

when God comes

A silhouette of a person stands on a dark, rocky cliff edge, looking down. The background is a vibrant sunset or sunrise sky with a gradient from blue at the top to orange and red at the bottom. The word "CLOSE" is written in large, white, outlined capital letters across the middle of the image, partially overlapping the person's silhouette.

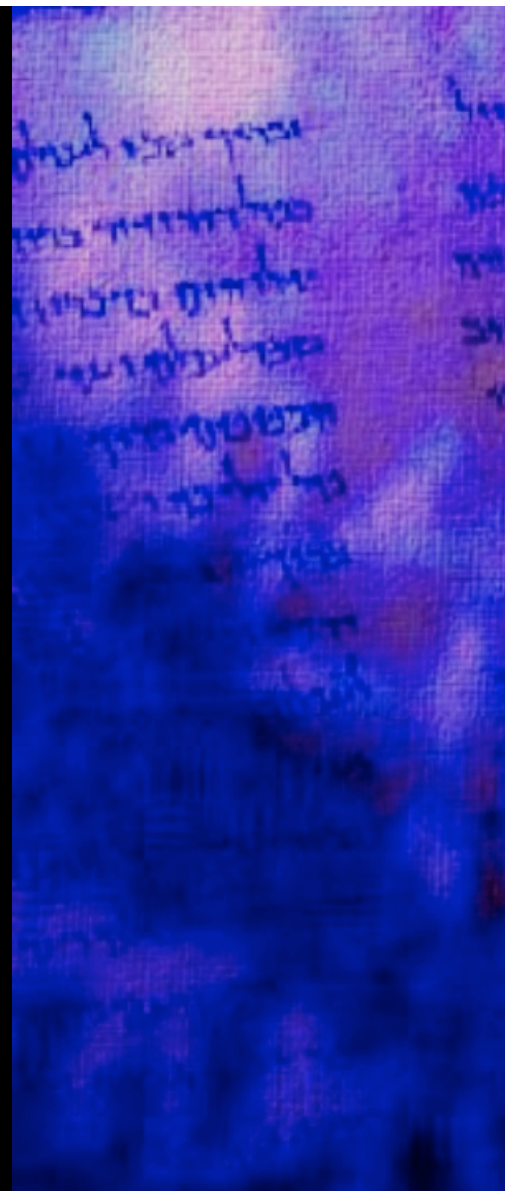
CLOSE

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CLOSE

After the Philistines captured the Ark of God, they took it from the battleground at Ebenezer to the town of Ashdod. ² They carried the Ark of God into the temple of Dagon and placed it beside an idol of Dagon. ³ But when the citizens of Ashdod went to see it the next morning, Dagon had fallen with his face to the ground in front of the Ark of the Lord! So they took Dagon and put him in his place again. But the next morning the same thing happened—Dagon had fallen face down before the Ark of the Lord again. This time his head and hands had broken off and were lying in the doorway. Only the trunk of his body was left intact. *1 Samuel 5:1–4*

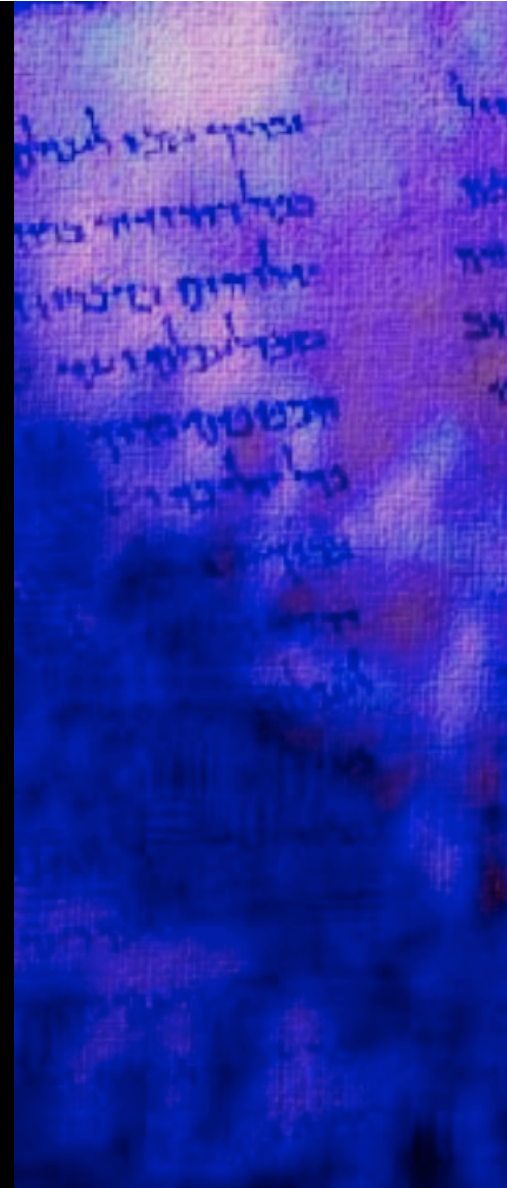






(God told Moses to) ...put the atonement cover on top of the Ark. ²² I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant. From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel.

