

There Was No Frequent Vision

An inductive study of I Samuel – Chapters 1 - 15

By

O. William Cooper

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O. William Cooper

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4742 Westbury Drive

Fort Collins, Colorado 805626

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THE PREFACE

One of the great needs of the modern church is the discipling of new converts. These people know little about God and Christians who have not grown in their faith since their spiritual birth are not in a position to be of any help to these new-born believers. Discipling does not progress without a corresponding growth in the knowledge of the Scriptures. Studying books about the Bible is not the best way to meet this great need. People need to study the Scriptures themselves. We have come through a time when people within the body of Christ have depended upon the pastor or other hired teachers to interpret the scriptures for them. Our problem is that our need to understand the message of Scripture seldom happens when we are in the presence of that professional. People within the body of Christ need to be enabled to interpret the Scriptures for themselves. In turn, this will enable them to become intimately aware of the character and will of God. As people really discover who God is, they also begin to discover what God wants them to be and become. This was the message of Isaiah's life. When he saw God, in the temple, he also heard God call him to be a prophet.

Studies, such as this one, are based upon a central principle –All Scripture was given with a dual purpose in mind:

1. To convey the basic teachings of the individual books through which God reveals himself.
2. To reveal the person and nature of God in order to know His will for our lives.

Scripture must be seen with these ideas in mind. We must, therefore, continually ask ourselves not only what has this portion of Scripture taught us concerning the subject of the text, but we must also ask ourselves, what has this passage taught us concerning the person and nature of God?

This volume is an inductive study. Inductive Bible Study is a study tool which enables the student to allow the Scriptures to present the message it was written to convey rather than a message one brings to the text. Inductive Bible Study seeks to discover the message of a particular passage, phrase or word in view of the overall teaching of the particular book of the Bible in which it is found. It should be clearly understood that Inductive Bible Study is a tool. Like all other tools of Bible study, it is limited, but also very helpful. This study is not intended to be a seminar in teaching the study method of Inductive Bible Study. Such seminars will be taught on request, in local churches. In this volume, we will attempt to enable the student to discover what God is teaching through this portion of the inspired Scriptures.

The guide questions in this volume have been placed in the three-ring binder so that the students or readers can do their own study and add it to the text as prepared by the author. It is the intent of the author of this study to have students dig into the text and answer the questions presented, and then supplementing their work with the insights which the author has discovered and shares in the commentary following the questions.

Logos Ministries, Inc., exists to be an arm of the local church. It was created to strengthen members within the church fellowship rather than to take the place of the local church. It is our desire to be a supporting servant to each pastor and the members of the congregation. Logos Ministries is committed to complement and increase spiritual productivity of the local congregation and the individual. These materials are being used in a number of seminaries in different countries. Intellectual support for the body of Christ in third and fourth world countries is a joyful part of our ministry.

Because the Scriptures are the product of the Holy Spirit speaking through the hearts and minds of chosen writers, it is our conviction that the most important part of Bible study is the preparation through prayer. We urge you, before each time you study, to prepare yourself by spending time in prayer and meditation. We trust that this study will be as inspiring and enjoyable as it was in our preparation.

O. William Cooper

May 24, 2003
Fort Collins, Colorado 80526

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All too often, when a book is written the writer gets the attention. Inevitably, there are a number of people who put their whole heart into the project, but remain unnoticed and unappreciated. This should not be the case.

Over the past year, while this book was being written, our son Kiel spent hours with me refining descriptions of Jewish events and practices. As a result, a number of uniquely Jewish events are presented in much clearer form. Besides the help it provided, it was great to work together with him.

In my junior year in high school, I took a course in typing. Some of my classmates took the inevitable tests with near-perfect scores. I can honestly say that I never had that problem. Unfortunately, this situation has not changed much with the passage of time. Because of this, Rev. Mary Neil has literally spent weeks of her time correcting the instances where there were no spaces between words or too many spaces as the case may be. Time after time when she returned the proof-read copy, I saw the words, "Did you really mean..." The more meticulously she worked, the better my writing appeared to be.

Most of the time, it is not the computer that makes the mistakes, but "the nut behind the keyboard" that is responsible for things not being the way they ought to be. On a number of occasions, it has been a bit easy to sense the near-human activity of my electronic friend. Sometimes, in the quiet confines of my office, my electronic assistant seems to make a decision not to be helpful at all that particular day. It just does not want to work. I pack the computer up and take it down to Dr. Peter Stone. Wouldn't you believe it, when I get there, the machine works as though it had never failed since the day it was made? As Dr. Stone has said many times, when troubles go away by themselves, they tend to return with their friends. These are the times that I turn my gadget over to Dr. Stone and he brings order out of the chaos of what happens when I work on it by myself.

Each year I teach in Haiti several times as well as teaching in one or two other countries. When classes are over for the day, there are occasions when we can just sit around a table with students to talk about the "what-if's" of our faith. Out of these sessions has come a greater determination to teach these students the scriptures. It challenges me to make greater efforts to explain the issues in greater clarity and to write in such a way that the message of the particular text takes hold of their heart as it has my own. I owe them a great debt because of their willingness to identify the things they do not understand or are able to share their need for help with a given passage. Because of the challenges these sessions present, I have been prodded to explain the intent of Scripture with much greater clarity. It has also served to provide greater stimulus to write on Biblical topics and themes that would otherwise receive less or no attention.

As you can see, these people are key to my being able to function in my writing. Without their gracious efforts these studies would be an even greater challenge that they already are. In the years that we have worked together, I have never heard any form of complaint about the amount of effort these tasks consume. I regularly thank God for the help they provide in the preparation of these manuscripts. It is one of the many blessings God has made available in my ministry.

With deep gratitude,

O. William Cooper

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INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each chapter.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	

2. Study the chapter titles you have written. What divisions of the book can you identify?

INTRODUCTION

In Old Testament times, the Hebrew Bible did not contain two books called I and II Samuel. It was one single narrative. This changed when the Hebrew text was translated into Greek during the second century B.C.

It is interesting that these two books are called I and II Samuel. If you look at the chapter summaries that follow, you will note that Samuel is only a major figure in the book in about one-third of the chapters. He is not a major figure in II Samuel at all. We will deal with this issue at length following the study of chapter 31.

We must be very careful ascribing dates to the events in I Samuel. We believe that Samuel died at an advanced age in about 1,000 B.C. We cannot be much more specific than this.

The fact that these two books bear the name "Samuel" causes many people to believe that Samuel wrote these books. Samuel's death is reported in I Samuel chapter 25. He could not have been present for the events in I Samuel 26 – 31. Samuel died before any of the events in II Samuel took place. The honest answer is that we do not know for sure who wrote these two books. I Samuel may contain some reports that Samuel wrote, but we cannot speak with assurance about the authorship of these books.

1	The Birth of Samuel
2	Contrast - Samuel and Eli's Sons
3	Jehovah Spoke With Samuel
4	The Philistines Capture The Ark of the Covenant
5	Agreement to Return The Ark of the Covenant
6	The Ark of the Covenant Returned
7	Israel Defeated and Subdued The Philistines
8	Israel Demanded a King
9	Saul Meets Samuel
10	Samuel Presented Saul to Israel
11	Saul Routed Ammonites at Jabesh-gilead
12	Samuel Prophesied Concerning Their Demand for a King
13	Saul Made a Burnt Offering
14	Jonathan Routed the Philistines
15	Saul Disobeyed God's Command Concerning Amalek

As you study the chapter titles, you will discover that there are several important characters that surface in the story of this book. Out of all of these, three men surface as the most important people in the book – Samuel, Saul and David. In one way or another, every part of this book focuses careful attention on one or more of these three men. The book does not select one of these as more dominant in the text than the other two. It is clear that both David and Saul seem to be more involved in the text than Samuel was. As you study, you will observe that this author makes repeated use of comparisons and contrasts between the characters in the text. The message that the author seeks to convey is often hidden neatly within these comparisons and contrasts. Watch carefully for them.

As you begin to study this book, you must keep in mind the position of these times in the overall history of the nation. This is a watershed period in the life of Israel. God had brought them out of Egypt and into the land of promise. This was a time of great blessing, but it does not mean that it was also a time when the relationship between the LORD and His people was at its greatest rapport. Indeed, Israel was more disobedient during this time than they had been for some time. During the time of the Judges, Israel had a system of government that was essentially a theocracy. Israel was not happy with that arrangement and it was not working

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well. As this book begins, Israel found an excuse to insist on having the king they desperately wanted. God had been more than patient with them, but it was time for Israel to be punished for their rebellion. The punishment they received was that they got what they wanted. This is the point at which the book of I Samuel begins.

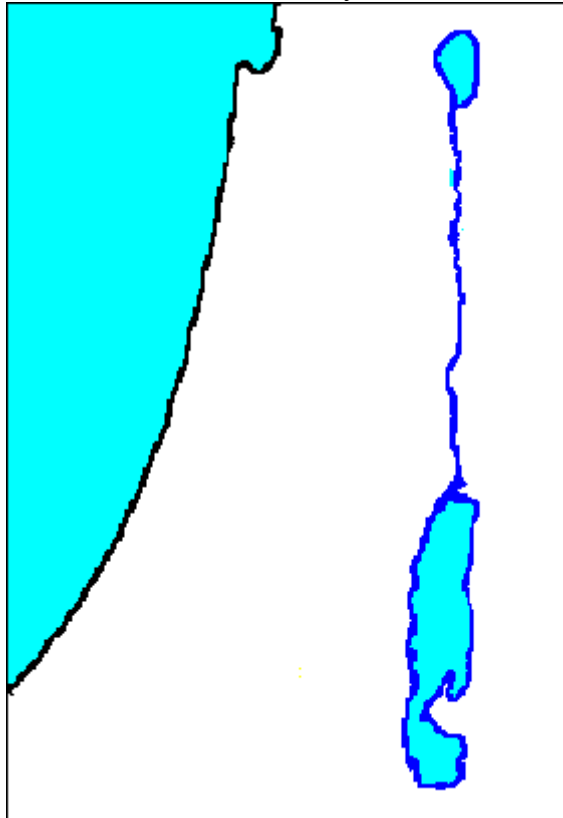
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 1

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL – I SAMUEL 1:1 - 28

1. There are five paragraphs in the first chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

1:1-8	
1:9-11	
1:12-18	
1:19-20	
1:21-28	

2. In I Samuel 1:1-8, the author described Elkanah's family situation.



- In I Samuel 1:1, the author indicated that Elkanah and his family came from Ramathaim-zophim. On this map, identify where this city is located in relationship to Shiloh, the place of worship.
- In 1:2, the author indicated that Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. How can we explain the fact that he had two wives?
- In 1:3, the author begins to draw a very serious contrast .
 - Who are the people being contrasted?
 - The author gives some initial information about one of the parties being contrasted. What did he say?
- In 1:4, 5, the author draws a contrast between the way Elkanah prepared his two wives for worship.
 - What did the author say about Elkanah's preparation for Hannah?
 - What is the significance of this information?
- In 1:6, the author used four words to paint a picture of Peninnah.
 - Define these four words.

