



# GOD OF THE FATHERLESS

The Story Of God  
& Samuel



## Yes, No & Maybe

1. People who are really into magical and mystical things make me uncomfortable.
2. I'm a very independent person.
3. God wants us to do our best, and He will do the rest.
4. God wants me to use His presence to defeat my enemies.
5. There are areas of my personal life that are devoid of peace.

### ➤ READ 1 Samuel 7:1-14

#### WHERE HAS THE ARK BEEN?:

➤ **CHAPTERS 4-6 - (4:1-2):** The Israelites went out to fight the Philistines, but were defeated and 4000 died on the battlefield. **(4:3-11):** They get a bright idea to bring the Ark of the Covenant out to the battle as their super weapon. The Philistines attack, kill another 30,000 foot soldiers and capture the Ark. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas who brought the Ark, are killed in the battle. **(4:12-22):** Eli hears about the Ark and the deaths, falls over backwards from his chair, breaks his neck, and dies. His daughter-in-law (Phineas' wife) who is pregnant goes into labor and dies in childbirth of her son which she names, Ichabod, meaning "The Glory has departed from Israel."

➤ **(5:1-8)** The Philistines take the Ark into Dagon's Temple in Ashdod. In the first couple of mornings, the people find Dagon's idol had fallen face-down on the ground before the Ark. The second morning Dagon's hands and head are broken off when it falls. The people of Ashdod began having an outbreak of tumors. **(5:9-12)** They move the Ark to Gath, and they got tumors too. In fear, they moved the Ark to Ekron, and people there died or got tumors. In a panic, they decided to send the Ark back. **(6)** The Philistines send the Ark back on a cart driven by cows who miraculously walk back the road to the Israelites.

#### A GOD OF SECOND CHANCES:

➤ **7:3** *So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts"* - Samuel did not assume that the weeping and wailing amounted to a true returning to the Lord. His words did, however, assume that they had been away from the Lord in their hearts. Through these twenty years Israel had not recovered from the Eli era. They had attempted to put the ark out of sight, and so out of mind. The same applied to the Lord himself. Unable to bear his hard hand against them, they had sought to be rid of him (see 1 Samuel 6:20). After twenty years, however, it was just possible that there had been a change of heart.

- With everything that God desires to do for us, why do you think mankind does not follow Him with all their hearts?

➤ **7:3** *Rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths* - Foreign gods and the Ashtaroth were adopted by Israel from the population around. Ashtoreth (pl. 'Ashtaroth') was worshiped over a wide area as the goddess of fertility, love and war (Gk. 'Astarte'). The Baals were the corresponding male deities. This depraved cult had become widespread at this period, involving Israel in breaking the first and second commandments, and resulting in loathsome sexual indulgence.

- What is it that we tend to depend on to solve our problems, instead of turning to God?

## Dig Deeper

## Dig Deeper... Continued

» **7:6** *They drew water and poured it out before the Lord. On that day they fasted and there they confessed* - Perhaps pouring the water on the dry ground symbolized a fast of sorts, because they were in the hot desert where they would want to drink it.

» **7:7** *Mizpah* - The name Mizpah meant ‘watchtower’—it was a vantage-point for military purposes and was itself visible from a distance. On the main north-south road across the hills, and only five miles (8 km) north of Jerusalem. The first walled city on the site was founded c. 1100 BC, during the Israelite period. The Philistines, hearing of the great gathering of Israelites, supposed an attack to be imminent and moved up to take the initiative in the battle. It was a testing moment for the Israelites, who had been defeated so decisively in the previous encounter (1 Sam. 4:10–11).

• The Israelites begged Samuel to pray on their behalf when the Philistines advanced against them. Does God listen to some people more than others?

» **7:1** *But that day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines* - Because the peoples of the ancient Near East believed that every military combat involved a conflict being played out on two planes, the human (terrestrial) and the divine (atmospheric), any unusual meteorological phenomenon during a military operation would naturally be interpreted as evidence of a deity at work (cf. Josh 10:11; Judg 5:4, 20–21). The loud, unexpected thunder was immediately understood by the Philistines as a bad omen, and it “threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites.”

» **7:12** *Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer* - Such a remarkable deliverance could not be allowed to sink into oblivion, so Samuel’s memorial-stone, set up like our war memorials in a prominent place. But Samuel’s stone recalled not the names of the dead but the living Lord God, the Helper of his people. Ebenezer means “stone of help” or “stone of the Helper.”

• What experiences in your life have become “solid stone” reminders to you of how God wants to be your Helper?

» **7:13** *So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel’s territory.* - This is what God did for Israel. They could hold their heads high again—not because of their virtue or strength (don’t forget the last twenty years)—but because of what the Lord their God had done for them.

• What are the areas of our lives that you think God wants to bring peace?

• What does this story reveal to us about God’s character?

## My Prayer...

1. What am I turning to for help, instead of turning to God?
2. In what areas of my life do I need God to bring peace?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?

