

2 Samuel 6:1-23

Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem

2 Samuel 6:1-2 - "Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims."

Psalm 132 is a companion piece and an expansion on this incident.

Psalm 132:6 - "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood."

Ephratah was not only the older name for Bethlehem, it also was the name of a district around Kirjathjearim, the "city of the woods" in Judah, where the Ark was "found." The Ark had been sitting there after being returned by the Philistines, who experienced plagues after capturing it. The Ark remained there for 20 years, separated from the Tabernacle and the altar, until Israel repented in the days of Samuel. (**1 Samuel 5:1, 7:1-2**)

During the reign of Saul it had been neglected, especially after Saul murdered the priests of Nob. "For we enquired not at it in the days of Saul" (**1 Chronicles 13:3**).

Now as David was still in the process of uniting Israel and Judah into one kingdom, he wanted to re-establish and affirm the Ark as a national symbol.

1 Chronicles 13 adds some details. This wasn't an arbitrary decision by the king. "David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader" and called a national assembly of "our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs."

2 Samuel 6:3-4 - "And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark."

The procession was accompanied by joyous song and music in praise of God. But the scene soon turned fearful.

2 Samuel 6:5-7 - "And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."

Despite the zeal and enthusiasm for this project, David and the priests and Levites, who should have known better, disregarded the proper procedures laid down in the Law:

- Numbers 4:4, 15, 17-20:

- This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting, relating to the most holy things: . . . And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry. . . . Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites; but do this in regard to them, that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things; Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to his service and his task. But they shall not go in to watch while the holy things are being covered, lest they die."

The Philistines had sent the Ark back to Israel on a cart, but they had been plagued during its presence. (Don't allow the ways of the world to influence or adulterate true worship).

Uzzah was not a Kohathite or even a Levite.

The Kohathites were not supposed to even look at the Ark, let alone touch it.

The covered Ark was to be transported by two poles or staves put through rings built into the Ark and carried on their shoulders, not in a cart.

The lesson is a warning against presumption and arrogance. "Obedience is better than sacrifice" (**1 Samuel 15:22**). In **Deuteronomy 4:2** Moses declares, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commands of the Lord your God which I command you."

- Proverbs 30:6 - "Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."

Uzzah may have lost the awe associated with the Ark while it resided in his house. Familiarity might have bred complacency and carelessness.

Finally, the Ark could have taken care of itself. Rashi: "If it lifted its bearers over the Jordan certainly it was able to lift itself."

God doesn't need human hands to steady the Ark or make sure His will is carried out. Even an altar built for His worship was to be of unhewn stones or earth, made without tools. (**Exodus 20:24-25**)

This is what Paul calls "will worship" (**Colossians 2:18**) or self-contrived worship in which our ideas supersede God's word.

This was a situation similar to Saul's decision to spare Agag against God's instructions.

David and this entourage were no doubt sincerely joyful and worshipful, but no amount of soul power or psychic energy can balance out disobedience. Our human "help" always defiles what God is doing. Usually we are just told to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (**Exodus 14:13**).

Uzzah was not responsible for the Ark, though he felt like he was. We are not even responsible for ourselves - we belong to God.

The reason this lesson is important is because the journey of the Ark to Jerusalem mirrors Christ coming into the Temple of our hearts in salvation. It's all Him. No human effort can be involved!

The rabbis assumed Uzzah reacted reflexively and his sin was not intentional. Why was his punishment so severe? They interpret the phrase that he died "by the Ark of G9d" to mean that he earned an exalted place in the World to Come.

2 Samuel 6:8-11 - "And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household."

David was not angry, but rather upset, dismayed and shocked, probably realizing the whole tragedy was his own fault.

Obededom was a Levite (**1 Chronicles 26:4**) and a Gittite = from Gath, not the Philistine city but one of Judah.

Rashi - "and the Lord blessed... all his household": His wife and eight daughters-in-law gave birth to sextuplets as it is written: "Peulthai the eighth (son), etc. Threescore and two were of Obededom" (**1 Chronicles 26:5**).

The Ark Enter Jerusalem, and Michal's Displeasure

2 Samuel 6:12-13 - "And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings."

Apparently David by now had realized the correct way to transport the Ark.

- **1 Chronicles 15:2, 12-13,15** - "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever....And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order...And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD."

2 Samuel 6:14-16 - "And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet (shofar). And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart."

The rabbis said the word "arrived" signifies that the Ark came on its own, and that it carried the bearers.

The Ark was placed within a tent David had erected for it - this was not the original Tabernacle, which was still set up in Gibeon, and would remain there until Solomon's reign (**2 Chronicles 1:3**). David hoped soon to build a Temple to contain the Ark, which he inquires about in the next chapter.

When the feasting and the singing and dancing were all over, Michal expressed her displeasure to David:

2 Samuel 6:20 - "Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!"

This is a strange little incident. Scholars have wondered if David was naked or inappropriately dressed. But **1 Chronicles 15:27** specifically says David was wearing a "robe of fine linen" as well as an "ephod of linen." He certainly danced with "abandon." (**1 Chronicles 15:29**)

"Uncovered" often has a sexual meaning in the Bible. Possibly she saw David's dancing as a self-centered display for attention or admiration.

The Midrash has Michal say, "Royalty in my father's house was more refined than in yours! Heaven forbid if a hand or foot of anyone in the royal household would ever be exposed there! All of them were more respectable than you!" She argued that the maidservants would take David's actions to be frivolous.

David replied that her father Saul had deferred to public opinion when he allowed the people to take and keep the animals of the Amalekites, and it cost him his throne.

Michal simply didn't like the fact that David was a participant among the crowd rather than directing as a "master of ceremonies" in a more royal fashion. i.e. she felt her position and status were threatened. She didn't understand the spiritual side of this celebration, nor David's idea of kingship as serving the people. Abarbanel explains: "In God's eyes royal titles are meaningless, for all human beings are equal before Him."

According to Rambam, the expression of joyous abandon in performance of God's commandment is itself a great mitzvah, and anyone who fails to feel and show that joy in order to maintain his "dignity" is worthy of punishment (Hilchos Lulav 8:15)

To sum up - We don't need to "help God out" by adding or subtracting to what He has told us. But on the other hand, the fear of making a mistake should not restrain us - we need to be "all in," dancing before the Lord with abandon throughout our life.