

The Destruction of Shiloh

There is an additional matter that we need to discuss, which may have been the reason that the Ark was never returned to Shiloh:

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- Introduction:** This is one of the great oddities of Scripture—Shiloh, once the center of Israel's religious worship, was destroyed around 1100–1050 B.C., and we don't know exactly when, on whose watch, or by whom it was destroyed. The last time that we hear of Shiloh as the center of Israel's worship was in 1Sam. 4, and we will never hear of it in that way again.
- We have covered the **Doctrine of Shiloh** already, back in Psalm 78:60. However, that was some time ago, so we therefore need some introductory points:
 - Although Israel first had her headquarters in Gilgal, prior to defeating the Canaanites throughout the Land of Promise, Joshua headquartered Israel in Shiloh once the land had been conquered. The Tent of Meeting was set up there, which would have included the Ark and the other articles of furniture. Joshua 14:6 18:1
 - Shiloh was located in Ephraim, a little northeast of the center of Ephraim, in a place which was almost the center of west and east Israel.
 - Other than its central location we do not know why Shiloh was chosen as a place of worship. However, ZPEB suggests that, because there has been no evidence of Canaanites found in excavations of that area, Shiloh was relatively free of heathen religious influences.¹
 - The Tent of Meeting remained in Shiloh throughout the remainder of Joshua's life and through most of the period of the judges. It apparently was in Bethel for a period of time. Joshua 18:1 Judges 18:31 20:26–27 1Sam. 1:3 4:4
- During Eli's judgment, his two sons corrupted the worship of God by turning the sacrifices into *BBQ Nite for the Sons of Eli* (1Sam. 2:12–17). God was extremely unhappy with this state of affairs and held Eli responsible. Interestingly enough, a prophet of God spoke to Eli concerning his shortcomings and prophesied to Eli about the end of his priestly line, but did not say anything about the imminent destruction of Shiloh. 1Sam. 2:27–36
- The holiness of the Ark had been demeaned to the point that Israeli soldiers went into Shiloh and took the Ark from the Holy of Holies and used it as a good luck charm in battle (1Sam. 4:1–5).
- When the Ark was returned to Israel, there was no suggestion that it be taken to Shiloh. It first was sent to Beth-shemesh (a decision of the Philistines); but it was then forwarded off to Kiriath-jearim by the Israelites in Beth-shemesh. No mention is ever made of Shiloh. 1Sam. 6:1–7:2. There are several possible reasons for this:
 - Samuel was overwhelmed by his duties, and primarily functioned as a judge early in his career. He did not take care of moving the Ark back to the Tent of Meeting.
 - Because of the destruction which seemed to follow the Ark, most of Israel was apprehensive about moving it again.
 - The Philistines possibly were temporarily occupying a lot of the territory around Shiloh at this time, and that it was unsafe to travel in that area.

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- d. It is also possibly that Shiloh was destroyed, although it appears that the Tent of Meeting was saved (more on that later on).
- e. The end result is that the Ark will not be reunited with the Tent of Meeting and the other articles of furniture until the time of Solomon (more on this to come).

