

1 Chronicles Chapter 13

Verses 13:1 – 16:43

This section recounts the ark of the Covenant being brought from Kirjath-jearim (verse 5), to Jerusalem.

In verses 1 to 14 (see notes on 2 Sam.; 6:1-11)

(1 Chron. 13:1-6), adds new material to the narrative.

Verses 1-3: Chapters 13-16 detail the return of “the ark” of the Covenant to Israel.

David built consensus among the people by consulting “every leader” about this important decision.

He also consulted “the LORD.”

David’s decision to bring back the ark was the right one; however, his counselors were not in communion with God, and they told David to do what they had seen the Philistines do (2 Dan. 6:7), instead of what God had instructed.

1 Chronicles 13:1 "And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, [and] with every leader."

With the chiliarchs and centurions, and every officer in that large body of armed men in every tribe, who met to make and crown him king.

For at that time was this consultation had, and therefore is connected with it; though the affair advised about was not yet done.

As Dr. Lightfoot observes, and was not done until some considerable time afterwards.

Advice being taken, the several officers went with their men to their respective countries, to meet again at a certain time and place to put the thing projected into execution.

And between this and that time were Hiram's message to David on his accession to the throne, the taking of Jerusalem, and the two battles with the Philistines, as the same writer notes; most of which are recorded before this in the book of Samuel.

2 Samuel 6:1 "Again, David gathered together all [the] chosen [men] of Israel, thirty thousand."

We are about to repeat the same message that was (in the 6th chapter of Samuel).

I gave the extra verse to show the connection.

1 Chronicles 13:2 "And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If [it seem] good unto you, and [that it be] of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto 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, that they may gather themselves unto us:"

To the above persons, as representatives of it.

"If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God":

If it could be thought by them a good and useful thing, and agreeable to the will of God, and would make for his glory.

"Let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere, that are left in all the land of Israel":

That were not then present with them, even all the common people.

Whom David, though king, owns as his brethren; nor is his antitype ashamed to own this relation between him and his people (Heb. 2:11).

“And with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs”:

Given to them in the several tribes to dwell in (see 1 Chron. 6:54), that they may gather themselves unto us; at a certain time and place appointed.

The tribes of Israel had operated somewhat independently.

They had not had a central place of worship.

In fact, Saul had led them away from their deep faith in God.

They had placed their faith in an earthly king, instead of in their One True God.

The Philistines had destroyed Saul and his family, and many of the other Israelites.

They needed to focus on God again.

Verses 3-4

See the note on 2 Samuel 6:2.

Chronicles 13:3 "And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul."

“The ark of our God”:

Not only had the ark been stolen and profaned by the Philistines (1 Sam. Chapters 5 - 6), but when it was returned, Saul neglected to seek God's instruction for it.

Scripture records only one occasion when Saul sought God's ark after its return (compare 1 Sam. 14:18).

The chronicler, intent on showing David's longing to honor God, tells the story of the transport of "the ark of ... God" before he mentions the building projects that David completed, even though those projects were completed before the ark's journey from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem (2 Sam. Chapters 5 and 6).

For more about the ark of the Covenant, the most sacred object of the Hebrew faith (see Exodus 25:10-22).

David wants to reunite them around the ark of the Covenant which symbolized the presence of God.

The ark had even been taken, and carried off by the heathens.

It was back in the land again, but no central place of worship existed.

The people had really fallen away from their God.

No longer had they looked to God for the answers to their problems.

1 Chronicles 13:4 "And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people."

They unanimously agreed to the motion.

"For the thing was right in the eyes of all the people":

They saw the propriety, necessity, and usefulness of it.

When David brings this to their attention, they know that he is right.

They are aware, if they are to be the nation of Israel again, it is God that will unite them.

1 Chronicles 13:5 "So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim."

"Shihor":

The "river of Egypt" was a small stream flowing into the Mediterranean, which forms the southern boundary of Israel (compare Joshua 13:3).

