the lord of breaking through (I've already explained at length that at this point in Israel's history the term **ba'al** had been adopted into the Hebrew language and was often used to simply mean "lord"). That name bore such impact on Israel's history that we find it remembered in even Isaiah's day (more than 250 years later).

What we noticed in chapter 5 verse 21 is that the Philistines had brought their gods with them into battle just as the Israelites had brought the Ark of the Covenant into battle many years earlier. The Philistines' idols were captured and burnt up at David's order, just as the Ark of the Covenant was lost for a time to the enemy upon Israel's defeat those many decades ago.

Let's move on now to chapter 6 that focuses on the Ark and the story of David's attempt to make Yerushalayim not only Israel's political capital but its spiritual capital as well.

### READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL CHAPTER 6 all

About 7 decades had passed since the Ark of the Covenant rested in the Holy of the Holies in the Tabernacle, as it should according to the regulations of God as ordained at Mt. Sinai. Now that Israel was again united in a political way not seen since those 40 years of wandering in the wilderness it was time to restore the ancient worship of Israel that had so sadly become perverted (and now nearly forgotten) from the moment Israel's collective feet touched the waters of the Jordan River at Joshua's leading.

This could only happen when the Philistines were subdued, and when the place the Lord chose as where His Name would dwell on earth came under Israelite control: Yerushalayim.

Verse 1 explains that David assembled 30,000 men to go and fetch the Ark of God. The CJB in this matter gets the vocation of these 30,000 men incorrect; they were not crack military troops but rather they were the chosen political representatives of the whole land. These were the **bachar**, the clan leaders and other prominent men from all the descendants of Jacob. Since the aim was to bring back the holiest object that had ever graced this planet it was appropriate that a solemn procession that represented all Israel was convened to accompany the Ark.

Troops were not needed (although undoubtedly some went along as a normal precaution and protocol) because this was not a military expedition. The Philistines were confined to their Mediterranean seacoast territory at this moment and no longer a threat in Canaan. Further the Ark was not in the hands of the Philistines it was in Israelite possession, specifically in the care of a Levite family located at a place that is here called **Ba'al-Judah**. The family was that of Avinadav; he may have been a priest because his son's name was Eleazar and that is a common name among the priestly clan. Later genealogies in the Bible also seem to imply that Avinadav was a priest. On the other hand they could have been a family ordinary Levites (non-priests); the reality is that the divinely ordained structure of the various offices and duties of Priests and Levites had become blurred, mixed, and applied willy-nilly for a very long time so it's hard to know with any certainty.

Let's pause to recall the circumstances that directed the Ark of God to reside at its present resting place.

***CJB 1 Samuel 6:21 They sent messengers to the people living in Kiryat-Ye'arim with this message: "The P'lishtim have returned the ark of ADONAI. Come down and bring it back up with you." CJB 1 Samuel 7:1 So the men of Kiryat-Ye'arim came and brought back the ark of ADONAI. They took it to the home of Avinadav on the hill and appointed his son El'azar to guard the ark of ADONAI.***

Notice that the name of this place is called **Kiryat Ye'arim**. Another name for it was **Ba'al Y'hudah** (the lord of Judah) and an earlier Canaanite name was **Ba'alah**. Place names constantly shift in the Bible with the ebb and flow of territorial control and the evolution of languages. We can be certain that these are all the same place because in the Samuel scroll found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran it specifically says so. **Ba'al Judah** is small hilltop community located about 8 miles northwest of Yerushalayim, so it would have been considerably less than a day's journey for David and Israel's leadership to travel to the Avinadav's home. It is located at the confluence of the tribal territories of Judah, Benjamin (and in earlier times, of Dan) but the name itself makes it clear that the place was considered as belonging to Judah.

The last part of verse 2 is confusing and so has been translated a number of ways. It speaks of the Ark, the Name of God, and the Cherubim on the lid of Ark. One interpretation seems to say

that God's Name, Yehoveh, was literally written (carved) above the Cherubim. Another makes the passage to be an embellishing or glorification of the God whose Ark it is. But the Hebrew Sages generally see it a bit differently; they see it as an explanation of WHICH god is represented by this Ark. This matters considering the reality that it was for a time in Philistine possession, had been stored away in a common home in an area controlled by the Philistines for the past 70 years, and Israel had only in an obtuse kind of way even practiced it's religion for a very long time. One would think that what with the detailed instructions in the Torah on building the Ark, etc., that it was self-evident that YHWH was the God represented by this golden box with the winged representations of spiritual beings ensconced on its lid. But in fact this is one of the few times in the Hebrew Scriptures that God's formal name, YHWH, is directly attached to the Ark and used in conjunction with the Ark. Of course this use of God's actual formal name is obliterated in both the Hebrew and English versions of the Bible because in both cases the 6000 appearances of God's name (Yehoveh) in the ancient scroll texts have been replaced with words like Adonai, HaShem, Lord, and God. Thus starting around 300 B.C., due to some new traditions, even when the great Hebrew scholars read the Torah to their mind God's name isn't even present.