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6. Sometime, during this time period, Shiloh was destroyed, but we do not know exactly when. This should raise at least several questions:
- a. How do we know this?
 - i. We have worship at the Tent of God in 1Sam. 1–3 in Shiloh (1Sam. 1:3 3:21). However, after the incident with the Philistines and the Ark, worship is conducted in the high places instead (1Sam. 9:12, 14, 25 10:5, 10, 13). Nob is called the city of priests in 1Sam. 21–22, and Nob appears to be a spiritual center at this time. Solomon is still offering sacrifices in the high places in 1Kings 3:2–4. However, when he builds the Temple, then sacrifices to God were offered there (1Kings 6). Apparently, something happened to the worship center of the Israelites between 1Sam. 3 and 9, and its lack continued until the time of Solomon.
 - ii. Asaph mentions the abandonment of God of His dwelling place at Shiloh in Psalm 78:58–60: *For they provoked Him with their high places, and aroused His jealousy with their graven images. When God heard, He was filled with wrath, and He greatly abhorred Israel, so that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, the Tent which He had pitched among men.* Asaph was the director of music during the reigns of David and Solomon.
 - iii. Jeremiah uses Shiloh as an example of a city which was destroyed. *The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, “But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My Name to dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things,” declares Jehovah, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer; therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My Name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim.”* (Jer. 7:1, 12–15). *“And you will say to them, ‘Thus says Jehovah, “If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My Law, which I have set before you,...then I will make this house like Shiloh, and this city I will make a curse to all the nations of the earth.” ’ ’* (Jer. 26:4, 6). Jeremiah, by the way, prophesied 626–580 B.C., which would be at least 400 years after the fall of Shiloh.
 - iv. The priests, prophets and people to whom Jeremiah spoke, threatened Jeremiah with his life, saying, *“Why have you prophesied in the name of Jehovah saying, ‘This house will be like Shiloh, and this city will be desolate, without inhabitation’?”* (Jer. 26:9a).
 - b. Just when was Shiloh destroyed, by whom, and under whose watch?
 - i. Archeological evidence places the destruction of Shiloh around 1050 B.C. There was a Danish expedition which took place between the years 1926–1929 under the direction of H. Kjaers, who apparently determined this. It was also determined that Shiloh sat in ruins for a long time after, as Jeremiah, writing 400 years later, in Jer. 7:12, quotes our Lord saying, *“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My Name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel.”*² It is possible and likely that, simultaneous with the Philistine victory over Israel during which they took the Ark, other forces had moved into Shiloh to destroy Israel’s religious capital. It is possible that during the time that the Ark was in Philistia that their army was still on the move and moved into Shiloh and destroyed it (they had no reason to be afraid of the Ark there, because they had captured it).³ The Philistines had no reason to be afraid of the God of Israel since they had just captured the Ark of Israel’s God. The destruction they wreaked upon Shiloh

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- would preclude the Ark from being taken to Shiloh when it was recovered. I should add that, while Samuel had a circuit court which included Mizpah, Bethel and Gilgal (1Sam. 7:16), Shiloh (which was deeper into Israel than these three cities) could have been destroyed from a westward attack coming out of Dan territory (which was probably overrun by Philistines at that time). Philistia did not have to occupy the land in that area; the attack upon Shiloh could have been symbolic.
- ii. If the Ark was taken out of Shiloh but not returned to Shiloh because Shiloh had been destroyed, then the destruction of Shiloh took place during that very short 7 month period of time (1Sam. 6:1).
 - iii. Another possibility is that, while the Ark was kept in Kiriath-jearim for those first 20 years, Shiloh was leveled then. We will not hear about any specific article of holy furniture or about the Tent of God until David brings the Ark to Jerusalem and talks about building a Temple for God. A tent that David pitched is mentioned in this passage, which is not necessarily *the* Tent (1Sam. 6–7). It would seem that something as horrible as the destruction of the Tent of Meeting in Shiloh and the city itself would move the people toward repentance (1Sam. 7:3–10).
 - iv. Shiloh could have been destroyed while Saul was king. Various scholars of chronology have placed his rulership beginning 1020 B.C. (ZPEB), 1065 B.C. (Reese, of *The Reese Chronological Bible*), 1006 B.C. (interpolated from Klassen, who is found in *The Reese Chronological Bible*), and 1043 B.C. (*The Narrated Bible*).⁴ Although the time frame would have been approximately on target, Saul was victorious throughout most of his dealings with the Philistines. Through the final few years of the reign of Saul, he became increasingly wiggy, pursuing David more vigorously than he pursued the Philistines. In the final battle that Saul waged against the Philistines, many Israelites died on Mount Gilboa, which is deeper into Israel than Shiloh, which would indicate that the Philistines had made some tremendous military inroads into Israel during that time period. Although this would be at the end of Saul's life, which would be 40 years or so later than the dates given, the time frame would be reasonably close in time to the archeological dates.
 - v. Saul kills the priests in Nob, the city of priests, in 1Sam. 22—this would suggest that Shiloh had been destroyed before then.
 - vi. One primary reason to assume that Shiloh was destroyed by the Philistines on Saul's watch is that it appears that Ahijah, a relative of Eli's, was wearing the ephod and acting as a priest in Shiloh in 1Sam. 14:3 (it could also be interpreted that Eli was wearing the ephod and acting as High Priest as well). This verse is the strongest evidence for the destruction occurring during the reign of Saul. The fact that the Ark is not taken back to Shiloh is the strongest evidence that Shiloh had been destroyed under the watch of Samuel (which could be seen as a contradiction to 1Sam. 7:13–14; however, the destruction could have occurred prior to the peace established on Samuel's watch).
 - vii. Since there are sacrifices offered in high places rather than at Shiloh as early as 1Sam. 9, this would suggest that Shiloh was leveled before Saul became king.
 - viii. Shiloh seems to be relatively well-insulated on the east side by land, the Jordan, and the eastern tribes of Israel. Therefore, an attack from another group of peoples from the east was unlikely.
- c. Why was not the destruction of Shiloh recorded in Scripture? God's Word was written by believers. We have even discussed 1Sam. 6, which takes place primarily in Philistia, and have explained why it is reasonable that this chapter was written (and probably by a Philistine believer). I suspect that, partially because of Eli's two sons, the worship in Shiloh had become exceedingly corrupt and it will be clear in the next chapter (actually, in 1Sam. 7), that Israel had fallen deeply into idolatry and heathen worship and that Israel was again at the mercy of Philistia (1Sam. 7:3–4). This would be after a period of 20 years, which was more than enough time for Philistia to rebuild their army, invade Israel and harass Israel again. What I suspect happened during this 20 year period of time is that the Philistine army boldly marched into Shiloh and burned