It is also called the “brook of Egypt” (Joshua 15:4, 47; Num. 34:5; 2 Chron. 7:8).

“Hamath”:

On the northern boundary of Israel’s territory.

"To bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim":

From here to the end of the chapter the account is the same with (2 Sam. 6:1, see the notes there).

What little variations there are, can be observed there. (See 2 Sam. 6:1, 2 Sam. 6:2-11).

This location is approximately 10 miles west of Jerusalem that the Canaanites called Baalah (compare 13:6).

The ark of God had resided here for the previous 20 years (compare 1 Sam. 7:1-2).

"All Israel" here, is speaking of the thirty thousand we read of (in verse one of 2 Samuel chapter 6 above).

"Shihor" is speaking of the Nile River.

"Hamath" was in the upper part of Syria.

These two places mentioned show the extremes David went to for everyone to be represented in moving the ark.

Kirjath-jearim, where the ark was located, was on the western border of Benjamin.

Verses 6-12

When God directed His people to construct “the ark of the Covenant,”

He specified the placement of special rings on the sides and poles to go through those rings (Exodus 25:12-15).

He also gave His people detailed instructions for transporting it (Num. 4:15).

Instead of having the Levites carry the ark on their shoulders with these poles as prescribed, David allowed “Uzza and Ahio” to transport it on a “cart,” much as the philistines had done when they captured it (1 Sam. Chapter 6).

1 Chronicles 13:6 "And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, [that is], to Kirjath-jearim, which [belonged] to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth [between] the cherubims, whose name is called [on it]."

From this point our narrative coincides with that of (2 Sam. 6:2-11).

The original text was plainly the same, whether the chronicler drew directly from the Book of Samuel, or from another source.

Such differences as appear consist of abridgments, paraphrases, and corrections.

"All Israel":

Samuel, "All the people that were with him."

"To Baalah": (Joshua 15:60), "Kirjath-baal, which is Kirjath-jearim."

"Baal's town" was doubtless the original name.

"Town of woods" describes the position of the place.

Our text appears more correct than that of Samuel, which has, "And David rose and went, and all the people that were with him."

The Targum, LXX and Syriac translate that which the Authorized Version gives as a proper name, "The people that were with him of the cities lords men of Judah."

If this be right, perhaps "Baalah" has fallen out of the text of Samuel owing to its resemblance to the word Baale.

Kirjath-jearim is the modern Erma, four miles east of Ain Shems (Beth-shemesh).

"The LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubims":

Rather, Jehovah, who sitteth upon the cherubim (compare Psalm 16:11; 80:2; Isa. 37:16).

"Whose name is called on it":

The Hebrew is, "who (or which), is called Name."

The Israelites in later days avoided all mention of the Divine name of Jehovah, and substituted hashshēm "the Name" (compare Lev. 24:16, and the Third Commandment).

A comparison with (2 Sam. 6:2), however, suggests that a word meaning "upon it" (‘ālāw), has fallen out.

In that case, the literal rendering will be, upon which (i.e., the ark) the Name (of Jehovah) is called, which is called by the name (of Jehovah).

The ark was often called “the ark of Jehovah” (1 Chron. 15:3).

The Hebrew and Targum of Samuel favor this.

Some manuscripts of Chronicles read “there” (shām) instead of “name” (shēm).

This, gives the meaning, who is invoked there (at the ark).

Baalah is another name for Kirjath-jearim.

We see that the presence of God was represented by the ark.

God had dwelled between the cherubims in the holy of holies in the tabernacle in the wilderness. They called upon the name of the LORD in this place.

Verses 7-14

See notes on 2 Sam. 6:1-11.

The violation of divine directives (Num. 4:1-49), for moving the ark proved fatal to Uzza (verses 7-10).

1 Chronicles 13:7 "And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart."

A new cart was chosen as one which had not been profaned by common work.

So (Judges 16:11-12).

New ropes “wherewith no work hath been done” were used in the attempt to bind the consecrated man, Samson.