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- 4) How would you describe the way Peninnah felt about Hannah?
 - 5) How would you describe the way Peninnah felt about herself?
 - f. In 1:7, the author described the frequency and results of Peninnah's actions.
 - 6) How does he really describe her actions?
 - 7) What were the results of these actions?
What do these results mean?
 - g. In 1:8, Elkanah asked Hanna four questions.
 - 8) Can you imagine that Elkanah did not know the answer to these questions?
 - 9) If any woman were asked the fourth question, what would the response be?
 - 10) What do these questions tell us about Elkanah?
3. In I Samuel 1:9-11, Hannah went to the temple to pray.
- a. In 1:9, there is an unusual statement. Please read 1:7 and then read 1:9.
 - 11) What, if anything, do you see in these statements?
 - 12) In 1:9, the author stated that Eli was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple. What is the significance of this information?
 - b. In 1:10, 11, the author described Hannah's condition as she began her prayer.
 - 13) What is that condition?
 - 14) Observe the way Hannah identified deity in this prayer. What is the significance of this?
 - 15) Three times, in verse 11, Hanna speaks of herself as "Thy maidservant." What is the intent of this type of statement?
 - 16) Hannah's vow is in the form of a conditional statement ("If... then...").
 - 17) What four conditions did Hannah request in her vow? Why?
 - 18) Hannah made two promises she would make if the conditions were met. What are these two promises?
 - 19) What is the significance of this "son" living without a razor coming on his head?
 - 20) If Hannah gave her son to the Lord, how would this help her family situation where Peninnah had several sons who lived in the family?
4. In I Samuel 1:12 – 18, Eli mistook Hannah's desperate prayer for drunkenness.
- a. In 1:12, 13, Hannah was praying and Eli was observing her as she prayed.
 - 21) In verse 12, the author reported that Hannah was praying and her lips were moving, but she made no sound. In view of the fact that these people quite often prayed out loud, what do you make of this?
 - b. In 1:14, Eli accosted Hannah. How would you describe the emotion of his statement to her?
 - c. In 1:15, 16, Hannah made her defense before Eli.
 - 22) In verse 15, Hannah began her defense of her character before Eli. How would you describe what she said?
 - 23) In verse 16, Hannah used 3 different words to describe herself and her situation. Describe or define each of the following:
 - "Worthless woman"
 - "Great concern"
 - "Provocation"
 - d. In 1:17, Eli responded to Hannah's defense of her character.
 - 1) What did he do in his response?
 - 2) What did he fail to do in his response?
 - e. In 1:18, Hannah made a second appeal to Eli.
 - 1) What does this appeal tell you about her feelings about Eli's response?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 1

- 2) Compare/contrast 1:18 with 1:7. What do you observe? What does this tell you?
5. In I Samuel 1: 19-20, Hannah Conceived and bore a child
- In 1:19, there is a definite change in the tone of the writing. How would you describe that change?
 - In 1:19, the author said "the LORD **remembered** her." What did he mean by this statement?
 - In 1:20, the text indicates that Hannah named her son. This is most unusual. How would you explain this?
 - The text indicates that Hannah named her son "Samuel."
 - What does this name mean?
 - On the basis of this meaning, what is the significance of this name?
6. In I Samuel 1:21-28, Hannah fulfilled her promise to give her son to God
- In 1:21, the author, speaking about Elkanah, said that he would "offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice" and he also said, "to pay his vow."
 - What is the difference between these two quotations?
 - What does this verse tell you about the character and spiritual life of Elkanah?
 - In 1:22, the author draws a contrast between what Elkanah was going to do and what his wife, Hannah, was going to do.
 - What does this tell us about Elkanah?
 - Why would Hannah not want to go up to the sacrifice?
 - In 1:23, Elkanah responded to the decision of Hannah.
 - Elkanah had one reservation about Hannah's decision.
 - What did Elkanah mean when he said, "only may the LORD confirm His word"?
 - In 1:24, the author gives us one hint about why Hannah decided to wait and then take Samuel to the temple and leave him there. Can you sense what that hint is?
 - In 1:25, Hannah fulfilled her vow to give the boy to the LORD. What is the significance of the bull mentioned in this verse?
 - In 1:26, Hannah reminded Eli that she was the one who had stood beside him praying to the LORD. Why would it be important for her to do this?
 - In 1:27, Hannah explained to Eli that this child that he could see before him was the one for whom she prayed to the LORD. What was she doing?
 - Among the Jews, following the Exodus, the first-born son of every family belonged to the LORD. With this in mind, why did she have to make the sacrifice of the bull when she brought Samuel to the temple?
 - In 1:28, Hannah continues to explain to Eli what she meant when she promised to give Samuel to the LORD.
 - In this verse she said, "I have also dedicated him to the LORD." She also said, "as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD. What is the difference between these two statements?
 - Notice the end of this verse says, "and he worshipped the LORD there." Who is "HE"?
7. Reflect upon this chapter. In what way will this have an impact upon your own dedication to serve God?

LESSON 1

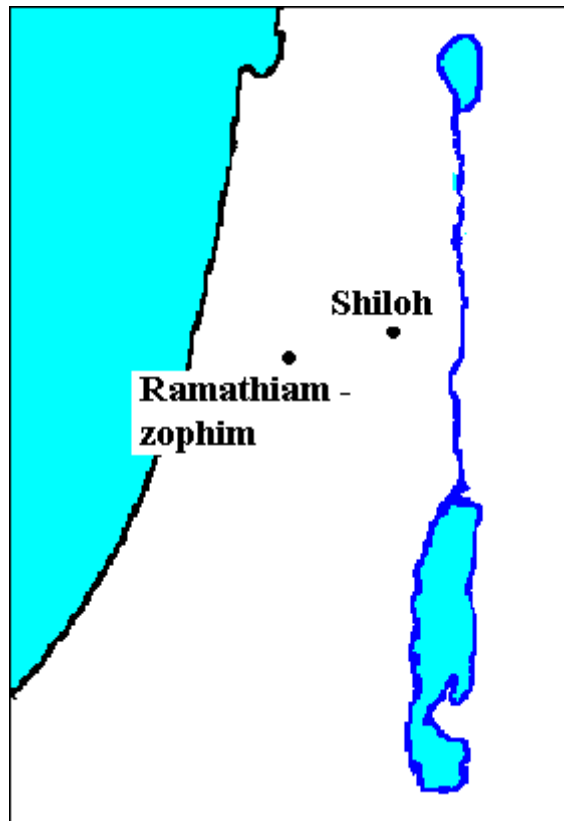
THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL – I SAMUEL 1:1 – 28

There are five paragraphs in the first chapter of I Samuel. You will find a summary of each of these paragraphs in the table that follows.

1:1-8	Elkanah Had Two Wives – Hannah and Peninnah
1:9-11	Hannah Pleaded with God for A Son
1:12-18	Eli Mistook Hannah's Desperation for Drunkenness
1:19-20	Hannah Conceived and Bore a Son – Samuel
1:21-28	Hannah Brought Samuel to Shiloh as Promised

I Samuel 1:1-8 – Elkanah Had Two Wives – Hannah and Peninnah

Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. I Samuel 1.1



As you can see on this map, it is a distance of about 18 miles from Ramathaim-zophim to Shiloh. Shiloh was the official place of worship for Israel during this time. In most instances, when worship took place, in a place other than Jerusalem, it was an indication that the king was not a good king and was probably involved in idolatry. As the text indicates, this was located in the tribe of Ephraim; a tribe not known for its godliness.

And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. I Samuel 1:2

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The fact that a man had two wives usually indicated that his favorite wife was childless. After ten years, a woman must bear a child or the husband was expected to take a second wife to bear him a son. This was their social security system. Though this was considered a social requirement, it seldom worked in a kindly amicable fashion. There was always a great deal of hostility between the favored wife and the one who could bear children.

Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were priests to the LORD there. I Samuel 1:3

The fact that Elkanah went up each year to worship God and make sacrifice indicates that he was a very devout individual. It indicates that he was very devout, but does not necessarily indicate that his wives were of the same mind. Worship, in the Jewish home, was the responsibility of the husband/father. The wife would need to know the Shabbat prayers and an occasional prayer connected with religious holidays, but the teaching and modeling of religious responsibility was the duty of the father of the house. There is ample evidence in this story to indicate that Elkanah was, indeed, a very devout husband and father.

And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; I Samuel 1:4

We should notice that this text states that Peninnah had several sons and daughters. This was not a recent relationship. Peninnah and Hannah had been at odds for some time. The text speaks of "all her sons and daughters." Observe also that these people were all to participate in the sacrifice in two ways.

- a. They came to the feast and brought their sacrifice.
- b. They also ate a portion of the sacrificed animal that they brought.

It is clear that the whole family would participate, but it is also true that the responsibility for this sacrificial experience was the sole responsibility of Elkanah. This was the man's place to perform on behalf of his entire family.

But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb. I Samuel 1:5

This is a most significant statement on the part of the author. The fact that Elkanah gave Hannah a double portion when she was barren and it was necessary for him to take a second wife because of this barrenness, says reams about his deep love for her. In essence, the author has said the same thing twice in this verse. He said, "he would give a double portion." This would be in spite of the fact that when he did he would certainly receive some serious aggravation from Peninnah for showing favoritism to a wife who could not give him any children and she had given him a large number of both boys and girls. The author also said, "for he loved her." We tend to think of marriage as the product of love. People in the east did not; do not think that way. The bride and groom did not make the decision, the fathers did. It was agreed upon at the end of a long negotiation procedure which involved serious financial implications. In the case of Peninnah, Elkanah married a second time because he had no son and needed one to take charge of the family when he would no longer be able to do so.

Observe that the text says, "for the LORD had closed her womb." There is clear evidence here and elsewhere that the LORD certainly does so, but for a specific purpose. Observe that though God had closed her womb, still He did something even better, He gave Hannah a son. God often gets blamed for painful things that happen. More often than not, it is overlooked when God having done something initially deemed painful, does something far greater and more of a blessing than the previous pain would have brought.

Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. I Samuel 1:6

There is a contrast here. The author has given us a picture of Hannah that is very positive and beautiful.

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

Now he gives us a picture of the kind of person Peninnah really was.

"Her rival, however would provoke her bitterly to irritate her,"

The word translated "rival" is "tsarah" (צָרָה). It means "tight" or "narrow." It was used to describe an opponent, adversary or enemy.

We need to keep in mind that the people in that day thought that if a woman was barren, it was punishment from God for a very serious kind of sinful action. This was the situation that Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, faced because she and Zacharias had no children and he was a priest of God. It is not hard to imagine how the wife who had several children would be quite condescending to the one who was barren and considered sinful. The statements, in the text, appear to carefully indicate that Elkanah was keenly aware of what was going on and was having no part of the attempt to ridicule his favorite wife.

The word translated "provoked" is "kaas" (כָּעַס). It means "to grieve," "to be filled with rage," "to be indignant." This is a very heated situation that results in extremely harsh words or actions.

The provoking was a two edged sword. It singled out Hannah as a sinner that God was punishing when this appears not to be the case. It also indicates that Peninnah was or appeared to be much better than Hannah. In this way, Peninnah has become guilty of both pride and cruelty.

"Because the LORD had closed her womb."

There are a number of assumptions that go along with what Peninnah was saying about Hannah. In that culture, people believed that if a woman was barren it was because the LORD was punishing her for some grave sin. This was not true, but they believed it. Thus, a barren woman was humiliated for two reasons – because she was barren and because she was a terrible sinner.

And it happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her, so she wept and would not eat. I Samuel 1:7

"And it happened year after year,"

This, of course, is not a single incident. This had been going on for many years. Peninnah, as the second wife, had been in the family for a number of years and her many children were evidence of that fact. It appears that across many years, Hannah had suffered in silence. There comes a point, however, when the silence is no longer sufficient to deal with the pain the abused person feels. It is one thing to be abused, in this way, once, but it is quite a different thing to have this happen year after year.

"As often as she went up to the house of the Lord,"

For one thing, the thought of going to the place of worship was always accompanied by the thought of being ridiculed again as she had been the year before. Think of what it would be like to have your thought of going to worship being inescapably linked to the pain of ridicule and provocation.

"She would provoke her,"

The word translated "provoke" is "kaac" (כָּאָע). It is a very strong word and is translated variously, "grieve," "cause to rage," "to be angry and indignant." This is anything except mild indignation. Peninnah knew that she could humiliate and enrage Hannah and enjoyed doing so. There was an added benefit for her. If she could get Hannah angry enough, she could hope that this would cause Elkanah to be upset with his favorite wife. It did not work.

"So she wept and would not eat."

The author was not talking about the intake of food. He was rather talking about the depth of her pain because of the provocation. She was suffering so badly that she could not eat without fear of being sick to her stomach. It is clear from the text that the "not eat" was tied to the weeping.

Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" I Samuel 1:8

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It is very clear that Elkanah was a man. He had no clue as to how much this situation was hurting his favorite wife. The compassion of this man, however, was very evident. Under most circumstances, the husband would not be so compassionate as he was. The husband would either tell her to get over it or get angry with her for making this special time a painful experience. Elkanah could simply have sent Hannah away when it was clear that she was barren. He, rather, tried to comfort her and assure her that his love for her was untouched. Elkanah asked Hannah four questions:

"Why do you weep?"

It appears, at least, that Elkanah did not know why Hannah was weeping as she was. That would be hard for us to understand. Whenever there were two wives in a family, there was always some strife between the two women. They usually tried to deal with this when the husband was not present. Under some conditions, the husband might not know what was going on. That clearly was not the situation in this case. He knew what Peninnah was doing. He apparently thought that this was no big thing because he loved Hannah so much more than he loved Peninnah. That might seem reasonable for Elkanah, but Hannah knew better.

The word translated "weep" is "baka" (בָּכָה). It is "deep sorrow like the mourning of the death of a loved one. We should keep in mind that when the Hebrew speaks of tears, this is associated with the eyes. When the Hebrew refers to weeping, it is associated with the voice. This was a very loud, bitter vocal eruption that Hannah could no longer control;

"Why do you not eat?"

Elkanah tried again. It just did not make sense for her to be so upset over this kind of attack. He knew that she was a stronger person than that. If she told him the truth she would have told him that she did not eat because she couldn't eat. Her pain made it impossible for her to eat.

"Why is your heart sad?"

The word translated "sad" is "yara" (יָרָא). It is to grieve so intensely that one trembles beyond control. It is to be broken up with fear to the point that one cannot control physical extremities.