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the place down and destroyed all the inhabitants. There were possibly no believers there and the Philistines who would have done such a thing would not be believers either. Therefore, since the incident had not been viewed by believers, there was no eyewitness account to record the events. Again, this is half Scripture, half conjecture.

7. Okay, when do I believe that Shiloh was destroyed? After spending a great deal of time in this study, putting it down, and coming back to it, I would think that the most reasonable time for the destruction of Shiloh would have been immediately after the capture of the Ark. That is, one set of soldiers probably brought the Ark back to Philistia, while another contingent of soldiers moved into Shiloh after the victory against the Israelites. This means that, as soon as the people of Shiloh heard what happened from their newsman/runner, that Samuel, as a very young man, must have called for the dismantling and removal of the Tabernacle of God. My second guess would have been, during the 20 year period of time mentioned in 1Sam. 7:2. My reasons are as follows:
- a. The Tent of God was clearly the functioning spiritual center in Shiloh when Samuel was young. 1Sam. 3:1–2, 21 4:4, 12
 - b. There will be practically no mention of Shiloh from 1Sam. 4:22 on (that the events of the latter portion of 1Sam. 4 occur in Shiloh is evident by v. 12).
 - i. The mention of Shiloh in 1Sam. 14:3 refers to Eli, who was the Priest of Jehovah in Shiloh. His relative, Ahijah, could have worn the ephod without being connected to Shiloh. The mention of Shiloh in 1Kings 2:27 is also a reference to Eli in the past.
 - ii. Then, Shiloh is not mentioned until after the time of Solomon, during the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1Kings 14:2, 4). This means that the Temple of Solomon had already been constructed and the furniture had all been transferred there. Certainly Shiloh could have been destroyed after this point, but there would have been less reason for it. There is, of course, no mention of the priesthood or the Tent of God in this passage (which would have been true regardless of when Shiloh was destroyed). What would be reasonable is that Shiloh had been destroyed, but had been built back up (probably during the time of Solomon, who was a great builder of cities and monuments).
 - c. The other mentions of Shiloh are in retrospect, of a sign that God will not preserve that which is not spiritually sound. Psalm 78:69 Jer. 7:12, 14 26:6, 9
 - d. There is only one other mention of Shiloh in Jer. 41:5, which indicates a restored Shiloh existed at that time.
 - e. During the early part of Samuel's life, after the death of Eli, he plays little or no visible role in the life of Israel. Given that Israel falls into 20 years of idolatry, this would be expected (note that in 1Sam. 4:1b–7:2, Samuel is not mentioned).
 - f. Even though Philistia had been hurt severely by the location of the Ark within their borders (1Sam. 5–6), this does not mean that their military movements came to a standstill. During the 20 years that Israel was in idolatry, only 7 months of this saw the Ark of God within Philistine borders (1Sam. 6:1 7:3).
 - i. This gives us two possible options: part of the Philistine army struck Shiloh soon after defeated Israel in battle and soon after taking the Ark (simultaneously, some carried the Ark to Philistia in celebration).
 - ii. After the incident with the Ark, and after a few years pass, the Philistine army regroups, marches into Israel territory, and burns down Shiloh. This would imply a relatively quick recovery from the vicious attack of God against the Philistines because of their capture of the ark.
 - g. There is every indication that Israel continued to be battered by God (which would have reasonably included attacks from outside forces) during this 20 years of idolatry. This is why Israel was in such pain and so eager to return to God (1Sam. 7:2–8). It is clear that some of this discipline was from the hands of the Philistines (1Sam. 7:8).
 - h. This actually will cause us some confusion. The Philistines first soundly defeated Israel and took the Ark from Israel (1Sam. 4–5). However, God struck the Philistines because they took the Ark and the Philistines returned the Ark to Israel (1Sam. 6). Then we have 20 years marked by