So also (Mark 11:2; 11:7), our Lord rode into Jerusalem on a colt “whereon no man ever yet sat.”

"The house of Abinadab":

Here the ark had been for at least twenty years under the charge of a man sanctified to keep it (1 Samuel 7:1-2).

They had wandered so far away from the LORD that they did not know how the ark was to be carried.

Uzza and Ahio were sons of Abinadab who had been charged with the keeping of the ark.

The new cart was used to show respect for the ark, but that was not how it was to be carried.

There were to be staves run through loops on the outside of the ark.

The priests were to carry the ark with these poles (staves).

They were not to touch the ark at any time.

1 Chronicles 13:8 "And David and all Israel played before God with all [their] might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets."

"Played":

Were dancing (to music).

"With all their might, and with singing":

So LXX and Syriac.

Samuel has "with all woods of cypresses;" a strange expression, probably due to confusion of similar letters, and transposition.

The LXX there has "in strength."

"With cymbals, and with trumpets":

Samuel (Hebrew) has sistrums (a kind of rattle), and cymbals.

The former word only occurs there.

The playing, singing, and rejoicing were all in order.

God wants us to rejoice in the LORD.

Verses 9-10

For this disobedience of the divine instructions with regard to transporting the "ark" (see the note on 2 Sam. 6:3-7).

It had been a long time since Israel had stood before the ark of the Covenant (13:3).

“David was afraid of God” because he had struck down “Uzza” for touching the ark, which served as a symbol of the very presence of God Himself.

This incident was a clear reminder to all of Israel that obeying God is a matter of life and death, and He will powerfully judge disobedience, something they frequently seemed to forget.

1 Chronicles 13:9 "And when they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled."

"The threshing floor of Chidon":

For Chidon, the parallel place has Nachon; possibly these are two names of the same place, or one form is a corruption of the other; but there is nothing to determine for us which.

Owing to the meaning of Nachon being "prepared," the version of Aquila is "to the prepared threshing floor."

The threshing floor was a circular plot of hard ground, from fifty to one hundred feet in diameter, on which the oxen trampled out the grain.

Threshing floors evidently often became landmarks, and helped to designate places (Gen. 50:10; 2 Sam. 24:16).

The oxen stumbled.

In the parallel place the Authorized Version renders "shook it."

Its elementary meanings are "to strike" and "to throw down."

Perhaps the meaning is near the Vulgate rendering, stubborn, and equivalent to the rendering, became increasingly difficult to control.

It seemed the stumbling of one of the oxen shook the ark that it might fall.

We must remember, God was displeased with them pulling the ark with the oxen in the first place.

The threshing floor was a place where people gathered, and became landmarks for the people.

Uzza was not the high priest, and even if he had been, he would not be allowed to touch the ark.

1 Chronicles 13:10 "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God."

"And he smote him":

Abridged from “and God smote him there” (Samuel).

"Because he put his hand to the ark":

“Because he put” is in the Hebrew ‘al ’asher shalah.

For this Samuel has ’al hashshal, an obscure phrase, occurring nowhere else in the Old Testament.

The similarity of letters in the two phrases can hardly be accidental, but whether the chronicler has given the original text of the passage as he found it preserved in his source, or whether he has himself made a guess at the true reading, cannot be determined.

The Syriac of Samuel reads, “because he put forth his hand;” and so the Arabic, adding, “to the ark.”

The Targum, “because he sinned” (using a word like hashshal).

"Before God":

Samuel, “by the ark of God.”

This explains the same phrase in (1 Chron. 13:8; compare for the event (1 Sam. 6:19).

Anyone who even entered the Holy of Holies, who were not anointed to do so, would have been killed.

This is doing even worse than entering, to touch the ark.

It is as if he touched the LORD.

He did it to save the ark, but God taught everyone viewing a lesson here, of the holiness of the ark.

He was instantly killed.

Again, the ark symbolized the presence of God.