Her heart was very sad because she felt that because she was barren she was a failure as a woman. Her heart was sad because she was devastated that her husband had to marry a second wife in order for him to have a son. Her heart was sad because like every other woman she wanted to be the one and only woman in her husband's heart. To know that this other woman had born many children for him and was now humiliating her was just more than she could handle.

"Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Poor Elkanah! He just did not understand! If Hannah answered him honestly she would have said, "No, you certainly are not!" Elkanah's heart was in the right place, but he simply did not understand how his wives felt and dealt with each other. Elkanah had good reason to understand that his relationship with Hannah was deep and loving. This might be the basis for his statement. The piece that he did not seem to understand was that Hannah felt less a woman because she was unable to bear a child as she was expected to do and this was a source of indescribable frustration for her.

Elkanah's reference to "ten sons" was a cultural understanding. One might wonder, why did he choose the number 10? Why not nine? Or eleven? Among the Jews, the numbers were associated with certain things. For instance, the numbers three, seven and ten were thought of as "perfect numbers." When Elkanah spoke of "ten sons," it was a reference not so much to a specific number as to the idea of perfection. In other words, Elkanah's statement meant that the greatest number of sons one could imagine would not treat Hannah better than Elkanah did and rejoiced to do so.

I Samuel 1:9-11 – Hannah Pleaded With God for A Son

Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. I Samuel 1:9

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What Elkanah said certainly did not make sense to Hannah, much less make her feel better. It is clear, in this verse, that something changed at this point.

"Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh"

Up to this point, Hannah really did nothing except weep and feel very sad. Now she has turned to action. She had confused her husband, but had done nothing constructive. Now she ate when she had been unable to eat. She was prepared to take part in the experiences for which they had come to Shiloh. It appears that she is now going to go to the temple.

"Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD."

The priests took turns sitting at the doorway of the temple. This was to make sure that no unwelcome person would try to enter. We must remember that it was not permissible for a Moabite to enter the temple. It also was not permissible for a murderer or prostitute to come into the temple. It was the job of the priest to make sure that none of these people came into the temple. That was Eli's job at this point.

And she, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. I Samuel 1:10

"And she, greatly distressed,"

The author was dealing with the difficulty of trying to describe the extent of Hannah's grief. Hebrew is a very expressive language, but there are no terms to properly describe the extent of her pain. To speak of being "greatly distressed" is a gross understatement. The word translated "greatly distressed" is "marah" (מָרָה) and means to be bitter. It is the word used in Exodus to describe the water that Israel could not drink. It is to "chafe in angry bitterness." This is a very strong, aggressive response to disturbance.

"Prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly"

Hannah finally realized that her pain and retaliation was going to accomplish nothing. She had to take her plea to the LORD. She did. She wept bitterly. This is another attempt to describe just how painful this experience was for Hannah. Again, the word translated "bitterly" is not "marah," but "bakah," (בָּכָה) which literally means to wail with a penetrating voice. It is to lament one's condition like the loss of a husband. This is more than brokenness. It involves a great deal of pent-up anger and frustration.

And she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy maidservant and remember me, and not forget Thy maidservant, but wilt give Thy maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head." I Samuel 1:11

"And she made a vow"

It is perfectly acceptable for a person to make a vow to the Lord if that person is serious about it and intends to keep the vow. It is an indication of the extent of her determination to deal with the issue at hand.

"And said, 'O LORD of hosts.'"

"LORD of hosts" is one of the Old Testament names for God. It stresses the fact that God is an all powerful God. It describes an image of great power. This is the God who is the commander of the greatest of all irresistible armies. The emphasis is on God as the eternal one who is the God of justice.

"If thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy maidservant and remember me,"

This is a conditional statement - "IF...THEN". This conditional statement is presented in the form of a strong vow. Observe that Hannah used three different statements that say essentially the same thing. This was a biblical way to express strong emphasis. It indicates that she at least wonders about being abandoned by God. It may be that she was thoroughly convinced God was abandoning her. She asked God to "look on her affliction." This is another way of saying that she wonders if God has forgotten about her condition. She asked God to "remember me." She went even further in her concern.

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"And not forget Thy maidservant,"

Observe that each expression of concern is a bit stronger. This particular one is the strongest of all. She openly asks whether God has forgotten her. The fact that she dealt with the issue in this way is telling. She did not deal with it as an indication of her sin and failure. She dealt with it as though God had forgotten to meet her need. She did not think for one minute that it was a punishment for her evil ways. It is as though she is suggesting that God, indeed, has forgotten her and her need of a son.

"But wilt give Thy maidservant a son,

The use of the word "but" suggests that a contrast is in progress. In her view, the opposite of being forgotten by God is to be given a son. Observe, also, that she continually refers to herself as "Thy maidservant." She did not have an inflated opinion of who she was and how she stood in the presence of God. She was, above all else, a servant of God. Her misery was not recent. She had been barren for more than two decades and her husband, after at least ten years of married life with no son was forced to take a second wife to bear for him a son. She was exposed to humiliation both in her home and in the community to the worst form of ridicule and shame because they thought that barrenness was the punishment for some severe form of sin. She knew that she had not committed this kind of evil and was certainly tired of the false accusation.

"Then I will give him to the LORD, all the days of his life"

One might wonder at what appears to be an extreme promise and covenant. In reality, however, it was not that extreme. Because she had been barren, this son would be the first that she bore for her husband. It should be noted that in the Jewish community, the first born son, according to the story of the Exodus, belonged to the LORD since He spared the first-born son of each family as they prepared to leave Egypt. The command of God gave the Israelites the option of buying back their first-born son, but in effect he belonged to the Lord and either had to be redeemed or given to the LORD. When Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple on the eighth day after His birth, in order to comply with this command. Hannah was not looking for loopholes as a way to get a son she could keep. She openly covenanted with the LORD to give her son to Him for his entire life.

We must keep in mind that Elkanah and his family were of the tribe of Ephraim, and not of the family of Levi. They were not required to give their son as a priest no matter what his other abilities might be. Nevertheless, she wanted to have a son so that she could give him to the LORD for his whole life.

"And a razor shall never come on his head."

The promise concerning the razor was a promise that the boy would be a life-long Nazirite. This, in itself, was more than a little bit unusual. The Nazirite vow was a commitment to God for a specific period of time so that the person could focus all of his attention upon God and His will for that person's life. It was not unusual for a person to identify their child or themselves as a Nazirite for a specific period of time. No one understood this vow, however, to be a life-long commitment. It was always for a specific period of time. Hannah wanted it to be clear that she was presenting this boy to the LORD for as long as he lived.

I Samuel 1:12-18 – Eli Mistook Hannah's Desperation for Drunkenness

*Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth.
I Samuel 1:12*

"Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD,"

In some documents it suggests that Eli was sitting by the door of the gate of the temple. This would not be unusual. There always was to be a priest sitting there to make sure that no unworthy person would attempt to enter the temple. Wherever the location, Eli was watching as Hannah prayed. As you read this portion of I Samuel, it becomes increasingly clear that Hannah is a great servant of God.

"That Eli was watching her mouth."

This is an indication that there was something very unusual about the way Hannah was praying. We will discover, in a moment, that there really was something unusual about the way she was praying. It is not that

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she had any less emotion. She was just a bundle of pent-up anger and emotion at this point. In that culture, if anyone saw a person's lips moving in prayer, but there was no sound, it would be considered most unusual.

As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. I Samuel 1:13

The fact that this caused Eli to think that she was drunk makes it clear that alcohol abuse was a very real problem in the area. We know that this was a serious problem for the women of Israel. We must keep in mind that the family supply of wine was kept in the tent or house and the wife had ready access to this supply and no one would be aware of how much she was drinking. For many women, this temptation was more than they could handle.

Eli's attention was drawn to Hannah because her lips were moving, but there was not a sound emitted from her lips. This was most unusual. Jews were very emotional. When they prayed, they would put their whole self into their prayer.

If you go to the Wailing Wall today, you will hear these devout Jews pleading, begging God, with loud voices, to deliver them from their enemies. In this instance, it was very clear that Hannah was so intent upon her request that she did not utter a sound. It would not seem strange for Eli to get the wrong impression of this situation. There is another issue here. When Jews came for the feasts, it was a time of joyful celebration. For instance, when the Jews celebrated the Passover, they each drank four glasses of wine. Wine was to enable them to be joyful in the midst of a painful life, but it was not to render them out of control.

Then Eli said to her, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you." I Samuel 1:14

Note that Eli made an assumption. There was no ground for him to assume that she was drunk. The fact that her lips were moving does not indicate that she was drunk. On the other hand, we know that there were many women and men in the Near East who had an alcohol problem. Remember, the women in the Near East spent a lot of time in the tent. That is where the family kept their supply of wine and strong spirits. It also suggests that he may have seen a number of women at the place of worship who under the influence of alcohol did any number of unusual things.

Did Hannah drink wine? She probably did drink some. Almost everyone drank some wine because the water was not that good. To assume that she was inebriated was quite another thing.

But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. I Samuel 1-15

"But Hannah answered and said, "No my lord."

Despite Eli's caustic accusations, Hannah was circumspect in her response. She seriously disagreed with Eli, the head priest in this place of worship. At the same time, she referred to him as "my lord." The word translated "lord," in this instance, is "adon" (אֲדֹנָי). It is not to be confused with the name for God that was most commonly used – "Jehovah." It should be understood to mean "supervisor," or "master." "It is one who has some authority over another person. It is what Sarah called her husband, Abraham. It is what a slave would call his owner. In her own defense, Hannah made three statements which, by the way, did not elicit a direct response from Eli.

"I am a woman oppressed in spirit."

The word the King James Version translates "sorrowful spirit" is "qaseh" (קָסֵה) and means "sorrowful," but it also carries the idea of being harsh, rough, stiff-necked or impudent." Hannah knew exactly what Eli implied. It was more than simply being under the influence of alcohol. She knew he thought of her as being a hardened woman of the street and she would, naturally, have none of that.

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"I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink."

We are not informed of the time of day when this conversation took place. Apparently, it was not in the morning. When we get to verse 19, we will note that it was the following morning. We mention this here because most Jewish people would drink some type of wine rather than water. There wasn't that much good water available. There were some, however, who would not drink alcoholic beverage at all at the time of their annual feasts. The text is silent at this point, but it is possible that Elkanah was one of these people. If he were, then it would be incumbent upon his family to join him in this type of observance.

There were basically two types of alcoholic beverages available in that culture – a weaker beverage made from grapes and called wine. There also was a stronger drink made from a number of different materials – grain, cacti, etc. Hannah was making doubly sure that Eli got the message that she had not had either one.

"I have poured out my soul before the Lord."

The word translated "poured out" is "saphak" (סָפַח). This is the word used to describe the shedding of blood on the battle field. It means "to spill out." It is "to spread abroad," "to gush out." In each of these descriptions, the emphasis is on letting out everything pent up within her. Had we listened to her conversation with God, we would be totally apprised of every last feeling she had about her desperate situation.

Having heard this, there was really nothing that Eli could really say. His choice of silence on the subject was a very wise choice.

Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman; for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation." I Samuel 1:16

"Do not consider your maid servant a worthless woman."

Notice that though the rules of polite conversation had been stretched a bit, still she used the acceptable means of polite address, "your maid servant." Observe, also, that she did not address him directly. Under other circumstances, one suspects she would have remembered this custom of acceptable address.

Observe also that Hannah continued her defense. She was determined that this important priest was not going to think of her as a "worthless woman". The King James Version translates this word "daughter of Beliel." This is also the intent of the Hebrew text. The Hebrew word for "daughter" is "bat" and means a "female child." In most instances it was used as a term of endearment. That is not possible in this instance. The word translated "worthless" is "belyyaal" (בְּלִיַּאל). This word literally means "wicked or worthless one." It identifies "a troublemaker," "one who is ungodly." It came to be used as a description of the evil one in the New Testament. Hannah wanted Eli to know that she was not such a vile woman as to be considered a daughter of the evil one.

"For I have spoken until now out of my great concern."

The word translated "great concern" is "siah" (סִיָּא). It literally means "a lament," It is a type of extreme babbling because of uncontrollable frustration and emotion. It is a way of saying that her grief was so intense that her emotional responses were beyond the limits of control.

"And provocation."

The word translated "provocation" is "kaas" (כָּעַס) and describes a source of great anxiety and uneasiness. It is hand-wringing anguish, a pent up anger about to explode. It expresses itself in abrupt indignation if confronted.

Hannah has totally exposed the heartbreak that she had suffered to the point it could no longer be hidden. As we observed in verse nine, however, Hannah had a burning determination that she would no longer languish in sorrow, but would turn expectantly to the Lord. This kind of determined resolve pleads before the Lord with an intensity that is well beyond description.

Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him." I Samuel 1:17

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"Then Eli answered and said, "go in peace."