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idolatry in Israel and Philistine aggression (1Sam. 7:3–8). This indicates that the 7 months that the Ark was in Philistia was a setback for the Philistines, but not one which ended their military aggression. My guess is, 10 years went by, the rats and mice had all been killed; those who died, died; and there were enough Philistines to build up their army again. Whether Shiloh had been attacked prior to/coterminous with the Ark being in Ashdod; or whether they attacked Shiloh during this 20 years of idolatry is unknown (however, this is the time frame where I would place such an attack).

- i. In any case, it is clear that there is idolatry in Israel after the recovery of the Ark and that Philistine aggression was also a part of this time period (1Sam. 7:3–8).
- j. So, given that there were about 20 years of Philistine attacks upon the Israelites, and given that the Israelites were greatly affected by this, and given that we have no references to Shiloh after this (at least not as an operating spiritual center), it is most reasonable that it was during this time period that Shiloh was destroyed.
- k. This would explain a great many things:
 - i. This would explain why Samuel did not have much say in the affairs of Israel for 20 years, as he had no center of operations for much of that time.
 - ii. This also explains how Samuel goes from being a child, learning at the foot of God (1Sam. 3:19) to a spiritual leader (1Sam. 7:5). I should insert that there has to be a period of time between God speaking to Samuel and the Ark being taken from Israel where Samuel experienced some spiritual growth in Shiloh (1Sam. 3:21).
 - iii. If Shiloh was destroyed at either of these times, then this explains why David and Solomon wanted to build a Temple for God, as the long-time home of the Tent of God had been put aside and its new location did not seem to garner much spiritual interest by comparison.
 - iv. This explains why Shiloh is not mentioned as a spiritual center again (except in retrospect).
 - v. This explains why the Ark of God was never reunited with the Tent of God. Shiloh had been destroyed and apparently the Tent of God had been dismantled and removed.
 - vi. Such an event would have certainly been one reason Israel recognized her sin and turned toward God.
 - vii. This also explains the altar that Samuel builds to God in Ramah instead of in Shiloh (1Sam. 7:17). If Samuel was raised in the Tent of God and his authority as a spiritual and civil leader was established, why not simply include Shiloh in his circuit (1Sam. 7:16) or why not, with his spiritual authority, move the Tent of God? No Shiloh and a dismantled Tent of God explain this quite handily.
- l. Finally, the archeological evidence is also in agreement with this time frame.
- m. Okay, why then was Shiloh not destroyed later?
 - i. After this 20 year period of time, Israel turned to God and God blessed them greatly. He gave them victory over the Philistines, He gave Philistine-taken territory back to them, and provided peace between Israel and the Amorites (the people of the land) after that. It would make little sense for Philistia to invade so deeply into Israel to destroy Shiloh during a time of defeat.
 - ii. Even though, when Saul was becoming king, he warred against the Philistines, he was generally victorious.
 - iii. When David became king, he was extremely successful against the Philistines, and eventually had a sort of uneasy alliance with some of them. Given the details of Saul and David's kingships, had Philistia gone into Shiloh and destroyed it, this would have been written about. However, such an event would have been incongruous with the rest of history during that time period.
 - iv. There was little or no war during the time of Solomon, who devoted himself to building projects and to chasing women. Again, the destruction of Shiloh during his reign would have been incongruous with the events of his time.