Nonetheless the way this passage probably ought to be read is: "David and all of the people that were with him arose and went forth from **Ba'al Judah** to bring up from there the Ark of Elohim, which is called by the name: "Yehoveh of hosts who is enthroned upon the Cherubim." In other words the phrase, "Yehoveh of hosts who is enthroned upon the Cherubim" is being presented as an alternate name for the Ark. Of course what it really is, is a kind of revival statement to recall that it is Israel's God alone who dwells above the Ark, and Israel's god's name is YHWH.

And by the way just to demonstrate how terribly the Lord's name has become tragically obscured in both Judaism and Christianity, where we often see God called **Adonai Tzv'aot** in the Hebrew Bible, or The Lord of Hosts in the English Bible, in fact the original Hebrew says **Yehoveh Tzv'aot** or Yehoveh of Hosts; it **almost always** uses God's formal name in that title, not the more generic words of Adonai or Lord.

To transport the Ark the 8 miles from Avinadav's home to the City of David, the Ark was carefully set into a newly built oxcart and accompanied by Uzah and Achyo, who are said to be Avinadav's sons (although they just as easily could have been his grandsons as little distinction is made in Biblical Hebrew thought and word between sons and grandsons). As they led the cart in procession the 30,000 **bachar** (chosen men of Israel) walked along with David celebrating the Ark's re-emergence with songs, dance, and musical instruments. But when (in verse 6) the oxen suddenly stumbled the cart lurched, tilted and it appeared that the Ark was about to tumble out. Instinctively Uzah reached up to steady the precious cargo and instantly he fell dead. This event so unnerved David that he balked at bringing the Ark into his

compound and so left it somewhere else.

A great deal is going on here so let's examine this episode piece by piece. There were a whole host of miscues and errors being committed on David's part that led to this fiasco. To begin, the Ark should never have been placed in an oxcart (new or otherwise). The Torah is quite specific that not only should the Ark be carried on the shoulders of men, but that those men should be Levites of the clan of Kohath.

***CJB Numbers 4:15 When Aharon and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy utensils, when the camp is about to move forward, then the descendants of K'hat are to come and carry them. But they are not to touch the holy things, so that they won't die. These things are the responsibility of the descendants of K'hat in the tent of meeting.***

***Num 7:8-9 Four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the descendants of M'rari, in keeping with the needs of their duties, directed by Itamar the son of Aharon the cohen.***

***<sup>9</sup> But to the descendants of K'hat he gave none, because their duties involved the holy articles, which they carried on their own shoulders.***

Where would Uzah and Achyo (who were Levites or perhaps even priests) or David get the idea, then, that the proper and solemn way to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the Israelite capital was in a new oxcart? Answer: from pagans.

Let's once again refer back to 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel and the story of the Philistines trying to rid themselves of the Ark of the Covenant because it had caused death and devastation throughout Philistine held territory. I'll condense it by only examining the most pertinent verses.

***CJB 1 Samuel 6:1 The ark of ADONAI was in the country of the P'lishtim for seven months.***

***<sup>2</sup> The P'lishtim summoned the priests and soothsayers and asked them, "What are we to do with the ark of ADONAI? Tell us how to send it back where it belongs."***

**(1Sa 6:1-2 CJB)**

**<sup>6</sup> Why be obstinate like the Egyptians and Pharaoh were? When he had done his work among them, didn't they let the people go?- and they left.**

**<sup>7</sup> Now take and prepare yourselves a new cart and two milk-cows that have never been under a yoke. Harness the cows to the cart, but put their calves back in the shed.**

**<sup>8</sup> Then take the ark of ADONAI and lay it on the cart. In a box next to it, put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering. Then send it away to go off by itself,**

**<sup>15</sup> Then the L'vi'im removed the ark of ADONAI and the box that was with it, which contained the gold objects, and put them on the big rock.**

**<sup>21</sup> They sent messengers to the people living in Kiryat-Ye'arim with this message: "The P'lishtim have returned the ark of ADONAI. Come down and bring it back up with you."**

**<sup>CJB</sup> 1 Samuel 7:1 So the men of Kiryat-Ye'arim came and brought back the ark of ADONAI. They took it to the home of Avinadav on the hill and appointed his son El'azar to guard the ark of ADONAI.**

It is a sad commentary (and it is well noted by the Hebrew Sages) that these Levites who were to accompany the Ark on behalf of King David (and whose duty it was to not just know the Torah but to teach it) had no idea how to treat it, which means they had little to no knowledge of the Law of Moses. So when 70 years after first receiving the Ark back from the Philistines the time came to move the Ark to the City of David it apparently was assumed that the right thing to do was to transfer it there in the same manner as it was brought to them: by means of an oxcart. And they figured that it MUST be a new cart that had never been used because that had a nice pious ring to it.