Observe that there is no reference to the fact that Eli had made a serious false assumption. It may have been done and not recorded. I doubt it. Had he made this error with a man, he would have apologized and it would have been recorded. Unfortunately, these customs were not so carefully observed for women.

Eli did go so far as to give her a proper farewell greeting. It is a wish stated as a command. The Hebrew word is "shalom" (שָׁלוֹם), but it means far more than the absence of war. It is a wish of peace. It also involves "wholeness, safety, contentment, good health, rest and prosperity." This is a beautiful greeting.

"And may the God of Israel grant your petition."

The early Jews had a difficult time dealing with women in worship. It was not so much a sexist thing, though there was some of that. It had to do with the fact that worship was the responsibility and prerogative of the husband/father. Family prayers and religious teaching were the work of the father of the house. He was taught to read the Torah, the wife was not. The wife who took part in worship, aside from necessary sacrifices, was rare.

Eli, with effort, continued his wish/blessing upon Hannah. Notice that he chose the name, "the God of Israel." The name God is a translation of the name "elohim" (אֱלֹהִים). This name was used when the speaker wished to stress the mercy of God. It would be like saying, "may the God who was and is merciful to Israel bless you as He has blessed His people."

Eli said, "grant your petition." This was a very generous, but risky request. To the best of our knowledge, Eli did not know what Hannah requested. One must admit that the situation in Elkanah's household was so common that it might be easy for Eli to guess. We cannot be sure of this, however.

And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. I Samuel 1:18

"And she said, "Let your maid servant find favor in your sight."

Observe that despite Eli's attempts to correct his stance, Hannah has not changed at all. There are two pieces of evidence.

1. She continued to be polite. She, again, referred to herself as his "maid servant." This was more than a deference to custom. She dealt with her identity in relationship to Eli's earlier assumptions in a calm, deliberate and proper way.
2. She continued to focus on the nature of the attack – her moral character. She did this in a kindly, albeit a forgiving manner. She showed no wavering in expectation of what God would do. Eli made an unfortunate assumption and she wanted to emphasize her innocence. In Hebrew, repetition is the most effective means of emphasis.

"So the woman went her way and ate."

This is strong evidence of change. Earlier, she would not eat because of her bitter frustration over being humiliated for being childless. Now she went back to the family and ate. She still did not have a son, but something changed her outlook. It appears that something is hope and expectation. Before she would have been shocked to become pregnant. Now she would be stunned if she remained barren. The eating was one of the signs of the initiated expectation.

"And her face was no longer sad."

Here you see a second evidence of the change in Hannah. Elkanah was frustrated because she was sad beyond description, despite his ever-increasing love for her. Imagine the relief it would be to see the return of the sparkle and joy he once had observed in his favorite wife.

The text does not speak to the issue, but one cannot help but wonder how this change affected Peninnah. For many years, she had enjoyed lording it over Hannah and making fun of her; enjoying the frustration and bitterness this created in Hannah.

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Suddenly, Peninnah's leverage was gone. She could no longer create a family incident when Elkanah was not looking. Her ability to destroy Hannah's peace of mind was gone. In fact, when Hannah was barren, bitter and burdened down with sadness, still she was Elkanah's favorite wife. Though Peninnah had born many children, still Peninnah was the second wife with no hope of replacing her rival. Think of how much worse it would be for her now.

"Then they arose in the morning and worshipped before the Lord."

This is the beginning of a very short paragraph involving only two verses. Still, this is an extremely important addition to the story. One might wonder why the author would begin with the words, "Then they arose in the morning." This was something they did every morning. Somehow, however, this morning was different. It was different because Hannah was different. Hannah was different because God had replaced her bitter sadness with hope and expectation.

I Samuel 1:19-20 – Hannah Conceived and Bore a Son - Samuel

Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD REMEMBERED her. I Samuel 1:19

This is the beginning of a very short paragraph involving only two verses. Still, this is an extremely important addition to the story.

One might wonder why the author would begin with the words, "then they arose in the morning." This was something they did every morning. Somehow, however, this morning was different. It was different because Hannah was different. Hannah was different because God had replaced her bitter sadness with hope and expectation.

"And returned to their house in Ramah"

It is one thing to have hope and excitement in the rush of worship. It is quite another thing to retain that excited anticipation in the every-dayness of life as we know it. Now, it would become obvious if Hannah's hope was real or just wishful thinking.

"And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife."

There is a subtle change in these words. The author spoke of "his wife." We know that legally, Peninnah was also his wife. In stating it in this way, the author was pointing out a change, a return to the relationship of Elkanah and Hannah before it was discovered that she was barren. Peninnah was still part of Elkanah's family. She had never received the favored wife status that Hannah enjoyed. She had been appreciated because she provided the children that Elkanah needed so badly. Though no son was born to Hannah, still she was again, "his wife."

This had to be a frightening time for Hannah and Elkanah. They were eager to know if, indeed, God had removed her barrenness. At the same time there had to be a bit of wonder whether or not this scourge had finally come to an end.

"And the Lord remembered her."

To some people, this might present a serious shock. It might sound to them as though God had forgotten about Hannah and then remembered her again. This is not the case. The Hebrew word translated "remembered" is "zakar" (זָכַר). It does mean to remember, but there is more. It literally means "to make mention." Then, as now, when we include a person in our will, it is spoken of as "remembering." It does not mean that we had forgotten them. It rather means that we honor them by including them among the beneficiaries of our estate. You have the same idea in the Greek. In Luke 22, he tells the story of the "last supper." As Jesus led the apostles through this celebration of great joy, He said,

And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Luke 22:19

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The Lord honored Hannah's faith. God acted upon the enormous pain Hannah brought before Him in her hour of extremity. God "remembered her."

And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the LORD." I Samuel 1:20

"And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived"

There is an obvious excitement when God acts instantaneously. That, however, is not the way He usually deals with us. The same was true with Hannah. After she had prayed, she had no immediate evidence that she was pregnant; that God had answered her prayer.

Rather there was that harrowing time of waiting until it was "the proper time." This left lots of time in that month or so to wonder if she were really going to have a baby; if God had really heard her pathetic cry.

"And she gave birth to a son"

It was one thing for Hannah to know that she was pregnant. It was quite another concern over whether or not the conceived child was a boy or girl. Hannah would be happy just to be pregnant and give birth. Because she was the first and favored wife, it was important that she give birth to a son. She had nine and one half months to wait and wonder if it was indeed a son.

"And she named him Samuel"

In our culture, this was no surprise at all. In that culture, however, this was absolutely shocking. The mother never named her child. This was the father's prerogative. You may remember the story of the birth of John the Baptist. Family and friends tried to name the baby, but to no avail. They appealed to Elizabeth, still, to no avail. Finally they approached Zechariah. His answer had a ring of finality to it. He wrote for them,

And he asked for a tablet, and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished. Luke 1:63

In that culture, when father spoke the child's name, the discussion was complete.

An aside – To this day there is a ceremony that is still observed among many of the Arab families in Bethlehem. When a baby is born, the midwife will clean up the baby and dress it as nicely as possible. She will then place the baby on the father's lap. If the father touches the baby they rejoice because this means they will keep the baby. If the father refuses to touch the baby, especially a girl, they know the baby may not remain in the home.

Among these people there is a great deal of family intermarriage between first cousins. Now, this results in a number of birth defects. The eyes will probably need serious surgery and the feet will probably be on backwards. In such cases, the child is wrapped warmly and placed on the curb the next morning.

There is a huge Christian hospital in Bethlehem. Each morning a truck makes a tour of every street in the city picking up these children and taking them back to the hospital. They receive excellent therapy to correct the problem with their feet. Eventually surgery is performed. They also perform surgery on the eyes as well. These girls are educated and taught a trade so that they can support themselves because without a father, they have no hope of marriage and family.

"Saying, I have asked him of the Lord."

Without explanation, it appears that Elkanah allowed Hannah to name the child. Certainly, none of these people had ever heard of anything like this before. Though the author makes no concerted effort to picture the kind of man Elkanah was, it is not hard to tell he was a most gracious, loving husband.

Hannah's choice of the name "Samuel" was not a casual choice. In that culture, names were given for meaning and purpose. The name "Samuel" is a compound word.

- a. "Shame" (שָׁמַיִם) means name.
- b. "El" (אֱלֹהִים) means "God."

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This name also meant "heard" or "named of God."

Hannah chose this name to remind her that she prayed earnestly to the Lord for a Son and God heard and answered her prayer. She was absolutely convinced that Samuel was born because God heard and answered her prayer.

I Samuel 1:21-28 – Hannah Brought Samuel to Shiloh as Promised

Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow. I Samuel 1:21

"Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the Lord."

This was Elkanah's annual duty. It is clear from this verse that he took his whole family with him to the place of worship for the annual sacrifice. This is good evidence that Elkanah was an unusually devout servant of God. In such a family, it was never a choice over whether the family would accompany him to this place of worship.

But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD and stay there forever." I Samuel 1:22

"I will not go up until the child is weaned."

We need to look at the timing to help us put this verse in perspective. Samuel was probably not conceived for a week or so after Elkanah and his family returned from their annual trip to take part in the sacrifices. It may well have been much longer than that. If he was a full term baby, you add to that two or three weeks the nine and one half months of pregnancy. Now, because of the mother's time of bleeding following childbirth, she could not come to the place of worship for at least two months. Also, if a woman gave birth to a boy, she was considered unclean for two months. If she gave birth to a daughter, she was considered unclean for a period of three months. The point of all this is that it is quite possible that Hannah was not able to attend the time of worship and sacrifice because she was still considered unclean following the birth of Samuel. This would account for the fact that she did not take Samuel to the place of worship a month or so after this birth.

This verse, however, has some surprising information. She announced to her husband (something not many women would dare to do) that she would not go to the sacrifice until the child was weaned. This decision had some implications. First, a child was not weaned as quickly as they are in our culture. There, weaning a child often took place at the age of three. This meant that that she would not be accompanying her husband to the annual sacrifice for a period of at least three years. It also meant that by not attending the sacrifice, she would be omitted from the Day of Atonement and the writing of her name in the book of life and the atonement for her sins. Nevertheless, her decision was made and would not be changed.

"Then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord."

It was important for Hannah to participate in the sacrifice. It was just as important for her son to appear before the Lord; take part in the sacrifice and have his name written in the book of life. She was promising her husband that this would happen. A man would be most uncomfortable and unhappy if his son did not become a part of the forgiven community at the earliest possible opportunity.

"And stay there forever."

This would be one more shocking announcement. Put yourself in Hannah's position. She had been childless for many, many years. There is no information to indicate that she had any other children prior to this announcement. If Samuel were to leave Elkanah's home, should we expect that Peninnah would, again, begin her abuses because she had many children and Hannah had none? It would be very easy for her to forget the vow she had made to God. Surely she would be tempted to at least postpone if not forget about the vow she had made. That was not to be the case. As soon as it was possible for him to leave her, she promised to take him to the place of worship and leave him there for the rest of his life. What a woman!

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And Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the LORD confirm His word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. I Samuel 1:23

"And Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you."

What a man! Most any other man in Israel would have asserted his authority at this point and announced that he would make that decision. Put yourself in Elkanah's position. Like him, you would want the eldest son of your favorite wife to be your heir, the one to lead and control your family when you are no longer able to do so. If the family were to be left in the hands of the second wife's son, one could anticipate that if Hannah were still living she would certainly be mistreated and treated unfairly. All of this would have to go through Elkanah's mind when he heard Hannah's announcement.

"Remain until you have weaned him; only may the Lord confirm His word"

Elkanah gave Hannah his permission to remain at home while the rest of the family went to Shiloh. Observe, however, that Elkanah placed one condition on his permission for her to stay. He said, "only may the Lord confirm His word." The word translated "confirm" is *qum* (קִּיּוּם). This word was used in several different ways. It means "to confirm," "to establish," "to assume," "to perform." In each instance, though different words are used, the important issue is that what God had promised, He would carry out dependably, without fail. The question arises, what did God promise that Elkanah wants confirmed? The honest answer is that we do not know for certain. The text records no promise God had given. One conjecture might be that Elkanah and Hannah believed that if they gave God their long awaited, only son, God would reward them with several others. This is exactly what happened, but we do not know if this is what he referred to in his statement.

"So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him"

This is an astonishing turn of events that Elkanah has permitted. Only a very unusual trust in God and love for his wife would permit Elkanah to make such an agreement. Again, we do not know how long she remained at home and did not accompany her family to Shiloh for the annual sacrifice.