Had they been worshipping the LORD the way they should have, they would have known the danger of doing what they had done here.

1 Chronicles 13:11 "And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day."

"Displeased":

The Hebrew root (נָחַץ), betokens a mixture of anger and grief.

It is the word used of Jonah (Jonah 4:1, 9).

And perhaps our English word "vexed" or "hurt," would convey its meaning.

“Had made a breach”:

Literally, had broken forth a breaking forth on Uzza; i.e. had fiercely broken forth on Uzza.

There are many exactly analogous uses of both verb and noun in the Hebrew, to this day.

This phrase, also found in the parallel place, indicates the lapse of time from the historical point of time to the point of record.

Displeased is probably speaking of David's grief over the death of Uzza for trying to do something good.

Had David fully understood the law of God, they would have gone about moving the ark differently.

He, like many of the other Israelites, had not learned God's ways.

1 Chronicles 13:12 "And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God [home] to me?"

Here and in (1 Chron. 13:8; 13:14), etc. Samuel has Jehovah.

The chronicler or his authority has avoided the frequent use of that most holy Name.

"Saying":

Samuel, “and said.”

"How":

Hêk, an Aramaic form, perhaps due to a transcriber rather than to the author.

"Shall I bring":

Samuel, “shall come.”

Two different voices of the same verb.

David's desire was to have a permanent home for the ark in Jerusalem.

Now he was so afraid of God that he felt he might not be able to accomplish that.

He loved God, but did not understand Him.

1 Chronicles 13:13 "So David brought not the ark [home] to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite."

"Brought not ... home":

A different verb from that in (1 Chron. 13:12).

Literally, And David caused not the ark to turn aside unto himself.

Slightly abridged (see Samuel).

"Obed-edom the Gittite":

As, according to (1 Chron. 26:1-4).

Obed-edom was a Korhite Levite, the term "Gittite" is generally assumed to mean native of Gath-rimmon, a Levitical township (Joshua 21:24), belonging to the great clan of Kohath, which was charged with the carriage of the ark, and of which Obed-edom was a member (Num. 4:15).

Obed-edom was a Levite of the family of the Korhites.

The ark remained there three months and Obed-edom was blessed.

At least David knew enough to take it to a Levite, who should know how to handle the ark.

1 Chronicles 13:14 "And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had."

By (near), the house.

The preposition is wanting in Samuel, according to older usage.

"In his house":

In its own house (shrine).

Instead of this, Samuel has "the Gittite".

And for the concluding words;

"And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had":

Compare 2 Sam. 6:12.

As to the nature of the blessing (see 1 Chron. 26:4-8; and compare Psalms 125).

The presence of the LORD is a tremendous blessing in itself.

It seems however, that Obed-edom prospered greatly during these three months.

When God blesses, there is no cup big enough to hold the blessings.

1 Chronicles Chapter 13 Questions

1. Who did David consult with?
2. Who did David want to send and gather to him?
3. Why were they fragmented?
4. Saul had led them away from their deep _____ in God.
5. Who had they placed their faith in?
6. Who had destroyed Saul?
7. What did David want to do with the ark?
8. What did the ark symbolize?
9. What was the reply from all of the congregation?
10. If they are to be a united nation again, how will it happen?
11. What is "all Israel", in verse 5, speaking of?
12. "Shihor" is speaking of the _____.
13. Where was "Hamath" located?
14. Where was the ark?
15. What is another name for Kirjath-jearim?
16. Where had God been in the tabernacle?
17. How had God said to move the ark?
18. How were they carrying it?

19. Who drove the cart?
20. Who were they?
21. What did David and the people do before the ark?
22. Who put forth his hand to touch the ark?
23. What happened to him?
24. What effect did this have on David?
25. What is displeased, probably, saying in verse 11?
26. What question does David ask in verse 12?
27. Where did they take the ark?
28. Obed-edom was of what family?
29. How long did the ark remain with Obed-edom?
30. What happened to them, while they had the ark?