

Golden Hemorrhoids

Commentary for October 1, 2014 — The Ark Causes an Affliction from God

Sorry about the title, but isn't it catchy? Who would ever think to put those two words together? Well, God would.

That is exactly what the Philistines fabricated to stop a plague of hemorrhoids attacking the people. They made icons or images of the hemorrhoid tumors they were suffering. As you read it seems, "You are now entering the *Twilight Zone* ..." but God was very serious.

The Story

Consider 1 Samuel chapters 4, 5, and 6. As I mention in the "[October 2014 Newsletter](#)," (introducing this month's article ""Israel and Judah: 3. David, Philistines, and Uzzah"), the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant at a place called Ebenezer where the Israelite army was defeated. The Philistines displayed the Ark from town to town as a trophy of victory over Israel.¹ Their seizure and display of this holy relic proved the superiority of the Philistine gods over Israel's God. YHWH punished them by causing strange events and plagues to occur at each place the Ark was taken. When the plagues came, the people urged their leaders to move the Ark elsewhere.

The final resting place for the Ark under Philistine control was at the city of Ashdod (1 Samuel 5:1). There, God caused two plagues to afflict the Philistines, at "**Ashdod and the coasts thereof**" (1 Samuel 5:6). The first plague was of what the King James Version terms "**emerods**," later described as "**emerods in their secret parts**" (1 Samuel 5:6, 9). Emerods is the 1611, King James Version spelling for hemorrhoids.

God's warning in Deuteronomy

The affliction of hemorrhoids was one of the punishments God said He would impose upon Israel if they disobeyed their covenant with God. God gave Israel a demonstration of that punishment by inflicting it upon the Philistines:

"YHWH will smite you with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof you can not be healed."

• Deuteronomy 28:27, KJV

"The LORD will strike you with the Egyptian inflammation, with hemorrhoids, boil-

¹ Before the battle of Ebenezer, the Philistines feared Israel's God. 1 Samuel 4:6-8

"[the Philistines] **understood that the ark of YHWH was come into the camp** [of the Israelites]. **And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, 'God is come into the camp.'** **And they said, 'Woe unto us! for there has not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.**

The Philistines knew about the Exodus, yet wrongly thought the Israelites worshipped many gods.

scars, and itch, from which you shall never recover.”

• *Deuteronomy 28:27, Tanakh 1985, Jewish Publication Society*

Look at the article from *Easton's Bible Dictionary*:

“Haemorrhoids, or Emerods, bleeding piles known to the ancient Romans as mariscaae, but more probably malignant boils of an infectious and fatal character. With this loathsome and infectious disease the men of Ashdod were smitten by the hand of the Lord. This calamity they attributed to the presence of the ark in their midst, and therefore they removed it to Gath (1 Samuel 5:6–8).

But the same consequences followed from its presence in Gath, and therefore they had it removed to Ekron, 11 miles distant. The Ekronites were afflicted with the same dreadful malady, but more severely; and a panic seizing the people, they demanded that the ark should be sent back to the land of Israel (1 Samuel 5:9–12, 6:1–9).”

• *Easton's Bible Dictionary, article "Haemorrhoids"*

Of course, most translations translate the Hebrew term as “tumors” and not hemorrhoids. But whatever the affliction was, it was **“in their secret parts”** (1 Samuel 5:9). Surprisingly, God caused the Philistines to make images or icons of their affliction, the emerods. Mice also ravaged the Philistines. Their priests and diviners had specific recommendations:

“And the ark of YHWH was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, ‘What shall we do to the ark of YHWH? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place. And they said, ‘If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then you shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.’

Then said they, ‘What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him?’ They answered, ‘**Five golden emerods**, and **five golden mice**, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords. Wherefore **you shall make images of your emerods**, and images of your mice that mar the land; and you shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.

Wherefore then do you harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?”

• *1 Samuel 6:1–6*

Again, the Philistine priests and diviners mentioned Israel’s God bringing His people from Egypt. Here is the conclusion of this episode:

“And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering unto YHWH; for Ashdod one, [one for each of the 5 cities]; And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of YHWH: which stone remains unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite.”

• *1 Samuel 6:17–18*

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com