Although the text does not speak to the issue, there is another concern that is not addressed. It was the law of the Jews that a male child must be circumcised on the eighth day of life. This ritual was to be performed by the priest. We know that Samuel did not go to Shiloh, where the priest lived and worked, until after he was weaned. This may have been when he was several years old. We know that in some instances weaning was postponed until the child was three years of age or more. Did this observance go unaccomplished altogether? Did Elkanah violate their rule to circumcise on the eighth day and wait until the child was weaned to have this performed? Was the law carried out in Ramah by someone who was not a priest? The honest answer is that we do not know. If forced to choose, one might opt to conclude that the observance was not performed by someone other than a designated priest. Again we cannot be sure. Nevertheless, this issue has an interesting bearing on the fact before us concerning Hannah being allowed to remain in Ramah until after Samuel was weaned.

Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young. I Samuel 1:24

"Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her."

There is no indication as to whether this is at the time of the annual sacrifice some years later or not. It appears that this is exactly what happened. This is what Hannah promised God she would do. Now she is going to keep her word before the Lord.

"With a three year old bull"

As indicated earlier, there were situations where a child was not weaned until the age of three. If that was the case here, and it could be, then Samuel and the sacrificial animal were both born at about the same time.

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The text does not indicate the kind of gift or sacrifice this was. The fact that Hannah is the one making the sacrifice would point to the probability that this is the sacrifice she was required to give 60 days after giving birth to a son. We must keep in mind that she had not been to the place of worship from the time Samuel was born. This suggests that the required sacrifice had not been made. It should be noted that she brought a bull. In most instances a poor person was not required to sacrifice a bull, but could bring two small turtle doves instead. If that is the case here, it tells us that Elkanah was a man of unusual means.

"And one ephah of flour and a jug of wine."

An ephah is a dry measure. There is considerable disagreement about what constitutes an ephah. Most scholars favor considering a ephah to be 20 dry quarts. The alternative number of dry quarts is 65. Whichever one you choose, both are too much to be offered with one bull. There are many scholars who believe that the text should read "three bulls" rather than "a three year old bull." This would certainly be the proper number if the ephah is really what the author wanted to say.

There is a fact that favors the three bulls. If Hannah is bringing Samuel to devote him to the Lord for the rest of his life, then a sacrifice of dedication should be offered. This would require one bull. The rest of the sacrifices that Elkanah and his family would make would require the other two bulls. No matter which of the ideas one chooses, we are dealing with conjecture and we cannot know for sure. I tend to favor the idea of three bulls rather than a three year old bull.

"And brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh."

Some years before, Hannah had promised that if God would give her a son, she would give him to the Lord forever. Now she was making good on that promise. One must ask why the house of the Lord was in Shiloh rather than in Jerusalem where God commanded it to be placed? Israel had been designated by God as the place of worship and Shiloh was certainly not in Jerusalem. Shiloh was not even in Judah. Shiloh was the central place of worship in Israel at this time. The time had not come when the place of worship was Jerusalem.

"And the child was young."

The word translated "young" is "naar" (נָעָר). It means "boy" or "child." It is not a very specific designation. As indicated earlier, this is shortly after Samuel was weaned. We also indicated that on occasion the weaning took place when the child was three years of age. Could it have been an even longer time since he was weaned? Certainly. There is just no evidence to pinpoint the age.

Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. I Samuel 1:25

"Then they slaughtered the bull"

As we indicated in the study of verse 24, the Hebrew in these two verses speaks of three bulls while the Greek Septuagint and the Syriac speak of a bull three years of age. In such a situation, the Hebrew text carries more weight unless there are textual problems. For our purposes, we will think in terms of three bulls.

The question immediately arises, why would there be three bulls? The text does not clarify this problem. There are some possible answers. First, when one covenanted with God, two bulls are required. Again, the thank offering would require one bull. Obviously, the text does not say this, but it is plausible.

"And brought the boy to Eli."

Six simple words, but they are packed with deep meaning and deeper emotion. We do not know if God had given Hannah another child in the meantime. We know that it is highly unlikely for a woman to bear a second child before her first child was weaned. We also know that wealthy families often hired a servant woman to be the nurse for their child. We are painfully aware of the abuse Hannah endured because she had no children for many years before Samuel was born. For Hannah to keep her vow would open her up to even greater abuse because she would again be childless in the family. We mention this to highlight the fact that her faithful obedience to her covenant was a very costly decision in her life. To part with her son for life

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would be devastating at best. To part with him not knowing whether she would have another child or not, would only increase her devastation.

Though the text does not stipulate, Hannah presented Eli with a serious problem. We know that Elkanah was an Ephraimite, not a Levite. We cannot prove that Hannah was a Levite. The family identity, of course, was determined by the mother. Thus, we have what appears to be a Gentile, Samuel, as the only known Gentile to live and work in the temple. Now, he was not, at this point, serving as a priest because the men only served at the altar from age 30 to 50. Samuel did, as we shall see, work in the place of worship. Like only Jesus and Melchizedek, Samuel was one of only three men who were not Levites, to serve as both prophet and priest.

And she said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD. I Samuel 1:26

"And she said, 'oh, my lord.'"

To her credit, Hannah not only kept her vow, but returned to the priest who had falsely accused her of drunkenness. This takes great strength and poise to say the least.

Observe how Hannah referred to Eli twice in the same sentence – "my lord." This is an expression of respect that every woman would commonly use when addressing a man, especially a priest. Though Eli had embarrassed her, without apparent apology, still she treated him with deep respect.

When she went to present Samuel to Eli, she reminded him that she was the one who stood beside him praying so intently he thought she was drunk.

"As your soul lives, my Lord."

This statement was used to emphasize the integrity with which a statement was made. We do something of the same order when we say, "with God as my witness."

"I am the woman who stood here beside you,"

She forced Eli's attention to return to the unfortunate incident when he mistook her for a drunken woman. She reminded him that she had stood there beside him some years before. She did not elucidate because it would have been vivid in his memory, even to that day. This is no casual identification. She was being as specific as necessary to remind him of exactly what had been done without rubbing it in.

"Praying to the Lord."

She reminded him that she had indeed prayed to the Lord and now the Lord had answered. She was affirming that this was something that God had done. She claimed no credit for this blessing in any way.

"For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him. I Samuel 1:27

"For this boy I prayed"

Though the text is silent at this point, it is easy to surmise that Eli would remember that embarrassing incident with vivid pain. Nevertheless, Hannah reminded him of that experience. Notice, however, that she made no attempt to humiliate him over his error.

"And the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him."

She reminded him that she had prayed to God seeking a son. The mention of this was intended to give praise to God for answered prayer. Hannah presented her remarks in such a way that it acclaims God as answering Prayer. She acknowledged that it was God who gave her this child.

"So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there. I Samuel 1:28

"So I have dedicated him to the Lord,"

The word translated "dedicated" comes from a root word that means "to ask." It means "to request," "to dedicate." It is a way to describe a request to be able to dedicate oneself or one's belongings to God. Hannah

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made it clear that she wants to present her son to the LORD as her sacrifice of gratitude as well as an obedience to the vow she made with God.

"As long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord"

It is one thing to dedicate your son to God. It is quite another, more demanding thing to make a lifelong dedication. Samuel cannot be a priest, but he is set apart to serve at the temple in what may be a very minor role. It did not work out that way, but she did not know that when she made the vow.

"And he worshipped the Lord there."

Notice that it says, "he worshipped the LORD there." The text does not clarify the identity of "he." Asking questions and making observations may be helpful. For instance, the text is speaking about Samuel. Does this mean that the one identified as "he" is Samuel? On the other hand, if Samuel is a very young child, would he really be able to worship the Lord? Thinking again about this, what would Eli have to give thanks for concerning the coming of this Ephraimite to work in the temple?

If, in fact, it was Samuel who worshipped God, it is an astounding tribute to his parents training of this very young boy. Though the text is silent, at this point, it is my considered opinion that it was Samuel whose worship of God is recorded in this verse.

Conclusion

Several issues surface in this chapter. Repeatedly, however, the faith walk of a very special lady rises to the surface. Her faith is exhibited in the fact that she saw her plight as an issue to present before the LORD. Not only so, having received the unimaginable blessing from the LORD, she was prepared to return her long awaited son to the LORD. She had no assurance that she could again bear a child.

Returning from the place of prayer, she ate as though there had never been a problem. There was no visible reason for this change in her outlook. She trusted the LORD. When the unexplainable, untoward creeps into our lives, how do we handle that? Is it a matter of dealing with the seemingly impossible as confidently as she did?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 2

CONTRAST – SAMUEL AND ELI'S SONS – I SAMUEL 2:1 - 36

1. There are six paragraphs in the second chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of each paragraph in eight words or less.

2:1-10	
2:11	
2:12-17	
2:18-21	
2:22-26	
2:27-36	

2. In I Samuel 2:1 – 10, Hannah prays her song of praise..
- a. Read this prayer in one sitting.
 - 1) Observe the names for God that Hannah employs. What rationale, if any, can you find for using these names in each instance?
 - 2) What does Hannah say about God? Why?
 - b. In 2:1, Hannah gives praise to God.
 - 1) How would you define/describe the word "exult"?
 - 2) What does she mean by "my horn"?
 - 3) What does "my enemies" have to do with this praise to God?
 - c. In 2:2, Hannah made three statements about God.
 - 1) What are they?
 - 2) What do they mean?
 - 3) Explain what these have to do with the source of her praise.
 - d. In 2:3, Hannah warned against pride and arrogance.
 - 1) Describe the difference between the two words.
 - 2) Explain the reason Hannah gives for this warning.
 - e. In 2:4, Hannah drew a contrast. In the light of Hannah's statement in verse three, explain her intent in this contrast.
 - f. In 2:5, Hannah drew two contrasts. The pattern for these follows that established in 2:4.
 - 1) What are these contrasts?
 - 2) What purpose do they serve?
 - 3) Hannah used the number seven. Why would she choose this number?
 - g. In 2:6, Hannah continued the contrast, but changed the form.
 - 1) In what way is the form changed?
 - 2) What purpose is served by this contrast?
 - h. In 2:7, Hannah continued the contrast and the form she followed in 2:6. What does this contrast have to do with the purpose behind this prayer?
 - i. In 2:8, Hannah continued her description of divine actions she began in 2:4. The form, however, is somehow different.
 - 1) In what way has the form changed?
 - 2) She used the image, "Keeps the feet." What does she mean by this image?
 - j. In 2:9, she continued her description of divine actions.
 - 1) She changed the form of her description again. How did she change it? How does this change help?
 - 2) She used the image "keeps the feet." What does she mean by this?

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- 3) In this verse, the word "for" introduces an explanation.
 - a) What is she explaining?
 - b) How does she explain it?
- k. In 2:10, Hannah changed the style again.
 - 1) In what way has she changed it?
 - 2) What benefit does this change provide?
 - 3) Hannah made two statements about those "who contend with the LORD."
 - a) What does she mean by the word "contend"?
 - b) What is the significance of "thunder in the heavens"?
 - 4) Who are the people who do this?
 - 5) She also made three other statements about divine action.
 - a) What did she mean "judge the ends of the earth"?
 - b) What is the difference between "give strength to His king" and "exalt the horn of His anointed"?
3. In I Samuel 2:11, Hannah left Samuel in the temple as she promised.
 - a. This verse/paragraph is written as a contrast.
 - 1) What is contrasted?
 - 2) What purpose is served by this contrast.
 - b. There is also a parallel in this verse. What parallel can you find?
4. In I Samuel 2:12-17, the author described the sins of Eli's sons.
 - a. In 2:12, the author pictured Eli's sons in two different ways.
 - 1) How would you describe these pictures?
 - 2) Think about these pictures in terms of the ministries they performed. What impression does this create for you?
 - b. In 2:13-17, the author continued the pictures of the priests begun in verse 12.
 - 1) In verse 13 and 14, the author described the way in which the priests received the portion of the sacrifice divinely designated for their use. Compare their custom with the design established in Leviticus chapter seven.
 - 2) In 2:15, the author continued his description of the way in which Eli's sons secured their portion of the meat. Compare this report with the way in which this was supposed to be accomplished. In what ways did the sons fail to comply with the prescribed process? What does this mean?
 - 3) In 2:16 and 17, there is an escalation of the way in which Eli's sons failed to comply with God's design.
 - a) What did they do?
 - b) What attitude do you detect?
 - c) What does this mean?
 - 4) In 2:17, the author summarized the actions of Eli's sons.
 - a) Review 2:13-17 and summarize the failures you see the sons of Eli commit.
 - b) Compare your findings with those of the author.
 - c) In 2:17, the author said the priests, "despised the offering of the LORD." What does this mean?
5. In I Samuel 2:18-21, the author identified the number of children that Hannah had.
 - a. In 2:18, the scene changed and the author identified Samuel's new way of life.
 - 1) Samuel was in the temple and ministering before the LORD, but he was from the tribe of Ephraim, not Levi. How can we deal with this issue?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 2