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8. Now, the difficult question: *why is the destruction of Shiloh not recorded in Scripture?* This is the most difficult question of all to answer.
- a. We know that Samuel later had a circuit that he traveled in as a civil judge. It is possible that this circuit was established prior to 1Sam. 7:16 and that he was not present during the attack upon Shiloh. However, the Tabernacle itself did survive; whether it had been dismantled prior to the attack or untouched during the attack is unknown to us.
 - b. Recall that Eli had a grandson and that his grandson did survive (1Sam. 4:19–22 14:3). I should point out that Icabod, the son born at the death of Phinehas and Eli, apparently had an older brother, Ahitub. At the end of this 20 years, they were still perhaps too young to serve in the capacity of High Priests to God, and that it was unclear as to what Samuel's authority was and what his authority was. Since we know that a grandson of Eli did survive (1Sam. 14:3), this line of the priesthood continued. However, recall that Eli's sons were worthless asses who did not believe even in God. Therefore, their sons would have had little reason to claim authority. Had Shiloh been destroyed at this time, then their function was even less certain. Since Israel was out of fellowship as a nation during this time, their function would have been all but ignored. Therefore, even though there were people who functioned in some very limited capacity at the Tent of God, they apparently dismantled the Tent and moved it, and were very likely not even observers of the destruction of Shiloh.
 - c. Therefore, what is reasonable is that there was no one who actually witnessed the fall of Shiloh. Samuel could have been elsewhere and the little that was left of Eli's line could have been elsewhere with the dismantled Tent of God.
 - d. That Samuel never mentions this may be out of disappointment and embarrassment. After all, the city of God which housed the Tent of God was destroyed on his watch. Who would want to record that? On the other hand, many things which are embarrassing are recorded in Scripture (e.g., some of David's actions).
 - e. Perhaps God simply chose not to have this act recorded in Scripture so that there are no odd parallels drawn. This reason I am mentally rejecting simply because (1) there are actions which are recorded which do not have future parallels and (2) Jeremiah later parallels the destruction of Shiloh with the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - f. Perhaps the destruction of Shiloh had been recorded, placed in Scripture, and then removed soon thereafter by a scribe who did not like recording the fact that Shiloh was destroyed by the Philistines.
 - g. Let me admit, right here, that I find none of these reasons absolutely compelling.
9. An additional point: just exactly what did happen to the Tent of God and to the articles of furniture? We actually do not know. At first, it appears that it may have been destroyed, but it is more likely that it fell in to relative disuse.
- a. The next time that we hear about any priestly function, Samuel will offer up a burnt offering in Mizpah on behalf of Israel against the Philistines (1Sam. 7:9–10). No mention is made here of the Tent or of any of the sacred articles of furniture.
 - b. According to Keller, archeological evidence is that the Philistines (probably) burned down the Tent of Jehovah. *This advance of the Philistines must have gone hard with Israel, as can be judged from the contemporary evidence which has been discovered. The temple at Shiloh which Israel had built for the Ark of the Covenant was burnt to the ground.*⁵
 - c. We have Samuel presiding over a sacrifice in 1Sam. 9:13, although it does not appear as though he offered the sacrifice (the people are waiting for him to come and bless the food).
 - d. In 1Sam. 10:3, there are three men who will be going up to God at Bethel, which implies that the Tent of God is in Bethel. Bethel is about 20 miles south of Shiloh and in an area which is probably more concentrated with Israelites and Israelite troops. Bethel is also on Samuel's regular route (1Sam. 7:16). This allows for the possibility that Samuel himself moved the Tent of God down to Bethel. Again, this is all conjecture, as there is no Scripture (apart from 1Sam. 10:3) which confirms this. Also, we have no indication of any function of the Tabernacle of God after 1Sam. 4 (although there are sacrifices in cities other than Shiloh).