I cannot help but preach here briefly. I have said on numerous occasions that the history and development of Christianity and Judaism have run along parallel tracks especially in how worship and observances are approached. Both groups started out with the pure Word, determined to stick to God's ordained ways at all costs, and then within one generation began to infect it with social customs, popular philosophies, and human doctrines that felt comfortable, familiar and fit in better with their world view and circumstances. In a matter of 2 or 3 generations the doctrines and traditions that arose from this mixture of the manmade with the divine became the norm and most worshippers no longer had any idea of what the original pure religion even looked like nor they did they seem to care enough to find out.

Judaism drifted in that direction and modern Christianity has followed suit. The bulk of our modern Christian liturgy has become a strange brew of the Bible and varying degrees of paganism mixed with modern societal attitudes resulting in something that I have no doubt the earliest Christians, nor Paul or Christ, would ever have recognized. Yet because the Holy Scriptures are today treated as entirely secondary to a sect or denomination's practices and teachings most followers of Messiah are blissfully unaware of how far off course we are as compared to what the Bible ordains. And of course when confronted with such a startling suggestion that our worship practices and doctrines may need to be re-examined, the dedicated layman and leader lash out in an unyielding defense of whatever their cherished traditions might be. Heaven forbid that an ordinary worshipper would point out the obvious in the Holy Scriptures to a Pastor or an Elder because the common response usually boils down to: "perhaps you don't belong here anymore".

How easily we recognize the corruption of God's Laws among the Biblical Hebrews (in all the Biblical eras) and how quickly we condemn them for it. How equally easily Christ's modern-day followers choose to turn a disinterested eye towards God's commandments and how quickly we excuse or rationalize away our own questionable practices, which are either un-Biblical in their source or even expressly forbidden in the Word.

Those who organized and led this procession and put the Ark of God into a common oxcart simply exercised what seemed right by Middle Eastern social convention and in their own eyes without bothering to consult or consider God's written commands. This would prove not only to be an embarrassing failure for King David, but deadly to one of the worshippers in particular.

However this wasn't the only indiscretion that David allowed for in this adventure. The Rabbis tell us that in this 1<sup>st</sup> attempt to bring the Ark to Yerushalayim the attitudes of all involved were completely wrong. And this is reflected in the contrast between the Hebrew words used to describe this 1<sup>st</sup> attempt versus the 2<sup>nd</sup> one that went considerably better. Look at verse 5; it

says this:

***CJB 2 Samuel 6:5 David and the whole house of Israel celebrated in the presence of ADONAI with all kinds of musical instruments made of cypress-wood, including lyres, lutes, tambourines, rattles and cymbals.***

The key word is “celebrated”, which in Hebrew is **sachaq**. **Sachaq** means to laugh, to mock, to make merry, to jest and to generally joke around in a frivolous manner. To translate this word as “celebrate” isn’t wrong provided the readers know that it is used in the sense of a party atmosphere. Sadly some gentile Bible translators so misunderstand this word that they attach it the musical instruments and say that the house of Israel “played” (**sachaq**) musical instruments, which thoroughly distorts the meaning.

In David’s 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt to bring the Ark to the City of David (a successful attempt), which begins in verse 12, we are told that:

***CJB 2 Samuel 6:12 ..... So David went and joyously brought the ark of God up from the house of 'Oved-Edom into the City of David. (2Sa 6:12 CJB)***

The operative word in this passage is “joyously”, which in Hebrew is **simchah**. **Simchah** might sound familiar to you because at the end of the yearly cycle of reading through the Torah, Jewish Synagogues celebrate with an observance that they call **Simchah Torah**. **Simchah** speaks of inner joy and gladness of the heart. It is similar to what Christians might call, “joy in the Lord”. It is a pious and reverent joy, as opposed to a raucous party mood. So the second attempt to transport the Ark was accompanied with the proper respect.