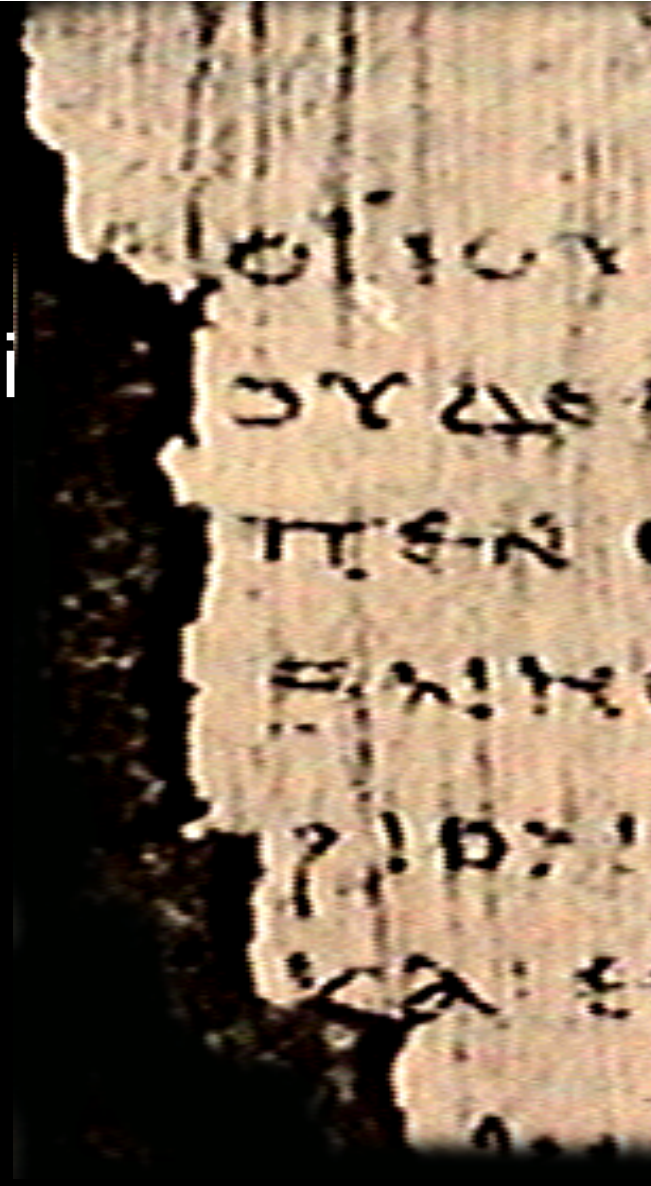
Exodus 25:22





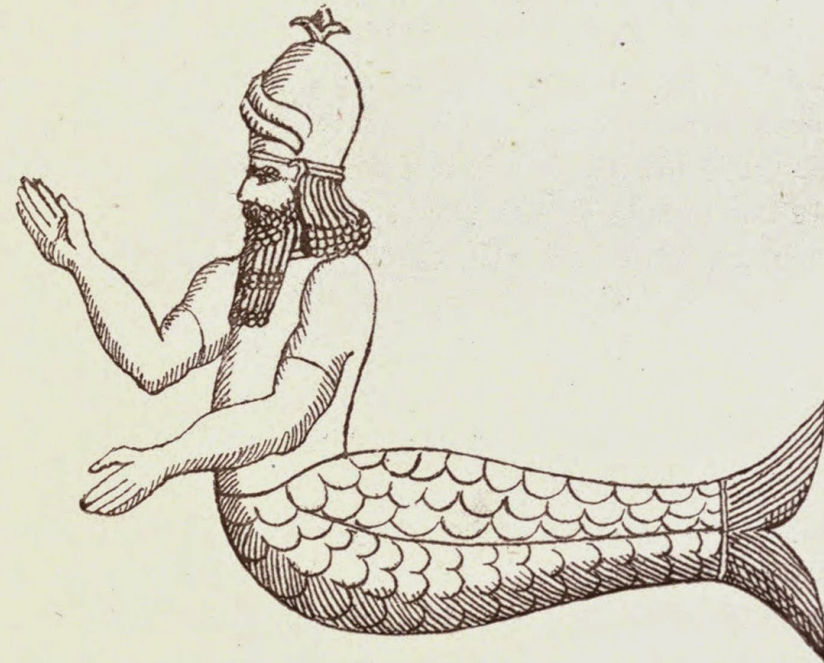
“Israel fled before the Philistines,
and the army has suffered heavy
losses. Also your two sons, Hophni
and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark
of God has been captured.”

1 Samuel 4:17



Who was Dagon?

Dagon was the chief deity of the Philistines, and the worship of this pagan god dates back the third millennium BC. According to ancient mythology, Dagon was the father of Baal. He was the fish god (*dag* in Hebrew means "fish"), and he was represented as a half-man, half-fish creature.



