

God's Calling Requirements

Part 8

(The Failure of Beth Shemesh)

"1 When the ark of the LORD had been in Philistine territory seven months, 2 the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it back to its place." 3 They answered, "If you return the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it back to him without a gift; by all means send a guilt offering to him. Then you will be healed, and you will know why his hand has not been lifted from you." 4 The Philistines asked, "What guilt offering should we send to him?" They replied, "Five gold tumors and five gold rats, according to the number of the Philistine rulers, because the same plague has struck both you and your rulers. 5 Make models of the tumors and of the rats that are destroying the country, and give glory to Israel's God. Perhaps he will lift his hand from you and your gods and your land. 6 Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When Israel's God dealt harshly with them, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way? 7 "Now then, get a new cart ready, with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. 8 Take the ark of the LORD and put it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering. Send it on its way, 9 but keep watching it. If it goes up to its own territory, toward Beth Shemesh, then the LORD has brought this great disaster on us. But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us but that it happened to us by chance." 10 So they did this. They took two such cows and hitched them to the cart and penned up their calves. 11 They placed the ark of the LORD on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumors. 12 Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh. 13 Now the people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced at the sight. 14 The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock. The people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. 15 The Levites took down the ark of the LORD, together with the chest containing the gold objects, and placed them on the large rock. On that day the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD. 16 The five rulers of the Philistines saw all this and then returned that same day to Ekron. 17 These are the gold tumors the Philistines sent as a guilt offering to the LORD—one each for Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron. 18 And the number of the gold rats was according to the number of Philistine towns belonging to the five rulers—the fortified towns with their country villages. The large rock on which the Levites set the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. 19 But God struck down some of the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they looked into the ark of the LORD. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the LORD had dealt them. 20 And the people of Beth Shemesh asked, "Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?" 21 Then they sent messengers to the people of Kiriath Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to your town." (1Samuel 6:1-21)

As we know that God allowed the Israelites to be defeated and His ark to be captured by the Philistines due to the sins that was committed at Shiloh by the sons of Eli the priest in despising the offerings of the Lord (***Read 1Samuel 2:12-17***) and in committing adultery with the women

who were serving the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting (***Read 1Samuel 2:22***), and how their father, Eli the priest, condoned and cover up their sins (***Read 1Samuel 2:27-36***).

While the ark was in the territory of the Philistines he did havoc to them, defeating their gods, and causing them sicknesses in their bodies and losses in their farming fields (***Read 1Samuel 5:1-12***). Therefore for this reason they decided to send it back to the Israelites to be relieved from God heavy wrath that He was severely afflicting them. Therefore they decided to return it back with guilt offering to give glory to the God of Israel: As they suggested, ***"5 Make models of the tumors and of the rats that are destroying the country, and give glory to Israel's God. Perhaps he will lift his hand from you and your gods and your land. 6 Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When Israel's God dealt harshly with them, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way?"*** They were non believers but when God disciplined them they humbled down and decided to send the ark back to the Israelites with guilt offering in order to give glory and honour to the Israel's God.

The Philistines priests and diviners they suggested to return the ark of God to the Israelites in the following manner: ***"7 Now then, get a new cart ready, with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. 8 Take the ark of the LORD and put it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering. Send it on its way, 9 but keep watching it. If it goes up to its own territory, toward Beth Shemesh, then the LORD has brought this great disaster on us. But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us but that it happened to us by chance."*** They suggested this way to know whether or not was God's hand who struck them with death and plague. For this purpose

A- They use cows that never being yoked: Because yoked cows might know what to do by themselves without guidance, because they are already trained on the work.

B- They use cows with calves that had been penned up: Cows who has calves will not be move unless their calves with them. Since they move spontaneously without their calves that mean that the hand of God was on them, moving them in the direction that God wants them to go. The cows submitted themselves to God and were moved against the law of nature, departing from their young calves, and that explain to us why they were lowing along the way, crying for their calves, yes submitting to God's hand, and God's will and direction as we can read, ***"12 Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh."***

The scene was awesome, and the Philistines rulers were watching how God was directing the cart to destination toward the town of Beth Shemesh. And how the cows were submitting to God's will, even overcoming their own emotions, moving away from their calves. There was no man leading, but the hand of the Living God. Therefore the Philistines were sure that God's hand was destroying them, and they were sure that they got the ark of God not because they were able but because God was disciplining His corrupted people. ***16 The five rulers of the Philistines saw all this and then returned that same day to Ekron.***

The Israelites while the ark was not with them were not thinking or concern of how to return the ark of God from the hand of the Philistines. But God Himself brought back the ark to His people the Israelites. Let us read what they did and responded to that particular event and to what God had called them to do and let us see if they fulfilled God's calling requirements: ***"13 Now the***

people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced at the sight. 14 The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock. The people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. 15 The Levites took down the ark of the LORD, together with the chest containing the gold objects, and placed them on the large rock. On that day the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD. 19 But God struck down some of the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they looked into the ark of the LORD. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the LORD had dealt them. 20 And the people of Beth Shemesh asked, "Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?" 21 Then they sent messengers to the people of Kiriath Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to your town."