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- e. Actually dismantling the Tabernacle of God, when the Ark is taken, makes a great deal of sense. Eli dies, the Ark is in Philistia, the Philistine army is nearby ready to attack. Dismantling and protecting the Tabernacle of God makes perfect sense.
- f. Later, sacrifices and peace offerings will be made at the coronation of Saul in Gilgal (1Sam. 11:14–15).
- g. Later, King Saul will offer a burnt offering himself because Samuel does not get to him in time (1Sam. 13:8–13).
- h. Saul appeared to have a priest that traveled with him. *And Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree, which is in Migron. And the people who were with him were about six hundred men, and Ahijah ben Ahitub, Icabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of Jehovah at Shiloh, was wearing an ephod* (1Sam. 14:2–3a). In this passage, it is not necessarily Ahijah, but Eli who was the priest at Shiloh.
- i. Then 30 or so years later, David will take consecrated bread for himself and his men from the priests in Nob, called the city of priests (it is a city which was unnamed until this Scriptural reference of 1Sam. 21:1–6). The implication of that passage is that there was a functioning priesthood, although it was unclear as to whether they had the full set of furniture or not and unclear as to whether there was a Tent of God as before. Saul will soon thereafter kill all but one of those priests (1Sam. 22:11–22).
- j. As mentioned before, David will send for the Ark and receive it with great celebration; however, the Ark is placed in a tent which David pitches (2Sam. 6–7 1Chron. 15:1, 12 16:1). There would be sacrifices offered because of the Ark of God (1Chron. 15:26). Some of the Levites are set as ministers in charge of the Ark. Nothing in this celebration speaks of the original Tabernacle (*Tent*) of God.
- k. David will build an altar to Jehovah and offer burnt offerings upon it late in his kingship (2Sam. 24:25). This is separate from the actual Tent of Meeting, which apparently had moved to high place in Gibeon (1Chron. 16:39–40).
- l. The implication, thus far, of these passages is that there was no functioning Tent of Meeting during the reigns of Saul and David. That is, it is never mentioned in connection with offerings made to God or ceremonies prescribed in the Law during those two reigns, with the possible exception of 1Chron. 16:39–40.
 - i. Recall that, after the 20 years mentioned in 1Sam. 7:2, the only person in the Ithamar line of the priesthood is 20 years old, too young to discharge his duties.
 - ii. From this point on, Samuel will not be mentioned in conjunction with the Tent of God.
 - iii. Samuel's sons will be mentioned, but as corrupt judges and not as priests (1Sam. 8:1–5).
- iv. Shiloh will not be mentioned again (except as having been destroyed).
- v. This leads us to three possible conclusions:
 - (1) The Tent of God was disassembled and removed from Shiloh prior to or during the destruction of Shiloh. It was not reassembled for several decades. If it was reassembled in Gibeon, there does not appear to be a regular ministry there as before (and one might even question the function of the Tabernacle during the time of Eli).
 - (2) The Tent of God was disassembled and removed from Shiloh prior to or during the destruction of Shiloh. It was reassembled soon thereafter (probably in Nob), and later in Gibeon, but with limited use.
 - (3) The Tent of God was destroyed with Shiloh and it was re-manufactured, but with obviously less mention than the first time it was all built. This was apparently the view of Ewald, and I was leaning in this direction for awhile, since there is no mention of the Tent of Meeting during the time of Saul and David. However, see the point below.
- m. Now, the Tent of God is finally mentioned during the reign of Solomon. In 1Kings 3:4, Solomon goes to Gibeon to offer up 100 sacrifices. Although the Tent of Meeting is not mentioned

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specifically in that passage, it is mentioned in 1Chron. 21:29 and in 1Kings 8:4, where Solomon brings the Tent of Meeting and the articles of furniture up to Jerusalem. More important is 2Chron. 1:3–4, which reads: **Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place which was in Gibeon; for God's Tent of Meeting was there, which Moses, the servant of Jehovah, had made in the wilderness. However, David had brought up the Ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the place he had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.** This tells us that, even though Shiloh was destroyed, the original Tent of Meeting was preserved (and, apparently for over 4 centuries).