- 2) At the end of this sentence, the author wrote of Samuel, "as a boy wearing a linen ephod." What does this mean?
 - b. In 2:19, the scene shifts back to Hannah.
 - 1) It is significant that Hannah did this for Samuel. What difference would it make if she did not make the robe?
 - 2) What is the significance of the fact that after having given her son to serve the LORD, as promised, Elkanah and Hannah continued to come to Shiloh to worship yearly?
 - c. In 2:20, Eli blessed Elkanah and Hannah. Reflect on this blessing. What would cause Eli to do this?
 - d. In 2:21, The author reports the results of Eli's prayer.
 - 1) Does this mean that Hannah gave birth to quintuplets? If not, what does it mean?
 - 2) What does this tell us about God?
 - 3) What purpose is served by the mention of Samuel at the end of this verse?
6. In I Samuel 2:22-26, the author drew a strong contrast between Samuel and Eli's sons.
- a. In 2:22, Eli received an evil report about the conduct of his sons. There are at least two major problems with this report. Can you identify them?
 - b. In 2:23, Eli confronted his two sons about this evil report.
 - 1) What did Eli really do?
 - 2) What change would this make?
 - 3) What should have been done?
 - c. In 2:24, something took place that was not reported.
 - 1) What was it?
 - 2) What is the basis of Eli's response in this verse?
 - d. In 2:25, Eli explained the severity of their actions.
 - 1) Explain Eli's reasoning in the first part of this verse.
 - 2) Read the last sentence in this verse very carefully. Explain in careful terms, what the author said.
 - e. In 2:26, the scene shifts back to Samuel
 - 1) The author mentioned that Samuel was growing in stature.
 - a) What is stature?
 - b) What is favor?
 - 2) There is an obvious contrast between the picture of Eli's sons, in 2:25, and Samuel in 2:26. There is always a purpose in mind when a contrast is used. What is that purpose in this instance?
7. In I Samuel 2:27-36, The prophet announced the death of Eli's sons.
- a. In 2:27, the prophet reminds Eli of God's faithfulness to Eli's father's house in Egypt. What is the purpose of this historical reminder?
 - b. In 2:28, the prophet asked Eli two leading questions.
 - 1) Look at the first question. What is the prophet's point in asking this leading question?
 - 2) By the way, what is an ephod?
 - 3) The second question is different from the first. What is the purpose behind this question?
 - 4) How does the second question relate to the first one?
 - c. In 2:29, The prophet chastises Eli.
 - 1) What does the LORD mean by "why do you kick at my sacrifices and offerings"?
 - 2) What is the difference between a "sacrifice" and an "offering"?
 - 3) Explain the second question the prophet asked on behalf of the LORD.
 - d. In 2:30, the word "therefore" indicates a summary or conclusion is being announced.
 - 1) There is a contrast in this verse. What is being contrasted? For what purpose?

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- 2) Though this is a pronouncement of judgment, there is an expression of mercy. Can you identify the expression of mercy?
 - 3) How would it read if mercy were not extended?
 - e. In 2:31, the prophet becomes more specific in his announced judgments.
 - 1) What does the prophet mean when he reported, "I will break your strength"?
 - 2) How does this differ from "the strength of your father's house"?
 - 3) The closing statement of this verse, "so that...", obviously implies death. What is the significance of this prophetic statement?
 - f. In 2:32, there are two statements separated by a semi-colon.
 - 1) What did he mean by the first statement?
 - 2) How does the second statement relate to the first?
 - 3) The prophet had already told Eli this in 2:31. What is accomplished by saying this again?
 - g. In 2:33, the prophet continued announcing judgment.
 - 1) What is the difference between "eyes fail from weeping" and "(your) soul grieve"?
 - 2) Is the first of these two statements an act of mercy or intense judgment?
 - 3) How does the closing statement in this verse differ from the closing statement in 2:31 and 2:32?
 - h. In 2:34, the prophet continued to announce judgment. What possible benefit is to be gained from providing a sign for Eli?
 - i. In 2:35, the prophet presents a contrast.
 - 1) What is being contrasted?
 - 2) The text does not identify "the faithful priest." Whom do you suspect he spoke about?
 - 3) Whom would you identify as "My anointed"?
 - j. In 2:36, the prophet identified a scenario.
 - 1) What is the significance of this?
 - 2) The remaining persons in Eli's family will make a request. What is the significance of this?
 - 3) How does the first statement differ from the second?
8. Review chapter two with great care.
- a. What is the major theme in this chapter?
 - b. In what way does this chapter impact your life and ministry?

LESSON 2

CONTRAST – SAMUEL AND ELI'S SONS – I SAMUEL 2:1 – 36

There are six paragraphs in I Samuel chapter two. A brief summary of each chapter is reported on the following table.

2:1-10	Hannah's Song of Praise to Jehovah
2:11	Samuel was Left in the Temple, as Promised
2:12-17	Eli's Sons Sinned in Greed
2:18-21	Hannah Bore Three More Sons and Daughters
2:22 - 26	Eli's Sons Sinned; Samuel Grew in God's Favor
2:27-36	Prophet Announced Death of Eli's Two Sons

I Samuel 2-1-10 – Hannah's Song of Praise to Jehovah

Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD, my mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, because I rejoice in Thy salvation. I Samuel 2:1

Throughout the Old Testament, the different authors were very careful in their choice of the different names for deity. We will watch for this as we continue the study.

Following the birth of Samuel and the short period of time he lived with his parents, Hannah sang her song of praise to God. Though this is a song, it is a prayer to God. As she began to sing, observe the way she refers to Deity. Twice in this verse she refers to God as "LORD." Our word "LORD" is almost always a translation of the word (יהוה) Jehovah. The significance of this is that this name stresses the fact that God is eternal. When Moses asked God what he should say in answer to the question, "Who sent you?" God answered, "Yahweh, Yahweh" – "I am, I am." Also, this name was used repeatedly in situations involving the justice of God.

"My heart exults in the LORD."

We must keep the message of chapter one in mind as we study this prayer. Peninnah had taunted and humiliated Hannah for a long time because she was barren. In that culture, this was considered a punishment from God for some secret sin. Now Hannah had a son and the taunting must cease. Observe, however, that Hannah focused her attention on God rather than on her own triumph. The word translated "exult" means to rejoice to the point of ecstasy. Hannah is giving all the credit to God, rather than rejoicing in her own achievement.

"My horn is exulted in the LORD"

The use of the word "horn" in this context is characteristic of a culture that is made up of herdsmen. The rams were powerful animals. They protected their harem with great ferocity. Saying, "My horn is exulted in the Lord," is a way of saying that her new strength, the ability to bear a child, is praise to the LORD and not to herself. It is a way to give God the glory and credit for what has happened.

"My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies."

A king would have brutal, vicious enemies, but a man's wife would probably not have. This situation was different. Peninnah had made life unbearable for Hannah for many years. In all that time, for instance, Hannah had not been able to participate fully in their sacrifices to Jehovah because of Peninnah's taunting. Part of the sacrificial experience was to eat of the flesh of the sacrifices. As that time approached, Peninnah would begin to chide Hannah for even being a part of the sacrifice because it was clear that God was punishing her for her terrible sins by making her barren. At this point, Hannah became so upset that she could not eat the meal of forgiveness and covenant.

Now things are different. Hannah has a son. Peninnah has lost her ability to taunt Hannah. In this statement, Hannah speaks particularly of Peninnah as the enemy that taunts her every day.

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"Because I rejoice in Thy salvation."

Three times in this verse, Hannah gave the credit to Jehovah. The LORD had enabled her to bear a child when for at least 15 years she had been barren. Think about this statement. She talked about what God had done as being her salvation. It is quite certain that she did not mean that the fact of Samuel's birth did not save her from her sins. She did mean that what God had done saved her from the unbearable taunting and embarrassment Peninnah had railed upon her. It is interesting to note that Peninnah does not appear again in the book of I Samuel after 1:4.

"There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, Nor is there any rock like our God. I Samuel 2:2

In this verse, Hannah continues her affirmation of the greatness and wonder of the LORD.

"There is no one holy like the LORD."

It is interesting that as Hannah gave praise to God for enabling her to bear a son, that she gives praise for the LORD'S holiness. She was celebrating the purity of God's nature and character. The beauty of His endless compassion; the endless power of His matchless love: these were the themes of her song. It is NOT just that God is omnipotent. It is that in His limitless power, He is indescribably good, loving and compassionate.

"Indeed, there is no one besides Thee."

Hannah is groping for words to describe the greatness of the LORD. This is like saying that the LORD is in a class by Himself. There is no one with whom to compare Him.

"Nor is there any rock like our God."

The Hebrew language is somewhat like some other romantic languages – Italian, Spanish, etc. It is wondrously beautiful, if not all that precise. In Hebrew literature and the Old Testament Scriptures, the idea of a "rock" is the image they loved to use to describe something immovable. That is precisely what she is attempting to do here. She wanted to focus the listeners attention on the fact that God was immovable in His dependability.

"But those who were hungry cease to hunger"

This is one more picture of an omniscient, all-powerful God demonstrating His limitless compassion. He is able to take the abjectly impoverished and provide well for their care. In Jewish history, they had an excellent example of the LORD'S provision in the story of Israel going through the desert.

"Even the barren gives birth to seven"

The contrast continues! This is Hannah's obvious reference to herself. At the same time, she is rejoicing in the fact that it was this omniscient, all-powerful God who enabled her to conceive and give birth to her son. Having covenanted to give this son back to God, it is certain that Hannah is counting on this being true for her. One might wonder why Hannah would choose the number seven. Why not six? Or eight? The Jewish People had a careful understanding of numbers. The numbers three, seven and ten were thought of as "perfect numbers." In view of this fact, it is not surprising that she made this choice. The truth is that Hannah did give birth to six children.

Hannah used a host of word pictures to convey specific ideas. They thought of a mountain as powerful, immovable. That mountain, of course, was made of rock. Therefore, they used the word "rock" as an image of indescribable power. This is a way of speaking of the omnipotence of God in a very graphic way.

Notice that up to this point Hannah referred to Deity as "LORD." The word translated "GOD" is "Elohim." It is usually used in a description of the omnipotence of God. It is also commonly used in situations where the mercy of God is being highlighted. Again, Hannah has placed an emphasis on the goodness of God's omnipotence.

"Boast no more so very proudly, do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and with Him actions are weighed. I Samuel 2:3

CONTRAST – SAMUEL AND ELI'S SONS

In this verse, the tone and direction of her song changes. This is stated as a warning. The recipient of this warning is not identified. However, the content would indicate that this is directed toward Peninnah.

"Boast no more so very proudly"

If, indeed, this is a warning directed at Peninnah, then the words Hannah used give us an insight into the terror of their family life. In this particular statement, you see a description of two devastating conditions. Hannah warns against boasting. Again, if this is aimed at Peninnah, then it would be clear that this second wife is boasting of her ability to conceive, at least in part by stressing Hannah's obvious inability to bear a child. The brutality of this kind of hazing is beyond description. As if boasting were not enough, Hannah also spoke of pride. It is devastating to be the target of such humiliating boasting. It is yet more devastating for this to be couched in the language of personal pride. Pride is the currency of boasting. It invariably presents the boaster as superlative and ultimately better than the one being humiliated. It also identifies the target of this outrage as very bad. This is most difficult for anyone to receive. It is impossible when it deals with a woman's relationship with her husband.

"Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth."

Hannah has used three different terms to describe the abuse she has received from Peninnah – boasting, pride and arrogance. These three terms are of the same vein, but are really different in their nature.

1. Boasting

The word translated "boasting" is "dabar" (דָּבַר). The word literally means "to speak." The inclusion of the word "boasting" is a translators interpretation of the way one might speak. It probably accurately describes what Hannah encountered, but it was not in the Hebrew text.

2. Pride

The word translated "pride" is "gaboah" (גָּבוֹהַ). It literally means "exalted" or "high." It speaks of unusual power and high in one's own eyes.

3. Arrogance

The word translated "arrogance" is "ataq" (עָתָק). It means "to be forward," "stiff toward others," "to be grievous."

The difference between "pride" and "arrogance" is one of degree. Arrogance is pride pushed to its most impossible extreme. Pride is disturbing. Arrogance is maddening. Also, arrogance is an expression of one's pride in relation to others.

"For the LORD is a God of knowledge."

It seems that repeatedly, ignorance is in the best interest of evil. A voodoo priest was approached about putting a school in his area. He was incensed. He responded to the inquiry, "as long as I live, there will never be a school in this area." God is different. He is the God of knowledge and He Himself is omniscient.

"The bows of the mighty are shattered, but the feeble gird on strength. I Samuel 2:4

"The Bows of the mighty are shattered"

Hannah has just described the almighty power of God. She then described what that power can do. It is like saying, "Take the most powerful warriors and God will easily destroy their weapons and render them harmless. For those who consider themselves invincible, this is a frightening thought.