1- They rejoice (Verse 13): Rather they should mourn and repent. The ark was taken due to sin in the priestly office. Now since God had return it back, they would rather humbled before God and commit themselves to stand firm and cleanse the priestly office. Now a day many Christians behave in the same way; they would wait for miracles and event to happen to celebrate and enjoy life but are not willing to see how to repent and come back to God. Discern the sin and work with God to help the people to come back to God with repentance.

2- They sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD (Verse 14): As burnt offering cows should not be used but a male without defect, as we can read in *Leviticus 1: 3* "If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD." It was not ordained for them to slaughter the two cows, but they should let them go back to their calves who were waiting for them. Many Christians they use to offer things that are not ordained by God to cover up their lack of commitment. Instead that they will bring to God their first fruit, tithes and offering, they will bring food, things they don't need, gifts from non believers, etc. And behold, corrupted mind fixed on food fellowships and entertainment and church activates cannot please God or achieve God's will.

3- The Levites took down the ark of the LORD, together with the chest containing the gold objects, and placed them on the large rock. On that day the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD (Verse 15): What the Levites needed to do was to carry the Ark of God on their shoulders and bring it to Shiloh from where it was taken, and there they will repent and commit themselves to God to cleanse the priestly office from corruption and immoralities and to offer their lives, burnt offerings, living sacrifices, once again to serve God wholeheartedly. The city of Beth Shemesh is a city that was a city allocated for the Levites who knew very well the word of God and the Law of God. But they were complacent and lazy and are not willing to serve God in the manner that He ordained in His word. Many ministers, pastors and workers they know the word of God but they are not willing to suffer, standing firm with God, facing the people and correct them.

4- They looked into the ark of the LORD (Verse 19): God stroke them because they should not look into the inside of the Ark of the Covenant. God Himself brought the ark; still they wanted to see to check perhaps God had brought His ark and something is missing from it. Many Christians they will not do what they ought to do but they interfere and disturb of what God is doing. They did not fear God or stood in awe in His presence, they took God for granted and that is why they look into the ark.

5- Instead that they will repent they mourn and murmur against God (Verse 20): "And the people of Beth Shemesh asked, "Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?" Their murmur went in two points. A- "Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God?" What they were saying that God is so strict and who can manage to obey His law. Many Christian now a day when you speak about the discipline of God's word they will say immediately who can obey and who can do all these things? B- "To whom will the ark go up from here?" They were looking to hand over the responsibility of the Art of God to other people. Many Christians they just want to enjoy the blessings of God but they are not willing to suffer for Christ and abide in His word and do the ministry faithfully.

6- They sent for someone else to do their ministry (Verse 21): "Then they sent messengers to the people of Kiriath Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to your town." They enjoyed eating the cow meat, they took the golden tumor and the golden rats, but they were not willing to bear God's word and His discipline.

7- Kiriath Jearim are better than Beth Shemesh people: "1 So the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD. They brought it to Abinadab's house on the hill and consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD. 2 The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all. Then all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD." Kiriath Jearim people were better Levites, they feared God and have reverence to Him. They dedicated a house and a person to guard and take care of the ark. The result of their dedication is fruitful ministry; **Then all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD.**

My Dear and Beloved: God is calling you today to take your stand to fear God and to serve Him wholeheartedly. Failure in the Levitical priesthood, corruption among ministers, irresponsible workers and pastors as people of Beth Shemesh, all are good reason for you to respond to God call and to commit yourself into His service as the people of Kiriath Jearim, so then all the people will turn back to the LORD as you agree to pray.

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus. Thank you for your word that reminded me of your word and your invitation to me once again to serve you wholeheartedly. Lord I repent of the following sins _____. Lord I commit myself to serve you in accordance to your word and law. Lord encourages me and takes my discouragement and upholds me with your grace to go on further forward to do your work and your whole will. This is my prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

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