

The Ark (Its Capture and Return)

I Samuel 4 – 6

By Tom Taylor

Eli, the High Priest for Israel, was not in good-standing with God:

His 2 sons were openly sinning in the Lord's sanctuary

Eli'd done nothing about it!

(Does that not seem just a wee bit odd?)

God told Eli that he and his family would be judged

And that He would do something to cause people to shudder just to hear it

When Eli was 98, the Philistines made war with Israel, killing 4000

Israelites

(Prompting some, I suspect, to decide: If there is a war over here, don't go near it!)

The Israeli elders asked why the Lord would permit such a thing...

But, then, they had an idea!

(though it may seem crazy to you and me)

"Go get the Ark of the Lord...take it with us into battle..." – *(Bingo! We've got th' victory!)*

(As you know, theirs was a most serious miscalculation....)

Eli's two sons

(who, if Daddy Eli is 98, must've been in their late 70's!)

Brought the Ark of the Lord into the camp

All the Israelites shouted so loudly, it seemed like the ground shook!

The Philistines were terrified –

"We're doomed – We're doomed!" they fearfully cried

But the Philistine leaders successfully encouraged their men –

And, guess what? That's right: They did it again!

30,000 dead

The Ark was captured

Eli's two sons were no more

Eli sat on his chair by the road . . . waiting for a report . . . 98 years old,
and blind . . .

A messenger came, told him the latest – and it was not the “good news”
kind ~

Horrendous slaughter...your 2 sons were killed...the Ark of God was
taken, even tho’ we tried....

When Eli heard about the Ark, he fell backward off his chair...a heavy man,
he broke his neck & died

The Philistines took the Ark to a city, put it in the temple of their god
Next morning, they found their idol facedown on the ground before the
ark,

(Looking much like a nondescript clod....)

They returned the idol to its place . . . next morn’ it was back - on the
ground

What did they discover? A headless and handless idol resting in the
dirt...that is what they found!

Then something else was found: MICE! MiceMiceMice...hundreds, nay
thousands of mice –

The mice were fine, healthy as can be – but the people had large, ugly
tumors for all to see!

Men said, “It’s the Ark of Israel’s God that’s causing this”

And they moved it to another city

Guess what!? New Setting, Same Story: Thousands of Mice and Tumors

The people panicked, and the men sent the Ark to city number three...

But the people cried out, “Why are you trying to kill us” -

That is ... her, him, them and me!?

We don’t want to be where the Ark of Israel’s God is gonna be!!

This went on for seven months – mice, tumors, fear and death...

Finally they asked their priests, “How can we send this Ark of the LORD
back!?”

Priests said, "Send a guilt offering with it, then God will forgive and heal
you"

"Make 5 gold images of your tumors, 5 gold images of the mice"

"Give Glory to the God of Israel," and everything will turn out nice....

They continued: "Prepare a new cart...to carry the Ark

Put gold objects in a box beside it"

. . . THEN, they got VERY serious – and it was time for the cows...

(here the account becomes seriously Moo-oooving....)

"Select two milk cows that've never been in a yoke (*and, NO, this is Not a
joke!*)

And hitch them to the cart. Put their calves in a nearby pen

(*NO! and please don't ask me that again!*)

THEN – Stand Back! - See what the cows will do:

"If they ignore their calves and go up the road to Israel,

We'll know the Lord has afflicted us these 7 months"

"BUT – IF the cows go straight to their calves, we'll know it was NOT
God's judgment....

It was just something that happened by chance"... (*luck of the draw, sorta
thing ~*)

The cows marched straight up the road toward Israel, Philistine rulers
walked slowly behind them

People of Israel, harvesting wheat, saw the Ark coming, and, of course –
Shouted for Joy!

The cows pulled the cart to a field near a large rock, and stopped
The people put the Ark on the large rock, and made a burnt offering of the
cows to the LORD

That done, the Philistine rulers returned to their country....

70 men from a nearby town, curious about what was IN the Ark of God,
opened it and looked inside...

The people's hearts were struck with fear, and Israel began returning to
the Lord

As, by the mighty, reigning hand of the Lord God Himself, the curious 70
men ... all died ~