I’m afraid that especially since the 1960’s there has been a concerted effort in Christianity to move away from awesome reverence into a comfortable familiarity with the Godhead. We now have the laughing, good-guy Jesus, who is our party buddy; the grandfatherly Father who winks at our indiscretions and looks the other way and tells us not to be concerned; and a Holy Spirit that is more there to provide us with warm, fuzzy feelings than with concrete guidance, correction and holy enlightenment. Many good books have chronicled this fairly recent evolution of Christianity and unfortunately the purpose primarily revolved around the need to fill the pews and grow the church treasuries. The strategy became to change God’s image to one



that was more likable and approachable on our terms and to make the obligations of Believers towards God as no more than showing up for a weekly church service and tithing. It's not unlike the modern view of education at our Public Schools that is more and more about lowering standards in order to move kids through the system.

David, the Levites, and the Elders of Israel all made this same grave error. Their cavalier attitude was that as long as they invoked God's name they could proceed any way they chose (that they had full liberty in the Lord). They thought that as long as they enjoyed the observance and felt good in their hearts about it, God would approve. They did what our modern religious institutions have done: they exchanged attention to God's holiness for the pursuit of their happiness. They even figured that the strictness of the Law and the Torah were for their ancestors, not their current era.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> error that was made was mostly Uzah's and he paid for it with his life. The Holy Ark is NEVER to be touched with human hands under any circumstances. Metal rings were formed into the Ark so that carrying poles could be inserted and these were not to be removed. The Ark was to be covered in cloth so as not to be viewed and also to remind not to touch!

Let me remind you of a very basic Torah principle that was obviously simply laid aside in David's day and is utterly forgotten in our time: holiness is transferable by contact. The study is too extensive to review here, so refer to some of my Leviticus lessons to learn about how holiness and uncleanness are transferred from people to objects, objects to people, and so on. This is neither superstition nor an abolished principle. Briefly, there are definite and well-defined laws in the Torah about the prohibition of anything holy coming into contact with something that is not. We also get some examples of what the consequences are for allowing it. In Numbers 16 is one of the most infamous events that happened during the wilderness journey out of Egypt when a group of disgruntled men led by the rebel Korah decided that they have as much right inside the Tabernacle compound as does God's priest. And so they brought their own personal fire pans with them to the Tabernacle. It resulted in two things: the fire pans touched holiness and so they became holy, and the rebels were killed.

Listen to this brief section of Numbers 16 and the beginning of 17:

### ***Num 16:35-3 CJB***

***<sup>35</sup> Then fire came out from ADONAI and destroyed the 250 men who had offered the***

*incense.*

<sup>CJB</sup> *Numbers 17:1 ADONAI said to Moshe,*

<sup>2</sup> *"Tell El'azar the son of Aharon the cohen to remove the fire pans from the fire, and scatter the smoldering coals at a distance, because they have become holy.*

<sup>3</sup> *Also the fire pans of these men, whose sin cost them their lives, have become holy, because they were offered before ADONAI. Therefore, have them hammered into plates to cover the altar. This will be a sign for the people of Isra'el."*

There are two remedies for something that has accidentally become holy by means of contact with a holy object: it is either consecrated for use by God or it is to be destroyed. By touching the immeasurably holy Ark of God, Uzah instantaneously contracted a measure of holiness for which he (and no one else for that matter) is authorized; therefore he was destroyed (killed). Should Uzah have allowed the Ark to tumble out of the cart and onto the ground as an alternative? The short answer is yes (assuming that God would have permitted that to actually happen). This is a great example of what happens when we presume to take spiritual matters into our own hands, in our own way. Our good intentions do NOT trump God's laws and commands.

And just so that we're together on this: this matter of contracting an unauthorized holiness is not a simple issue of "committing a sin" or (in Uzah's case) of making a choice between committing the lesser of two evils. That choice only comes in matters between humans. In other words, committing the sin of lying to save an innocent human life from unjust death is the lesser of two evils. But lying to God, or about God, is entirely different. There are separate Torah Laws about the relationship of humans to God and humans to humans.

One more thing and we'll wrap up today's lesson. Verse 6 explains that the procession with the Ark had arrived at Nakhon's threshing-floor when this incident of Uzah's death occurred. And in verse 8 the name of the place seems to have been changed to Peretz-Uzah in commemoration of what happened there. First, let's look at the Hebrew **Goren Nakhon**; despite most translations that make it seem as though there was a man named **Nakhon** who owned this threshing-floor that is not the case. **Goren** means "threshing floor" and **nakhon** means "stroke or disaster". So **goren nakhon** was merely a description of the place and what happened there, not its name. But because of the incident it was later given the name of **Peretz-Uzah** meaning, "Bursting out against Uzah".

We'll continue with this story next time.