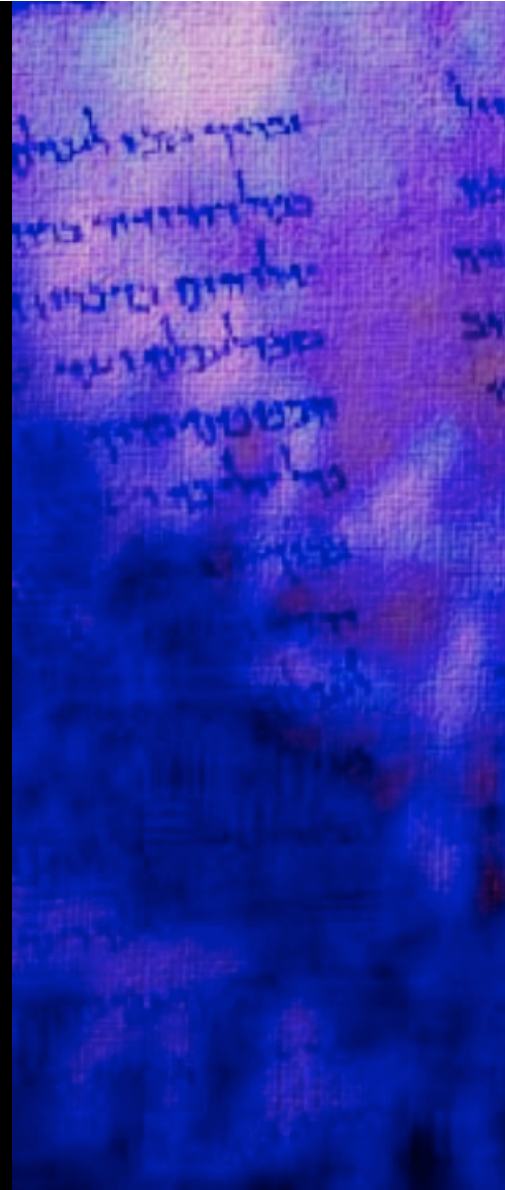






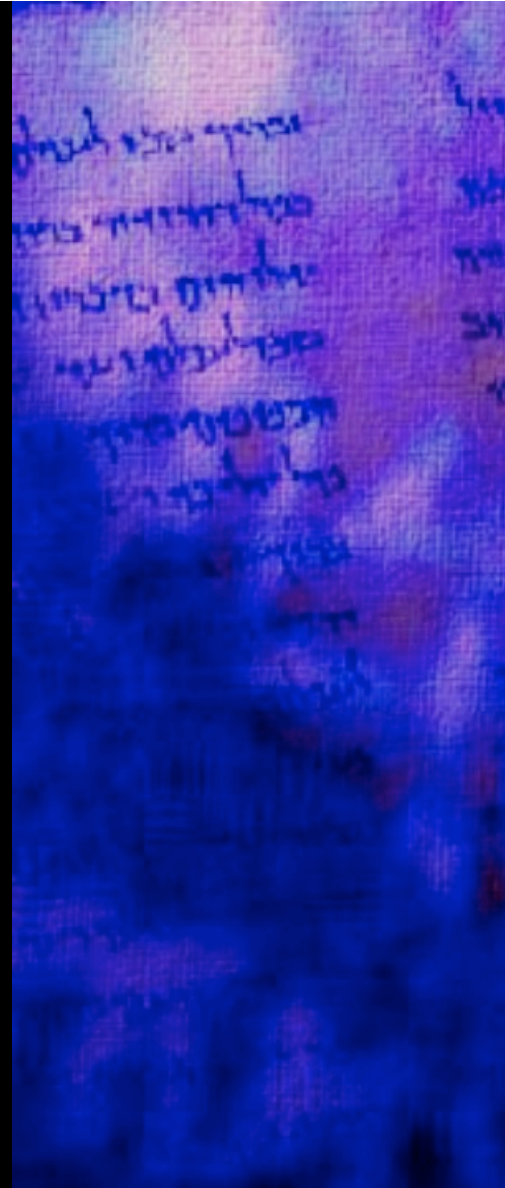
Dagon had fallen with his face
to the ground in front of the Ark
of the Lord! So they took Dagon
and put him in his place again.

1 Samuel 5:3



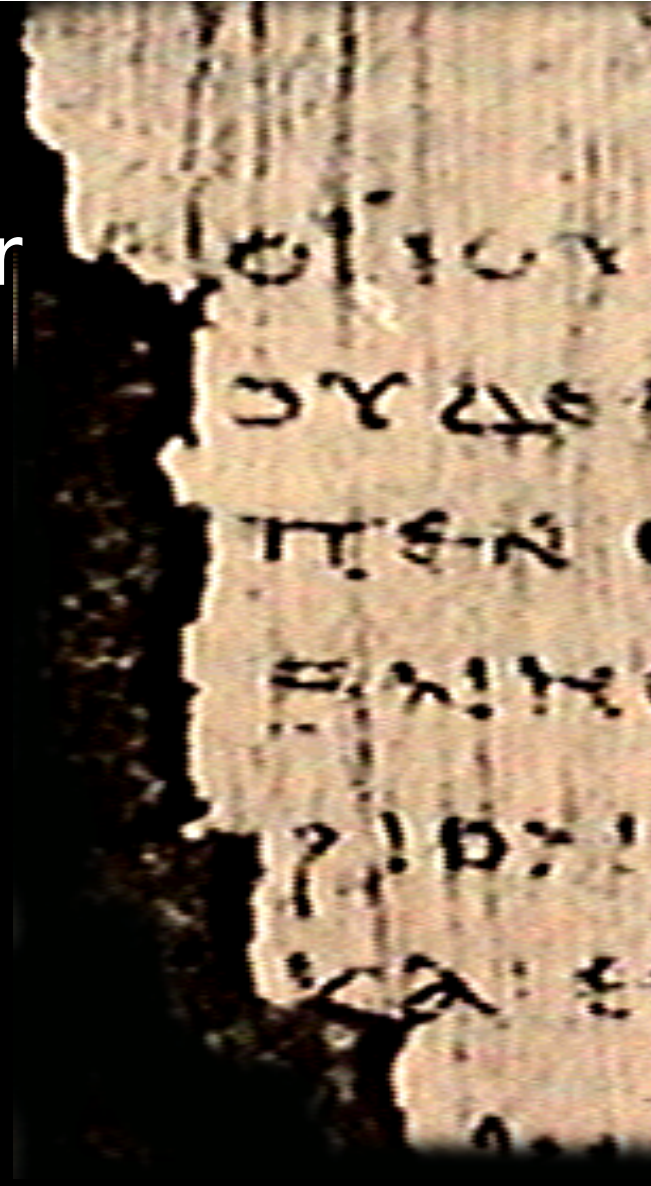
But the next morning the same thing happened—Dagon had fallen face down before the Ark of the Lord again. This time his head and hands had broken off and were lying in the doorway. Only the trunk of his body was left intact.

1 Samuel 5:4

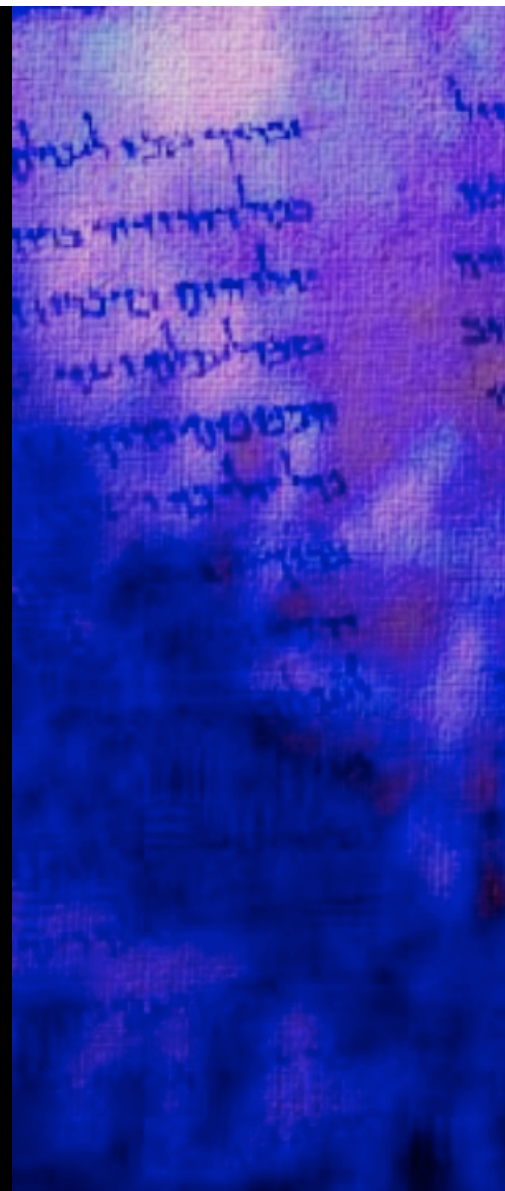


“Don’t go back to worshiping
worthless idols that cannot help or
rescue you—they are totally
useless!

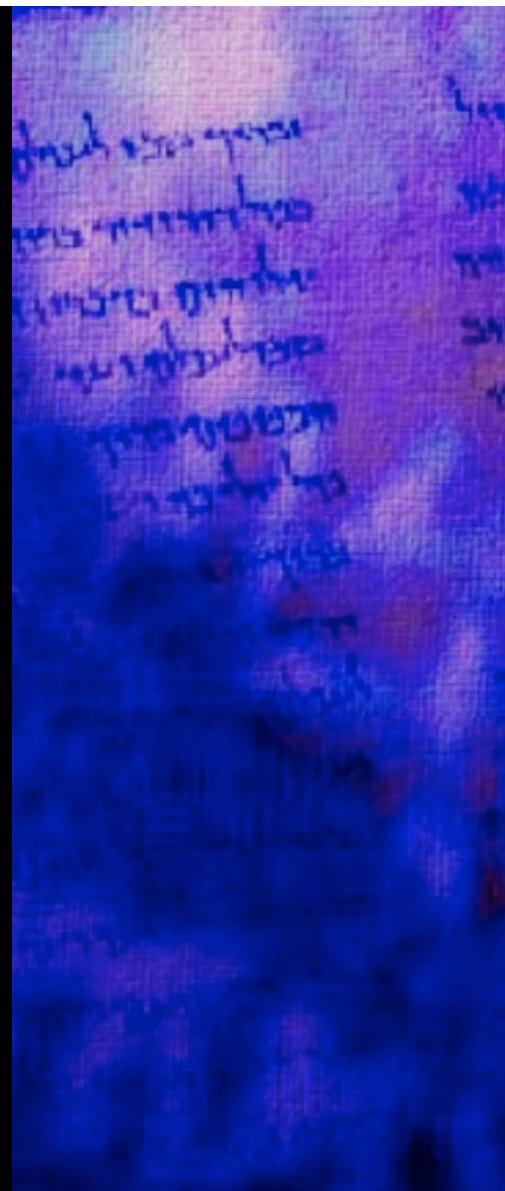
1 Samuel 12:21



Then the Lord's heavy hand struck the people of Ashdod and the nearby villages with a plague of tumors. When the people realized what was happening, they cried out, "We can't keep the Ark of the God of Israel here any longer! He is against us! We will all be destroyed along with Dagon, our god." So they called together the rulers of the Philistine towns and asked, "What should we do with the Ark of the God of Israel?" 1 Samuel 5:6-8

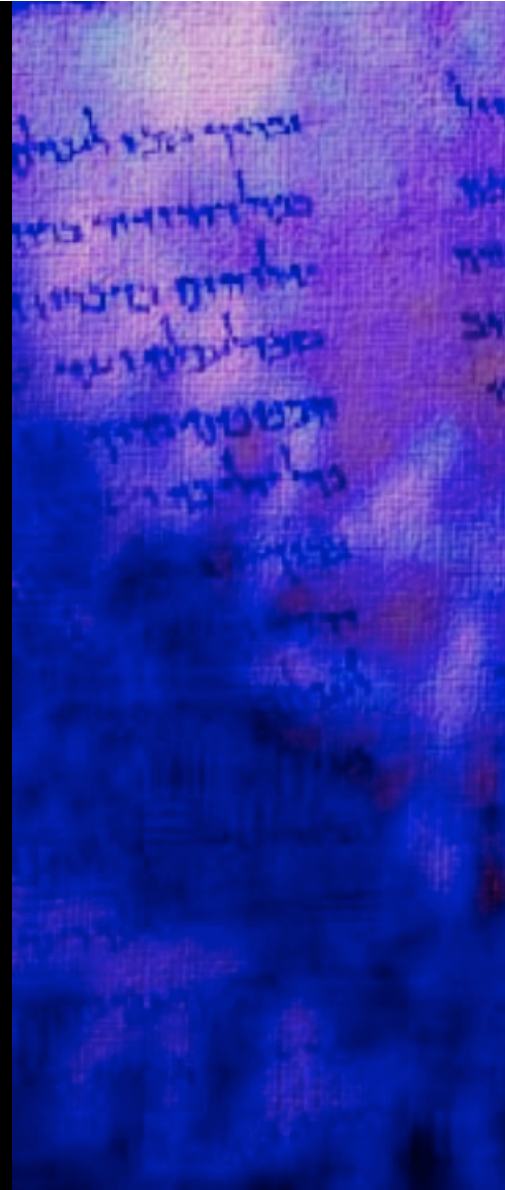


The rulers discussed it and replied,
"Move it to the town of Gath." So they
moved the Ark of the God of Israel to
Gath. But when the Ark arrived at
Gath, the Lord's heavy hand fell on its
men, young and old; he struck them
with a plague of tumors, and there was
a great panic. 1 Samuel 5:8,9

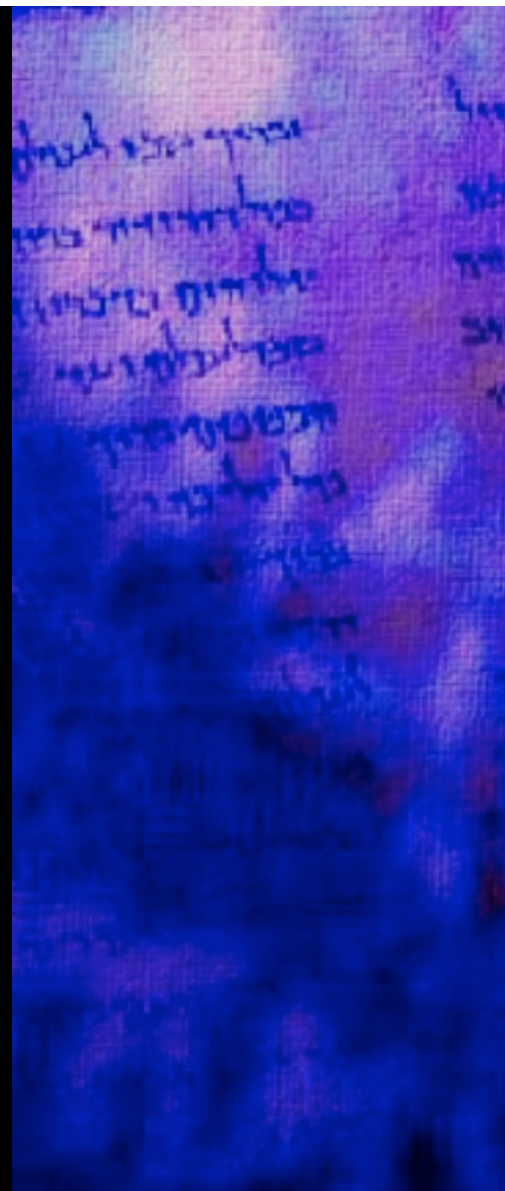


So they sent the Ark of God to the town of Ekron, but when the people of Ekron saw it coming they cried out, "They are bringing the Ark of the God of Israel here to kill us, too!"

1 Samuel 5:10

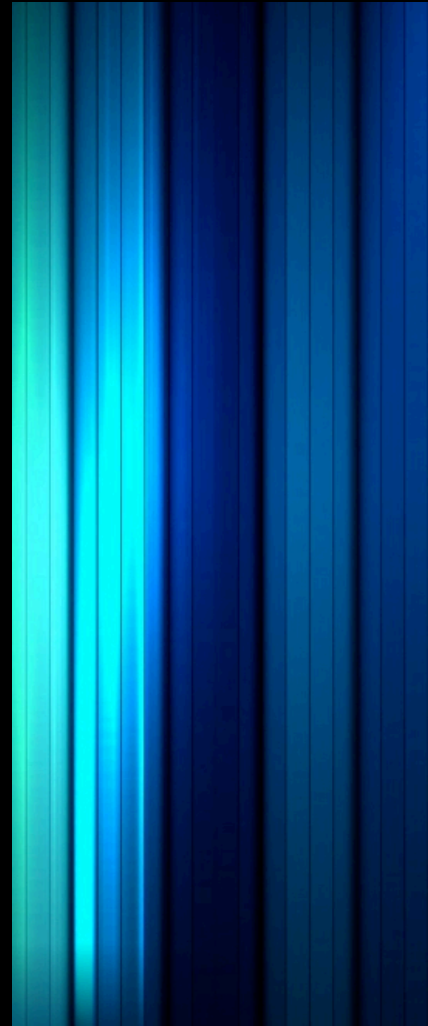


The people summoned the Philistine rulers again and begged them, "Please send the Ark of the God of Israel back to its own country, or it will kill us all." For the deadly plague from God had already begun, and great fear was sweeping across the town. 1 Samuel 5:11

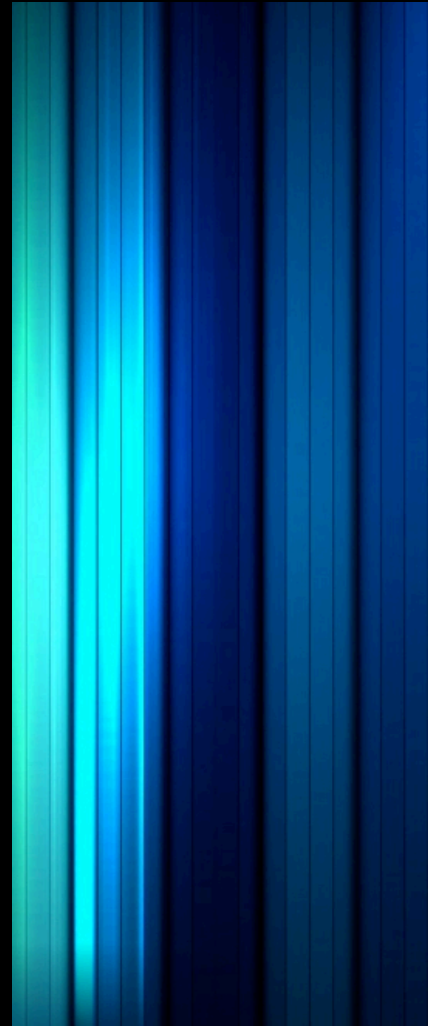




**What Does This Story Tell Us
When God Comes Close?**

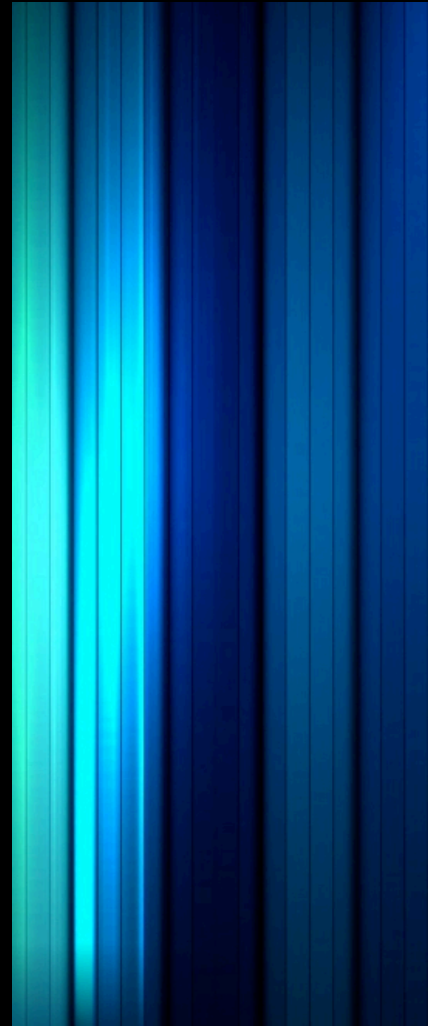


**That God isn't permanently
attached to any one thing.
He isn't your genie
in the bottle.**

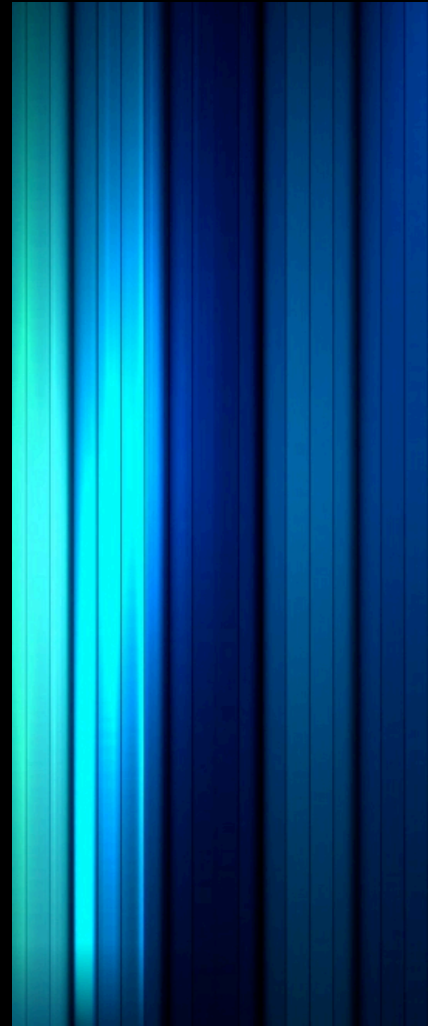




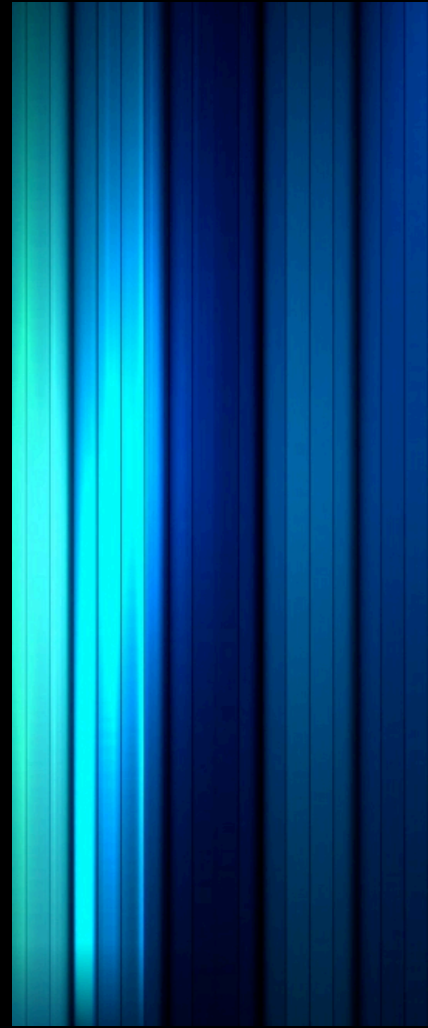
**There are certain things that
always are true when a person
comes into God's presence, and
they're all here in this story.**



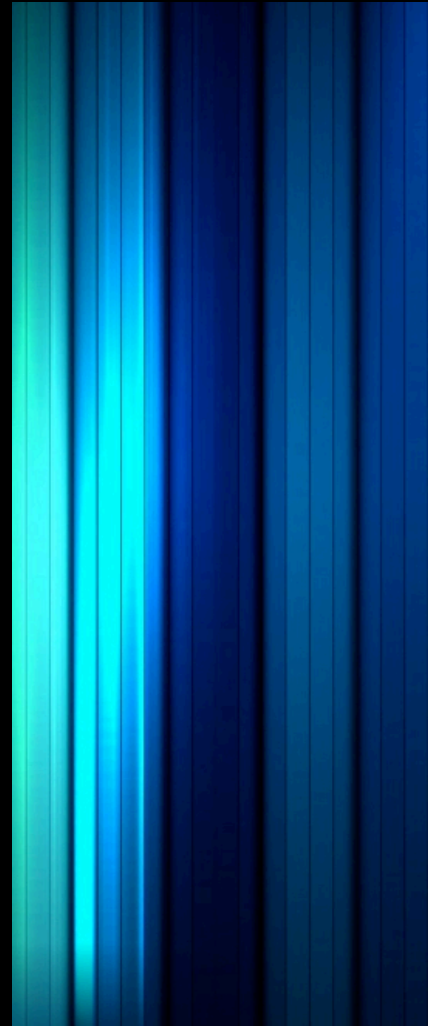
**I. God's presence is always
attached to total
commitment.**



Do not be deceived: God cannot
be mocked. A person reaps what
they sow. Galatians 6:7

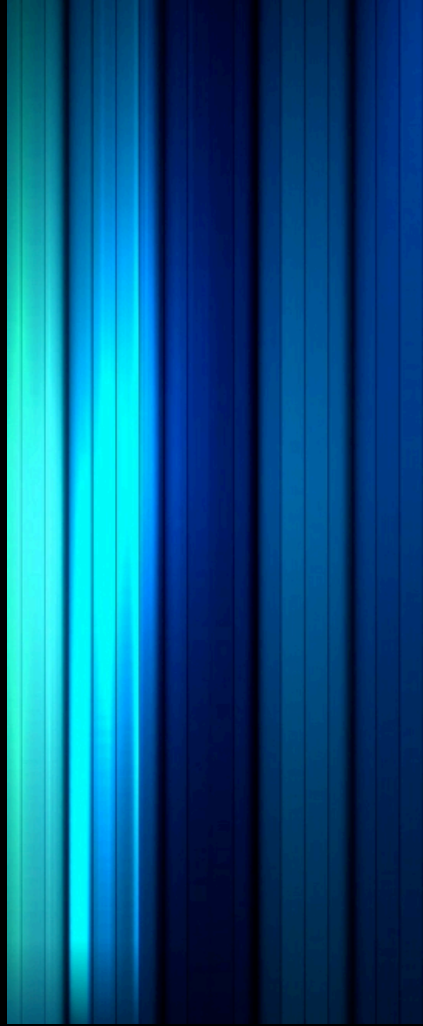


**II. God's presence is always
connected to the
destruction of Idols.**



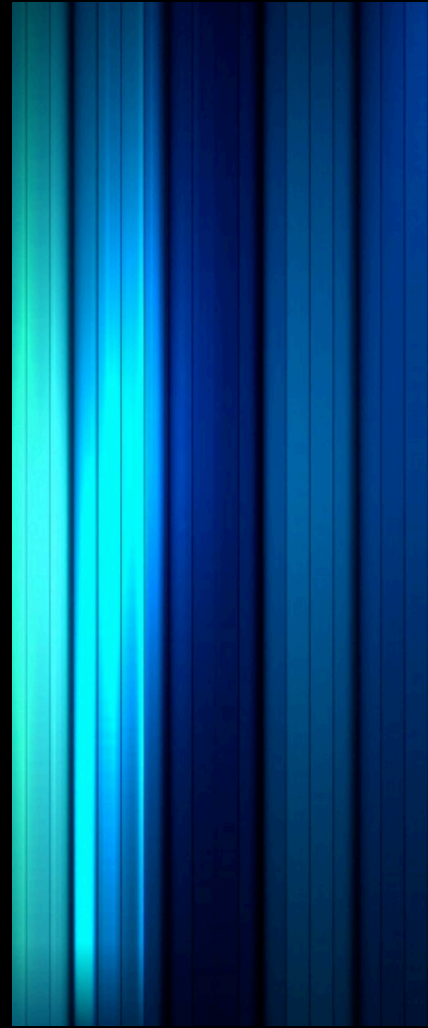


**III. God's presence is always
connected to His mercy.**



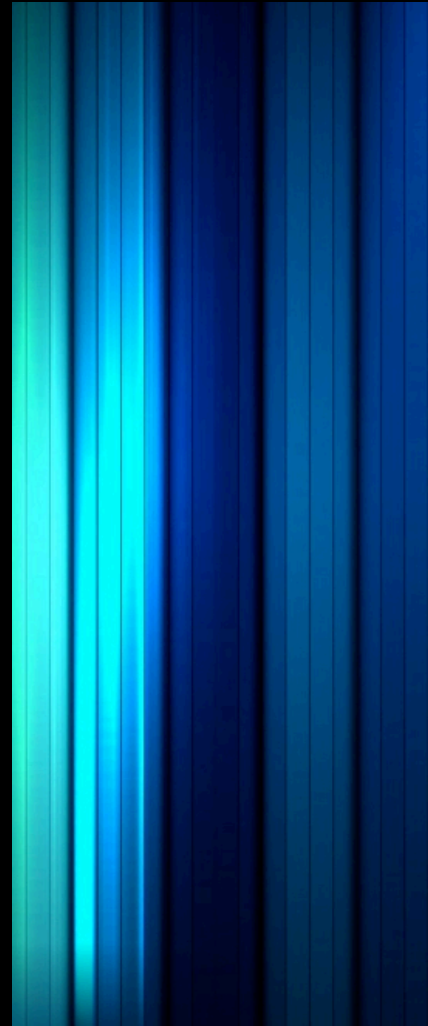
Priests regularly entered the first room as they performed their religious duties. But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people.

Hebrews 9:6,7



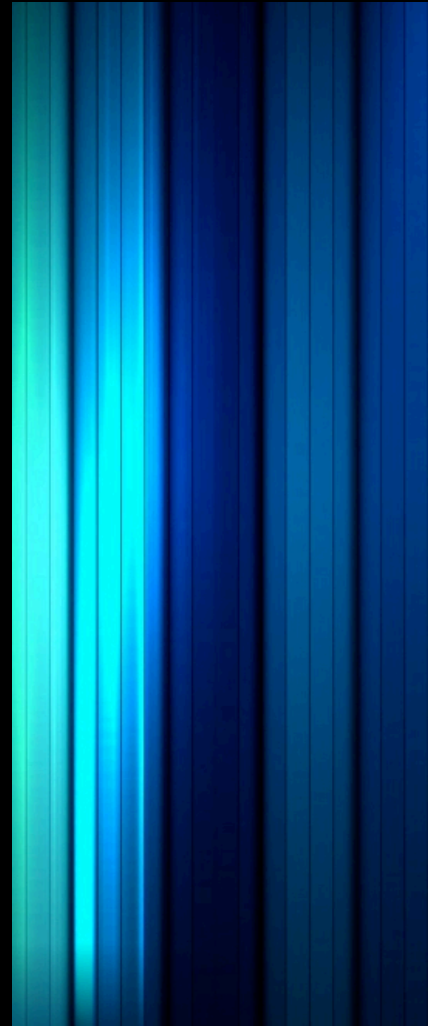
So Christ has now become the High Priest
...¹² With his own blood—not the blood of
goats and calves—he entered the Most
Holy Place once for all time and secured
our redemption forever.

Hebrews 9:11,12



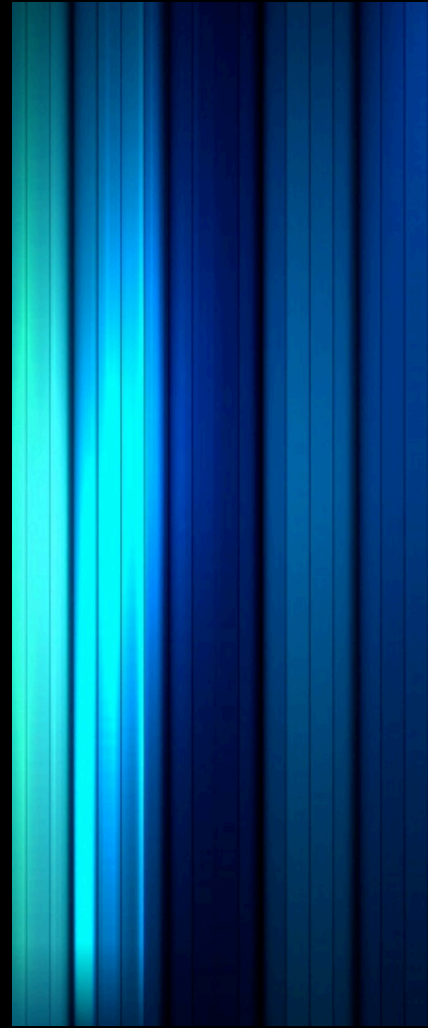
So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Hebrews 4:16



And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

Hebrews 9:27,28



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