- n. The conclusion is that, although the Tent of Meeting is almost not mentioned in Scripture (except for 1Kings 8:4 1Chron. 16:39 21:29 2Chron. 1:3, 13), it appears to have still been around during the time of David and Solomon. The implication is that its connection to religious services had fallen considerably. Keil and Delitzsch remark: *There is much more to be said in support of the conjecture, that the carrying away of the ark by the Philistines was regarded as a judgment upon the sanctuary, which had been desecrated by the reckless conduct of the sons of Eli, and consequently, that even when the ark itself was recovered, they would not take it back without an express declaration of the will of God, but were satisfied, as a temporary arrangement, to leave the ark in Kiriath-jearim, which was farther removed from the cities of the Philistines. And there it remained, because no declaration of the divine will followed respecting its removal into the tabernacle, and the tabernacle itself had to be removed from Shiloh to Nob, and eventually to Gibeon, until David had effected the conquest of the citadel of Zion, and chosen Jerusalem as his capital, when it was removed from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6).*⁶ During the time of David, the Ark was housed separately from the Tent of Meeting (and it had been separated from the Tent since it was taken into battle by the Israelites during the time of Samuel and Eli).

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10. Conclusion/speculations:

- a. Although it is clear roughly when Shiloh was destroyed, we may only reasonably suppose that it was the Philistines who did it and that it took place during the time of Samuel. Some suppose that this occurred almost immediately after the taking of the Ark, even though we have no mention of it in Scripture. You may wonder how that could be if the presence of the Ark caused considerable chaos throughout Philistia. The answer is simple: there is a moving army of Philistines terrorizing Israel. You also have the stable population within the main 5 cities of Philistia. The army of Philistia continues to attack Israel (perhaps the capture of the Ark gave them the confidence to attack Israel's holy city, Shiloh). Meanwhile, the Ark is moved throughout Philistia, causing widespread disease and destruction. Now, if this is the proper scenario, then this may be the single most important reason why the Ark was not transported back to Shiloh from Beth-shemesh.
- b. Keil apparently offers the suggestion that the people of Israel were unwilling to take the Ark back to Shiloh because of the failure of the priesthood. Edersheim agrees.¹ However, this seems silly, as the offending *priests* are all dead and only Samuel remains. However, it would be reasonable that the Ark was not returned to Shiloh because there was no recognized leadership in the priesthood with the passing of Eli and his two sons (and apparently Samuel was not considered a leader of Israel until 20 years later—1Sam. 7:2b–3).
- c. In any case, it does not appear as though the Tent of Meeting was destroyed, which gives us the most likely scenario that it was moved prior to an invasion of Shiloh. Since Samuel would have overseen such a move, and since it is not mentioned, it is cause to think that Shiloh was destroyed later.
- d. Another option was that Shiloh was destroyed, but the Tent of Meeting and the articles of furniture were not.
- e. No matter which option we choose, we are still left with some problems. We know Shiloh was destroyed; we know the Tent of Meeting survived; and we know that it occurred after the capture of the Ark but before the mention of the priests at Nob.

I need to add to this that, there are no contradictions involved; that this doctrine is simply one of conjecture, taking a major historical event in Israel's history and making it fit into a suitable period of time. No matter where in time that we place this event, we do not know why it is missing from the Old Testament (apart from several mentions in retrospect); and, if this belongs after the Philistines take the Ark, then there are simply a few details which need to be worked out.

1. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 402.

2. This is taken from Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (second revised edition); New York, 1981; p. 182.

3. Apparently, there are other sites in the mountains of Judah which were also burned to the ground; these include Tell Beit Mirsim near Hebron, Debir, and Beth-zur, south of Jerusalem. All have tell-tale ashes discovered in their digs. Bear in mind, however, that Israel could have burnt these cities to the ground when they conquered them originally; or one heathen tribe could have burnt out another as well (Keller is not clear on a time frame). Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (second revised edition); New York, 1981; p. 182.

4. The reference works are cited in my exegesis of the Book of the Judges, the Introduction in the time-line chart.

5. Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (second revised edition); New York, 1981; p. 182.

¹ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 424.

6. Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 409.