

The literary structure of 1 Samuel 5:1-6:11
Yahweh takes matters into his own hands.

A. Dagon, god of the Philistines: 5 When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. 3 And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. 4 But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon and **both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold**. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 5 This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

B. The people, cities and lords of the Philistines

a) Ashdod/gathering of Philistine lords: 6 **The hand of the Lord** was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. 7 And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for **his hand** is hard against us and against Dagon our god." 8 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?"

b) Gath: They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. 9 But after they had brought it around, **the hand of the Lord** was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them.

a¹) Ekron/gathering of Philistine lords: 10 So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people." 11 They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people." For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. **The hand of God** was very heavy there. 12 The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

A¹. The priests and diviners of the Philistines:

a) Sending the ark away: 6 The ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. 2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place."

b) How to send it - guilt offering: 3 They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why **his hand** does not turn away from you." 4 And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. 5 So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land,

c) Give glory to God: and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten **his hand** from off you and your gods and your land. 6 Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed?

b¹) How to send it – new cart, milk cows: 7 Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. 8 And take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way 9 and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not **his hand** that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence.”

a¹) Sending the ark away: 10 The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. 11 And they put the ark of the Lord on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors.