

1 Samuel Chapter 7

Verses 1-2: Significantly, the “Ark” was not returned to Shiloh from which it had been taken into battle (4:4). Archaeological evidence suggests that Shiloh may have been destroyed in the campaigning, hence the Ark was taken to “Kirjath-jearim,” situated northwest of Jerusalem, where it remained until David brought it to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6).

1 Samuel 7:1 "And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD."

The Israelites brought the ark to “Kirjath-jearim rather than to Shiloh because the Philistines had destroyed Shiloh.

The house of Abinadab in the hill is, probably, the same as Gibeah. They had an entirely different attitude. The Ark was handled with great respect by just the Levites. This Abinadab was a Levite and his son Eleazar, was sanctified to take care of the Ark.

Verses 2-4: After 20 years of silence from on high, the Israelites truly repented. Putting away the images of the “Baals and the Ashtoreths” signified their turn from idolatrous worship and back “to the Lord”. Ashtoreth was the Canaanite goddess of fertility (Joshua 24:23; Judges 2:13; 10:16).

1 Samuel 7:2 "And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD."

“Twenty years” (coupled with verse 3), the 20 years designated the period Israel neglected God and chased after foreign gods. After those 20 years, Israel returned to the Lord.

This was a long 20 years. It seemed the Philistines were still very powerful opponents of the Israelites. There was not a national worship going on at this time. It appears, the Ark abode there with very little worship going on. During this time, Samuel is trying to get the people to repent of their evil. There needed to be a national repentance, before the LORD would bless Israel again. They were sad and lamenting their separation from the LORD's blessings, but they were not repenting.

Verses 3-4: For “Ashtaroth” and “Balaam” (see the note on Judges 2:11-15).

1 Samuel 7:3 "And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, [then] put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from

among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

"Return unto the Lord with all your hearts ... He will deliver you": This statement recalls the cycle in the book of Judges: apostasy, oppression, repentance and deliverance. It previews the contents of this chapter.

It seemed that Samuel was a lone voice crying out for the nation to repent. They needed to stop lamenting and start doing what would put them in good standing with God. They still worshipped their false gods and specifically Ashteroth. They must have a total change of heart. The following is a promise to the people from God.

2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

This is not true just for these Israelites; it is true in our day as well. God will always deliver His people, if they will put 100% of their trust in Him.

1 Samuel 7:4 "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroath, and served the LORD only."

"Baalim and Ashtaroath": Most dominant of the Canaanite pantheon, these deities were the fertility gods which plagued Israel. "Baal" and "Ashtaroath" are plurals of majesty, which signify their supreme authority over other Canaanite deities. Ashtaroath represented the female goddess, while Baal represented the male sky god who fertilized the land.

Finally it appears; they did put away their false gods and served the LORD only. Baal and Ashteroth were the national false gods of the Philistines. This in effect was a statement against the Philistines, as well as the false gods.

1 Samuel 7:5 "And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD."

"Mizpeh" (Mizpah) was a city of Benjamin in the region of Geba and Ramah about eight miles north of Jerusalem (1 Kings 15:22). Samuel assembled the Israelites for prayer at Mizpeh after the Ark of the Covenant was returned from Kirjath-jearim (verses 5-6). Saul was first presented to Israel as king at this city (10:17, 24). Mizpeh was also one of the places that Samuel visited on his annual circuit to judge Israel (verses 16-17). Mizpah was one of the sites fortified against the kings of the northern tribes of Israel by King Asa (1 Kings 15:22). After the destruction of Jerusalem (in 586 B.C.), Gedaliah was appointed governor and his residence was at Mizpah (2 Kings 25:23, 25). At this time, Mizpah became the capital of the Babylonian province of Judah. After the Babylonian captivity, Mizpah was re-inhabited by Israelites (Neh. 3:7, 15, 19).

"I will pray": Samuel was a man of prayer (7:8-9; 8:6, 12:19, 23; 15:11).

Mizpeh was up on a high hill. We said, in the verse above, to denounce the false gods of the Philistine was a revolt against the Philistines. "Mizpeh" means watch tower. This was a high area where they could see their enemy coming.

1 Samuel 7:6 "And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured [it] out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh."

“Drew water, and poured it out before the Lord”: The pouring out of water before the Lord was a sign of repentance. This act is repeated (in 2 Sam. 23:16).

“We have sinned against the Lord”: The symbol of Samuel pouring out the water and the acknowledgment of the people reveal a situation where true repentance had taken place. The condition of the heart superseded the importance or righteousness of the ritual.

“Samuel judged”: At this point Samuel is introduced as the judge of Israel. His judgeship encompassed both domestic leadership and the conduct of war. The word links the text back to the last comment about Eli who judged 40 years (4:18). Samuel is known to be the one taking over Eli’s judgeship. He served as the last judge before the first king (1 Sam. 8:5).

The pouring out of water symbolized a repentant heart “Poured” out in submission and personal trust before God (Psalm 62:8; Lam. 2:19). This was an act of self-denial and humility. It signified pouring out their hearts and, along with the whole burnt offering (in 7:9), complete repentance.

The "pouring out of the water" symbolized their sorrow for the sins they had committed. They fasted and dedicated themselves again to the LORD. Samuel had been a prophet and now, he is a judge of Israel. In fact, he is the last of the judges. Samuel would be their leader against the Philistines.

1 Samuel 7:7 "And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard [it], they were afraid of the Philistines."

“Israel ... afraid of the Philistines”: When Israel hear that the Philistines had come up against them for war, they were afraid.

The Israelites gathering at Mizpeh was so great a number of people that the Philistines heard of it and came against Israel. These Israelites still had not learned to put their total trust in the LORD. They were afraid, when they heard the Philistines were coming.

1 Samuel 7:8 "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines."

To whom they applied, not as the general of their forces, but as the prophet of the Lord; believing his prayers for them would be of more avail to them than an army of men so numerous, or so well equipped.

"Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us": He had been praying for them that day, and they desired he would continue praying for them, well knowing that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. They knew their salvation was of the Lord, and that he only could save them, and that he must be sought unto for it; and as Samuel had an interest in him, they beg he would continue to make use of it on their behalf. In which they expressed their trust in God, their regard to means, the duty of prayer, and the high esteem they had of the prophet of the Lord, whom they entreat to pray for them.

"That he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines": Who were now coming up against them, and who had for a long time tyrannized over them.

They call out to God to save them. They know that Samuel is in good standing with the LORD, so they ask him to pray for them to the LORD. Their only hope is in the LORD, because the Philistines have a mighty army.

1 Samuel 7:9 "And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered [it for] a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him."

After a lamb was eight days old, it was fit to be sacrificed to God (Exodus 22:30; Lev. 22:27).

"And offered it for a burnt-offering": For though he was not a priest, nor this place appointed for sacrifice, yet as a prophet he had authority from God to build an altar anywhere and offer sacrifices. Thus, other holy men, Gideon and Manoah, were warranted to offer extraordinary sacrifices, in places which God had not before appointed. And thus, we read of an altar he built in another place (1 Sam. 7:17), as Elijah did in following times.

"And Samuel cried unto the Lord": He made intercession with the sacrifice. So Christ intercedes in virtue of his satisfaction. And in all our prayers we must have an eye to his great oblation, depending on him for audience and acceptance.

"And the Lord heard him": Probably God answered Samuel as he did Manoah, by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, in testimony of his acceptance of it.

Notice the difference in the offering here, from when they offered the two milk cows. This was an offering, pleasing unto the LORD. The lamb was at least 7 days old or older, but was still a baby. Samuel is acting in the office of priest in this situation. He prays for the people to the LORD and the LORD hears and answers him.

1 Samuel 7:10 "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel."

“The Lord thundered ... upon the Philistines”: In a literal manner, the Lord did to His enemies what was said by Hannah in her prayer (2:10).

For “thunder” as a sign of the divine presence (see the note on Judges 5:19-21; compare 1 Samuel 2:10).

We see from this, that the Philistines were almost in the camp before the lamb finished burning. The LORD brought a thunderstorm of great magnitude on the Philistines, just as they were about to enter the camp. It was probably accompanied by lightning. Many were killed, and many others turned to run. They knew this attack was from the LORD.

1 Samuel 7:11 "And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until [they came] under Beth-car."

To which they were encouraged by hearing or perceiving that the army of the Philistines was discomfited by the thunder, and lightning, and earthquake.

"And pursued the Philistines": Who, when they came out, were fleeing from the opening earth, and frightened with thunder and lightning, and many were killed, and all put in disorder; so that they stayed not to engage in battle with Israel, and who had nothing to do but to pursue their enemy.

"And smote them": With what weapons of war they could get at Mizpeh, and with what some might have with them for private use, and in common wear; but more especially with the weapons of the Philistines, which they in their confusion and fright had thrown away.

"Until they came under Beth-car": A place so called; "car" signifies a lamb; here might be formerly a temple dedicated to the lamb, unless it had its name in memory of the lamb Samuel now offered, which was followed with such success. Josephus calls this place Corraea; and in the Targum it is Bethsaron, which signifies a fruitful field or champaign country.

It appears the LORD had killed so many that the others headed away from the hill. Just as they did so, Samuel sent the Israelites down on them with great force. The word "under" indicates that Beth-car was a place of safety like a cave.

1 Samuel 7:12 "Then Samuel took a stone, and set [it] between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us."

The Israelites recognized that their victory really came from God. A different location from the one mentioned (in 4:1 and 5:1). The name functions as the literary knot for the two ends of this unit (see note on 4:1).

“Hitherto hath the Lord helped us”: This expression means that the Lord was the One responsible for getting Israel to this point. He was Israel’s Sovereign One in times of both faithfulness and rebellion. He fought the battles and provided the blessings.

"Ebenezer" means help stone, or stone of help. The stone was a memorial for the help the LORD had given them in battle.

1 Samuel 7:13 "So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."

"They came no more into the coast of Israel": The Lord gave Israel the victory over the Philistines, discontinuing their threat for the immediate future during Samuel's judgeship.

"All the days of Samuel": As the section opened (in 4:1), with Samuel pictured as God's agent, so here the section closed with the Lord working powerfully through all the days of Samuel.

The Philistines are not annihilated. They are subdued. In other words, they do not come against Israel again during the time of Samuel. The LORD fought for Israel while Samuel was alive.

Verses 14-17: "Amorites" is used here as a general term for all the various groups of the native Canaanite population. The Israelites at last achieved peace with both the Canaanites and Philistines, due to the godly leadership of "Samuel," Israel's last judge.

1 Samuel 7:14 "And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites."

"Ekron ... unto Gath": These two cities, mentioned earlier as chief Philistine cities (5:8, 10), became the eastern border of the Philistines. The territory to the east of these cities was freed from Philistine control and returned to Israel.

"Amorites": Whereas the Philistines resided in the coastal plains, the Amorites resided in the hills west of Israel between the Jordan Valley and the coastal plain. As with the Philistines, Israel was at peace with the Amorites.

We remember these cities had been counted in the 5 most important cities of the Philistines. It perhaps means they are on the border of the Israelite territory. The Israelites and the Amorites are friendly during this time. They both have the mutual enemy of the Philistines.

1 Samuel 7:15 "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life."

The influence and supreme power of Samuel only ended with his life. For a very long period, probably for at least twenty years after the decisive battle of Ebenezer, Samuel, as "judge," exercised the chief authority in Israel. The time at length arrived when, convinced by clear Divine monition that it was best for the people that a king should rule over them, Samuel the seer, then advanced in years voluntarily laid down his high office in favor of the new king, Saul. But his influence remained, and his authority, whenever he chose to exercise it, seems to have

continued undiminished, and on momentous occasions. See for instance (1 Sam. 15:33), we find king and nation submitting to his counsel and expressed will.

We remember that Samuel had been dedicated to the LORD by his mother Hannah, even before he was born. He stayed in the service of the LORD until his death.

1 Samuel 7:16 "And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places."

“In circuit”: The circuit was an annual trip made by Samuel; he would travel to Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and return once again to Ramah, which allowed him to manage the affairs of the people.

He was like the supreme judge of these people. He went from city to city, judging the things too difficult for their local leaders to decide.

1 Samuel 7:17 "And his return [was] to Ramah; for there [was] his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD."

“Ramah” was the name of several sites in ancient Israel, the most famous of which was known as Ramah of Ephraim. It may be identified with the Arimathea of the New Testament (Matt. 25:57; John 19:38), and with modern Rentis, about 18 miles east of Joppa and northwest of Jerusalem. This Ramah was likely the birthplace, home and burial place of the prophet Samuel (verse 17; 19:18-23, 28:3), elsewhere referred to as Ramathaim-zophim (1:1). At Ramah, the elders of Israel demanded a king (8:4-5), Saul first met Samuel (9:6, 10), and David sought refuge from Saul (19:18: 20:1).

The first major division of the book (1:1 - 7:17), ends with Samuel returning to Ramah to judge the people.

Ramah was the home of his father and mother. His father Elkanah had been wealthy and owned much land. It appears that some of the inheritance went to Samuel and he lived in Ramah. He built an altar there on his own land it seems. He built a home and lived in Ramah. Samuel lived his entire life in the service of the LORD. We do not read of Samuel doing anything which would be displeasing to the LORD

1 Samuel Chapter 7 Questions

1. Where did the men come from to get the Ark?
2. What is, probably, the same as Gibeah?
3. How was the Ark handled?
4. Who was sanctified to take care of the Ark?

5. How long did the Ark remain in Kirjath-jearim?
6. The house of Israel lamented for the _____.
7. Who is trying to get the people to repent, and turn to the LORD?
8. What was the main thing they must do, to show they have turned to the LORD?
9. What were the names of the two false gods they did put away?
10. Turning from these false gods was a statement against the _____.
11. Where did Samuel tell them to gather all Israel?
12. What does the name mean?
13. What did they do at Mizpeh, in the way of worship?
14. What did the pouring out of the water symbolize?
15. _____ would be their leader against the Philistines.
16. What did the Philistines do, when they heard about Israel meeting at Mizpeh?
17. How did the Israelites feel, when they knew the Philistines were coming?
18. What did they ask Samuel to do for them?
19. What did Samuel sacrifice to the LORD?
20. Samuel is acting in the office of _____ here.
21. What did the LORD do to fight for Israel?
22. What does "Ebenezer" mean?
23. Who became friends with Israel?
24. How long did Samuel judge Israel?
25. What did Samuel judge?
26. Where did Samuel return home to?
27. Samuel got his land from _____.