

means either “There is no *kābôd*” or “Where is the *kābôd*?” and seems to link the ark with the *kābôd*.

Sommer (2009, 106) suggests that, “If it ended at the close of chapter 4, the ark narrative might have been taken as a complete rejection of the notion that the ark is anything more than a box with several important texts inside it.” 1 Samuel 5, however, goes on to narrate the story of the ark’s defeat of Dagon, which, according to Sommer, shows that the ark does retain some manner of access to divine power. A tension is thus maintained between chapter 4’s “complete rejection” of the ark’s presencing function and the other chapters’ presentation of a “mysteriously powerful” ark. For Sommer (2009, 107), “The Deuteronomistic editors front-loaded their critique without completely reworking the whole. The front-loaded critique provides the context in which to understand the miracles that follow.”

Sommer seems to derive the “critique” that he identifies in chapter 4 entirely from the fact that the ark failed to facilitate the defeat of the Philistines. Nothing else in the chapter complicates the ark’s presencing function, and every other character, Israelite or Philistine, expresses precisely the perspective that Sommer argues is being completely rejected. I would suggest that even by Sommer’s own framework, this is an insufficient basis for his reading. A more likely explanation for the ark’s failure is found in Sommer’s (2009, 22) earlier discussion of Mesopotamian concepts of fluidity. There he explains, “it seems that, just as an *ilu* could enter an object, an *ilu* could also leave it. According to various historical texts, a god, when angry at a city, might abandon it, ascending from temple to heaven. The statues, however, were left behind—and now they consisted of nothing more than wood, stone, and metal. Further, the god could reenter the object.” This is the abandonment motif, or the notion that an angry deity may abandon their presencing media in reaction to wickedness or disloyalty.

So that raises the question: do we have any indication in the texts that YHWH was angry? The answer is resoundingly in the affirmative.<sup>16</sup> To begin with, in contrast with other pre-battle narratives, such as Judg 20:27–28 or 2 Sam 5:19, there is no effort described to seek the will or disposition of the deity before engaging in battle.<sup>17</sup> The deployment of the ark, and perhaps even the battle itself, are unsanctioned. Even more explicitly, however, the comment in 1 Sam 4:4 that Hophni and Phinehas (Eli’s sons) were with the ark in Shiloh connects the narrative with 1 Sam 2:12–17, 22–25, which interrupts the narrative in that

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<sup>16</sup> According to Thomas Römer (2007, 116), attributing these losses to divine anger is in keeping with one of the overarching themes of Dtr: “In a way, the whole Deuteronomistic History maintains the assertion that the end of the monarchy, the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of the land result from Yahweh’s anger.”

<sup>17</sup> Note that in Judg 20:27, the presence of the ark—before which a different Phinehas ministered—seems to have facilitated the inquiry.