"But the feeble gird on strength"

The use of the word "but" indicates that we are in the midst of a very strong contrast. Hannah contrasts God's devastating power against the powerfully proud, with God's granting of strength to the weak. This is a demonstration of God's relentless compassion for the helpless. This is Hannah's expression of praise to God. At the same time it is a strong warning against overconfidence on the part of the arrogant.

*"Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry cease to hunger.
Even the barren gives birth to seven, but she who has many children languishes. I Samuel 2:5*

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‘Those who were full hire themselves out for bread.’

This verse is a continuation of the contrast Hannah has initiated to praise God and at the same time attack her enemy. People tend to think of the rich as perennially wealthy. That, of course, is not necessarily true. In the hands of an all-powerful, all-knowing God, the rich can instantaneously be reduced to abject poverty and forced to sustain themselves at the lowest vocational level – a day-laborer who has many children "languishes."

Again, the use of the word "but" indicates that we are in the midst of a continuing strong contrast. Hannah contrasted the childless who give birth with the prolific who become unable to conceive. The word translated "languishes" is "amal" (אָמַל). The word was used to describe a runner too weary to continue the race; a warrior too worn out to defend himself; a woman so debilitated she was unable to conceive a child. We must keep in mind that this is in the midst of Hannah's prayer where she exalts the power of God exercised among the poor and helpless in His omniscience and omnipotence.

The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. I Samuel 2:6

"The LORD kills and makes alive"

The contrast continues though the form is adjusted. The focus is still on the omniscient, all powerful God demonstrated in mercy. The length of these contrasts stresses their great importance. Repetition becomes burdensome over time, unless some means is found to vary the format. As you can see, in this instance, Hannah adjusted the format by just listing the results. God is still the one doing the acting and the action is an expression of mercy and compassion. One might wonder how you link God's compassion with His killing a person. There are times when God shows His compassion on the abused by judging and destroying the abusers. The judgment upon Egypt at the time of the Exodus is a case in point.

"He brings down to Sheol and raises up"

The word "sheol" is one of those words that had two meanings. The intent of a particular use could be determined by the context in which it was used. This word was used to describe "the grave." It was also used to describe the place we call "hell." The grave, however, was the most common usage. The second part of this segment, "and raises up," identifies the intent. She spoke of the grave. No one rises up out of hell. Hannah was talking about the resurrection. From the Jewish perspective, this is a very important idea. One of the essential qualities of the person who is the Messiah is that he must rise from the dead and he must raise others from the dead as well. Again, in His omniscient, omnipotence, He will raise up those who died in the midst of abuse.

"The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. I Samuel 2:7

"The LORD makes poor and rich"

Though the text does not say so, it appears that Elkanah was a man of some wealth. This is suggested by the kind of sacrifices he made. This puts a whole different light on what Hannah said. In her prayer, Hannah continues the same format she had been using. This suggests that her statement does not spell out all she is trying to say. The total message would be more like this, "He makes the rich poor and the poor rich." This is a total picture of justice and mercy. When the rich are arrogant and abusive, God, in His omniscience and omnipotence will impoverish them. On the other hand, God will intervene on behalf of the oppressed and impoverished to grant them great riches.

"He brings low, He also exalts"

Again, according to Hannah's prayer, this is because in His absolute wisdom, He has compassion on the abused and moves in justice upon the proud. This is significant because the people in history who have abused the poor and powerless have seldom done anything to attack the rich and powerful. God exalts the powerless, but He also brings low those who are in power and wealth. There are many things that people of

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power and wealth can do to the poor. Controlling the rich is a totally different story. This statement points to the fact that Hannah views God as being in total control of the human scene because of His irresistible power.

*"He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honor; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He set the world on them.
I Samuel 2:8*

"He raises the poor from the dust"

Though Hannah continues in her prayer praising the mercy and justice of God, she shifted the format once again. Where before it was a long series of contrasts showing both God's mercy and justice, now the same theme is followed, but the focus is completely on God's great compassion on behalf of the disadvantaged.

In that day, as in many others, the poor and the rich were identifiable by their living conditions. The rich lived in large houses with beautiful stone floors. The poor, however, lived in very small dwellings with dirt floors. Their only way to keep the dust down was to put straw on their dirt floors. I remember my grandfather making the same kind of distinction by speaking of the "shanty" Irish" and the "Lace curtain Irish." (we were shanty!) Hannah's message was clear in her prayer of praise to God. She praised God because He had compassion on the most desperate and needy and provided an escape from their poverty.

"He lifts the needy from the ash heap"

This is a form of repetition. She did not repeat the exact words of the previous idea. She did repeat the idea she had previously expressed. It is all about God's power and compassion.

"To make them sit with nobles"

This is another shift in Hannah's presentation of the same theme. God's powerful compassion is visited upon the devastated. The poor are looked down upon in every culture. The LORD has compassion on them. He not only deals with their poverty, but also gives them a life of respect which the culture reserves for the wealthy.

"And inherit a seat of honor"

Here, again, Hannah worships the LORD by emphasizing His compassion. She does this by repetition in a slightly different wording. This phrase is intended to strengthen the impact of the previous one.

"For the pillars of the earth are the LORDS"

In history, there have been many theories about how our world is sustained in space. One such ancient theory was that it must be supported by giant pillars. Whether or not Hannah believed this, we do not know. It may well be that she, like many others did not really hold to this theory, but used it to describe the way God sustains His marvelous creation.

"And He sets the world on them"

This is another expression of that form of repetition used to emphasize a thought. It is a wonder beyond explanation that God could take this great creation of His and place it upon mighty pillars that people reckoned were holding the earth in place.

"He keeps the feet of His godly ones, but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; for not by might shall a man prevail. I Samuel 2:9

"He keeps the feet of His godly ones"

The image of "Keeping the feet" was a description of God's protection of those who fear and obey Him. Keep in mind that this is a "shepherd culture." The task of the shepherd is to watch over the sheep. It includes providing for their food, their protection, their rest and their welfare in general. In the same way, God looks over every aspect of the lives of those under His care.

"But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness."

True to form, Hannah returned to the format of contrast, again. It is a strong contrast between the way God treats the godly ones and the way He deals with the wicked ones. The word translated "keeps the feet" is

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an image that describes protection. On the other hand, the images of "darkness" and "silence" are pictures of defeat and destruction. This is what Hannah is talking about in this prayer.

"For not by might shall a man prevail"

The use of the word "for" immediately suggests a reason is forthcoming. Contrary to almost universal thinking, brute force is not the ultimate determiner of life. There are other ingredients, godly ones, that ultimately determine which forces will triumph.

"Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; against them He will thunder in the heavens, the LORD will judge the ends of the earth; and He will give strength to His king, and will exalt the horn of His anointed." I Samuel 2:10

"Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered"

Up until now, Hannah has spoken in a variety of ways about the nature and character of God. She did this by carefully describing what God will and will not do. In the midst of this, we must keep in mind that much of Hannah's prayer is directed to God, but carefully chastises Peninnah.

There is a slight shift in style in this verse. There is a strong hint of warning here. She accomplishes this warning by exalting God's greatness. The word translated 'contend' is "rib" (רִיב). It means "to strive," or "be an opponent or adversary." This word is commonly used to describe verbal combat, intense quarreling. It is the kind of thing Joseph's brothers did with their father when he told them to return to Egypt without Benjamin. It describes perfectly the quarreling between Jacob and Laban.

The word translated "shattered" is a generous translation of the word "nehet" (נָהַת). The word literally means "to go down." It was frequently used in the statement "go down to Sheol." It is part of a picture of judgment and defeat. Hannah's message is clear. If one takes a stand against the LORD, there will be a serious price to pay.

"Against them He will thunder from the heavens"

In poetry this is called a parallelism. It is a way to repeat an important idea without using the same identical words. People in that time were afraid of thunder. Later a strong army would be defeated when God caused it to thunder. It was viewed as an expression of God's limitless power and it caused people to panic. Hannah spoke reinforcing her attack on the disobedient, especially Peninnah. She said that God would judge those who contend with him ; those who verbally attack His ways in the world.

"The LORD will judge the ends of the earth"

Over the past six verses, Hannah had consistently used the name "LORD" when speaking about her God. In this statement she used the name once more, albeit appropriately. Though the text does not so indicate, it seems appropriate to assume that Hannah is again speaking to God, but at the same time attacking Peninnah. It was a frightening thing to contemplate the judgment of the LORD.

"And He will give strength to His kings"

In the midst of the sentence, Hannah returned to her exaltations of the greatness of the LORD. Observe that it is to "His kings" that he gives strength. There are two forms of comfort in these words. First, the Lord is the one who chooses and installs kings. God is in control of the nations. Second, the kings He has chosen receive strength from His hand. The ones He enables, He also empowers.

"And will exalt the horn of His anointed."

Again in the final statement in this verse, Hannah turned to a parallelism to emphasize a point she really wanted the people to hear. This parallelism is most interesting. As pointed out earlier, she used the image of a ram's horn to speak of total power. Having drawn the picture of total power, she used another picture in a way that we call a double-entendre. God had Samuel later anoint two kings. It was God's way of announcing His choice to use a specific person for a specific ministry. Prophetically, however, it was a way to identify

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one who would eventually live, die and live again as the redeemer of mankind. In both cases, it is the LORD who exalts the power He has placed in their hands.

I Samuel 2:11 – Samuel left in the Temple, as promised

*Then Elkanah went to his home at Ramah. But the boy ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest.
I Samuel 2:11*

"Then Elkanah went to his home in Ramah"

This sentence paragraph is written as a contrast. It was done this way for purposes of emphasis. The prayer is ended. Life must now return to normal. Only slightly concealed in this verse is the picture of what "normal" means. Elkanah and his wives will return to their home in Ramah while Samuel remains in the temple. This means that in Elkanah's home Peninnah will be surrounded by her many children. Hannah, on the other hand, will once again be childless. Nevertheless, the main import of this first part of the verse is that as painful as it had to be, Hannah was determined to keep her word.

"But the boy ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest."

This sentence is a contrast between what Elkanah and his wives were going to do and what Samuel would do. It has been written this way for two reasons: First, it tells what both are doing. Second, it adds great emphasis to the contrast between them. In this contrast, however, there is an inherent parallel as well. The parallel is between the faith practice of the parents and that of Samuel. Though we do not know Samuel's age for certain, he has to be extremely young. We have already seen the evidence of the father's devotion and the mother's faith; we now see an expression of the faith and devotion of a very young boy that mirrors the commitment of his parents. In the very next verse, we will witness a very different contrast.

I Samuel 2:12-17 – Eli's Sons Sinned in Greed

Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD I Samuel 2:12

The author described the sons of Eli in two ways: First, they were worthless young men. Second, they did not know the LORD.

The word "worthless" is beliaal" (בְּלִיָּעַל) It means more than having no value. It is worthless to the point of destruction. It is extreme wickedness. To get an idea of the extent of this wickedness, it is the word used to describe Beliel. In fact, in the Hebrew text it reads, Now, the sons of Eli were the sons of Beliel." It is to be corrupt to the point of ignorance. It is a way of saying that they have no redeeming value whatsoever. It is difficult to make a stronger statement than this.

The word translated "know" is yada" (יָדָע) and means to literally "discover by seeing." In the negative presentation, it is to be unable to see that which is observable. It is a way to describe the inability to recognize facts when you see them. It is not that the facts are hard to see. It is that painful limitation of being unable to discern what is before you. This was an apt description of Eli's sons. Evidence of the character of God was everywhere around them in the worship they facilitated. They, however, lived at such an evil level that they could neither discern His character nor allow it to have a real impact upon their lives.

*And the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand.
I Samuel 2:13*

"And the custom of the priests with the people."

The first part of this verse is the conclusion of the previous sentence. It is stated this way for purposes of extreme emphasis. It is like saying, "They did terrible things, in fact they did not realize that their actions were evil." In the last part of the sentence in verse 12, the author lists two equal components. The first is that Eli's sons did not know the Lord. The second is that they did not know the customs of the priests with a the

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people. This could be very difficult to understand. We know that for a long time there was a very extensive five year training program before a man could be allowed to serve as a priest. It would be difficult to understand that these men had not been properly trained. The priests received their daily food from the sacrifices people made. There was a very precise way in which this was to be carried out. They had been taught very well. This means of receiving their food was established by God. To change this would be an affront to God.

The situation is that Eli's sons did change it. We need to clarify how the sons of Eli possibly could not know how the customs of the priests with the people worked. The text does not explain this. There is at least one plausible answer, perhaps more. When people know to do the right cross over that line and do wrong repeatedly, the line eventually becomes blurred and they no longer recognize the difference. In 12:17b, and following, the author described the way in which the brothers conducted themselves in a sinful way. When the sacrifice had been offered, the priests were to come to the person making the sacrifice. The priest brought a three pronged fork in his hand. He came while the pot was boiling

Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. I Samuel 2:14

"Then he would thrust it into the pan"

This program was designed to give the person sufficient meat for his sacrifice. It also was designed to provide sufficient food for the priests. To be clear, the priest was not to look into the pot and choose the meat he wanted. He, without looking, thrust the fork into the pot and whatever he brought out was his. He could take that for his meal. This was an ancient pattern that was always used. It worked very well. This was supposedly what was done at Shiloh. It certainly was what was expected by the people for they knew the custom very well.

Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw." I Samuel 2:15

"Also before they burned the fat"

This means that the priests waited until the meat was cooked to come to claim their portion. That, of course is not what the sons of Eli did and the people would certainly be aware of it.

"The priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw."

In this, the sons of Eli changed the process completely. Instead of receiving their portion, they demanded it in the way that they wanted it. This was contrary to the instruction that Israel received from the LORD. Everyone in Israel would know that this was wrong. To some it might seem, what is the difference. The difference is that when it is demanded it is no longer a gift to God shared by the priest. It involved no dependence upon God. It was just taking what they wanted. This, of course, was not theirs to take. It was like telling God, "You do not know what I need. I will set that level for myself.

And if the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire," then he would say, "No, but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force." I Samuel 2:16

This changed what was intended to be a gift to the LORD into a forced forfeiture of possession. The verse makes it clear that the sacrificer was not trying to limit the amount the priest could take. He was simply trying to make a proper sacrifice and the priest who was supposed to facilitate that was inhibiting the carrying out of God's instructions.

There is purpose involved here. This purpose involves both the priest and the one making the sacrifice. The purpose of the priest was to facilitate the worship experience of the one making the sacrifice. In one sense, the priest helped prepare the sacrifice to enable the worshipper to be restored to God. The events of this

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verse changed the purpose completely. At this point, his purpose was to get the choices of food that he wanted. The sacrifice simply became a venue through which this was to be accomplished. For the priest, the issue was greed, though it should have been the desire to serve God and His people. The purpose of the worshipper was to obey the divine command concerning his sin and be restored to personal fellowship with God. When this took place, however, the worshipper, concerned that his sacrifice be accepted, became the defender of the divine instruction. In one sense, the worshipper, of necessity, took over the responsibility of the priest who had more personal priorities.

Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD. I Samuel 2:17

"Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD"

The author properly referred to the actions as "sins." It may be a very religious ceremony, but the way in which it was conducted was sinful. The definition factor is that it is a disobedience to God – disobedience to the sacrificial instructions; disobedience in the selfish way they treated the worshipper.

"For the men despised the offering of the LORD "

The word translated "despised" is "naas" (נָאָס). This word means "to hold God in contempt," "to deprecate God," "to blaspheme." We need to clarify this statement. The sacrificial system was a gift of God for the redemption of the people. This is not what was being despised. Should you ask these two if they despised the offering of the LORD, they would have been shocked. The fact is, however, that they did despise the offering. These priests simply used the sacrificial system as an opportunity to gain wealth. The difference is based in the fact that the gift of God was being used as a means or tool rather than being the means of service. Again, the food, wealth and satisfaction took the place of the worship of God. This is, of course, an expression of real contempt.

I Samuel 2:18-21 – Hannah Bore Three More Sons and Two Daughters

Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD as a boy wearing a linen ephod. I Samuel 2:18

Again, we do not understand how old Samuel was when his mother took him to the temple. A second issue also comes into play. Though this statement immediately follows the report of Samuel's coming to the temple in Shiloh, there is no certainty that this verse immediately follows his coming to Shiloh. The biblical text is of no help at this point.

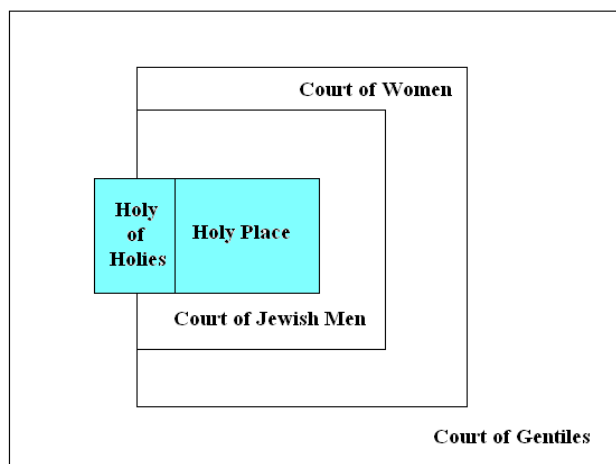
There is yet another question. The text says that Samuel was ministering before the LORD. From the context, we assume this means working in the temple itself. If that is true, and it appears to be, there is a problem of tribal background. The workers in the temple were all from the tribe of Levi, but Samuel was from the tribe of Ephraim. He might be able to serve as a helper while still a youth, though we know of no one else who did so. Even if he did serve this way, at the age of 25, he would be required to start the priestly training program and he would be excluded from that because of his tribal background. The text does not give us a complete list of Samuel's duties. We know he opened and closed the temple doors. We would assume that he was doing things like filling lamps, caring for the doors and other menial tasks. He certainly would not be allowed to perform regular priestly functions as the temple priests did.

"As a boy wearing a linen ephod."

As we mentioned earlier, this could go on until he came to the age when Levite young men were required to begin their temple training. At this point he would be excluded. Samuel, however, seems to be an exception to the rule that only the men of the tribe of Levi could minister in the temple worship. As we shall see, Samuel was to meet Saul and make a sacrifice. When Samuel did not arrive at the appointed time, Saul made the sacrifice and was condemned for doing so. The mention of the linen ephod carried two messages. First, the fact that the garment was made of linen indicated that it represents a family of wealth. Only these people could afford such finery. Second, this is the level of quality a priest might wear, but the fact that it was only

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the ephod suggests that he was in a different situation than others in the temple. The ephod was worn by the priests. It was a loosely-fitting vest-like garment to which the high priest attached the breastplate. The ephod was worn when the priests served at the altar. One might question an Ephraimite both working in the temple and sleeping there. Because of our view of a church, many tend to think of the temple as a single, total building. It was not. There was only one part of the temple that had a roof over it. This was the center complex that housed the holy place, where only priests were permitted to enter, and the holy of holies, where only the High Priest could enter and only on the Day of Atonement. The rest of the temple complex employed the services of a number of priests, but other people were allowed to be in the area as well. The Jerusalem temple was a case in point. It would look something like this:



The Jerusalem Temple
Shaded areas have a roof, the rest are open.

With minor restrictions, (women cannot enter the court of the men; Gentiles cannot enter either court of women or court of the men but Jewish men can pass through either of the other courts.) people other than priests can enter any areas except those with a roof.

And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. I Samuel 2:19

"And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year"

Hannah had given her son to the LORD as she promised. She did not give up on being his mother. She took care of his needs while he served the LORD. This gives us an indication of the faithfulness of her total dedication to that commitment.

You may have noticed that the author placed an emphasis on the fact that Hannah brought him "a little robe." Much about the timing of these early events in Samuel's life is not at all clear. The word translated "little" is "qatan" (קָטָן) and literally means "young" or "insignificant." Almost every reference to this word is translated "small" or "younger in age". There can be no doubt that the author has described a garment that would fit a very small boy. Could he be 8 – 12 years of age? Probably! For certain, it does not represent a teen-aged boy.

"When she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice"

This portion of the verse gives us some information about the lifestyle of Elkanah and his family. They still came up to Shiloh annually to make the sacrifice for atonement. At this point, Hannah had double reason to come to the yearly sacrifices. She wanted to worship the LORD. The second reason was that she was a mother - she wanted to see her son. We must keep in mind that at this point she did not have any other children. One wonders if she was becoming concerned about whether she would have any other children.

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Have you noticed that we do not hear any more about Peninnah? Does this mean that she is no longer a part of the family of Elkanah? Could it mean that she just doesn't come to the sacrifice any more since she can no longer lord-it-over Hannah? She just isn't mentioned any more and we do not understand why.

*Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, "May the LORD give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the LORD." And they went to their own home.
1 Samuel 2:20*

"Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife"

This is a considerable change from the time Eli chastised Hannah because he thought that she was drunk. It is clear that the priests were called upon to bless the people on behalf of God. The blessing mentioned here is substantially more than that. He was commending them for their faithfulness to God. Eli had not forgotten Hannah's faithfulness to her promise to give her son and her ongoing care for his needs.

"May the LORD give you children from this woman"

This had to be a total surprise to Elkanah and Hannah. This was not part of the covenant she had made with God when she many years before. If God did give Elkanah more children by Hannah, this would be an extra special blessing over and above the agreement. That, however, is just like the LORD. He covenants with us and then blesses us above and beyond what He promised.

Eli could see this situation very clearly. He knew, as everyone else would, that this situation was desperately traumatic whereas it might be necessary for the family, but more than desperate for the two women. Eli prayed accordingly. He asked God to give Elkanah more children by Hannah so that there would not be abuse by the second wife.

"In place of the one she dedicated to the LORD"

Eli remembered the fact that Hannah promised to give God her son and kept her promise. As far as the covenant was concerned, Hannah had no reason to expect that God would give her other children besides Samuel. That was not part of the covenant. From a human point of view, If a woman was able to conceive one child, it would not be unreasonable to expect that she might be able to conceive again. It should be remembered, however, that it had been at least eight years since the birth of Samuel and she had apparently not conceived during that time. Hannah had taken Samuel, her insurance for old age care, and given him to the LORD. Eli wanted her to be cared for in her old age in spite of Hannah's keeping of her covenant with the LORD. Can you imagine what happened in Hannah's heart when she heard this prayer?

*And the LORD visited Hannah; and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters.
And the boy Samuel grew before the LORD. 1 Samuel 2:21*

Eli's prayer was much more than a nice thought. It appears that he meant it and expected it to happen. Though the text does not comment, it seems very certain that Elkanah and Hannah prayed as intently as Eli did.

God answers prayer. Isn't it just like God?! Hannah gave God one son and God gave her three more sons and two daughters which were not a part of the covenant she made with the LORD. When we give God all we have, God gives us much more than we had in the first place. This, of course, is unchanged in our times!

"And the boy Samuel grew before the LORD"

This is a compatible statement with the report that God visited Hannah and she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Samuel was given to the LORD and there is a level of bitter-sweet joy involved in this obedience. There is an even greater joy involved when one is faithful to God and it works out perfectly. This is what the author highlighted in this verse.

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I Samuel 2:22-26 – Eli's Sons Sinned: Samuel Grew in God's Favor

Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. I Samuel 2:22

"Now Eli was very old"

This gives us a lot of information. A priest served from age 30 to age 50. At this point, they retired and only served after that during the days leading up to the Day of Atonement each year. Eli was very old, but there is no number associated with that statement. The physical descriptions suggest that he had passed 50 years of age many years ago. If this is so, and I believe it is, then his two sons had served in a very tragic way for many years. It is a wonder that the people put up with it for all these years.

"And he heard all that his sons were doing in all Israel"

This is the first of two statements in this verse about which Eli confronted his sons. This part of the confrontation is a reference to the things the author reported in 2:12-17. This and things of this nature accomplished two things, both of them unfortunate. It is grievous to God because of the inherent disobedience. It was grievous to the worshippers because they might expect this from other people, but they would hope for better as far as the priests were concerned.

"And how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting"

One wonders who these women were who "served at the doorway." The honest answer is that we do not really know. Some claim that these were temple prostitutes. This is possible, but not necessary. Most of the work in the temple was done by men and only by them. At the same time, we know that in Luke, chapter two, Anna was a prophetess and "she never left the temple, serving day and night with fasting and prayers." Frankly, any conclusion one would draw about this would be sheer conjecture.

Eli hardly could claim ignorance. This was a poorly kept secret and everyone would know these things. Eli, as the chief Priest, even though he was very old had to deal with his sons in two ways: In that culture, a boy must obey his father so long as his father lived. The fact that he knew the problem demands that he tell his sons to stop their evil ways and make sure that they complied. If they refused, it was his responsibility to remove them from temple service. As the Chief Priest, he was required to control all priests under his care.

There is another possible issue here. It is possible, though not confirmed in the text, that there was a shortage of priests. This is hinted at by the fact that Eli though very old was still the High Priest. No other priests are mentioned in the text. If this is the case, then Eli was in a bind. He knew his sons were doing wrong, but if there were no other priests, then where would Eli turn for priests? The fact that the LORD judged Eli for this indicates that Eli was responsible and failed to do the job he could do to correct the problem.

When priests returned from being home with their wives, and families, they were required to go through a cleansing process because they were unclean. Great stress was placed on the cleanliness of the priests. Further, these priests had been committing adultery repeatedly with the women who served at the gate of the temple. Jewish law required that anyone guilty of adultery should be stoned. Though this was common knowledge, they were not stoned. Any priest who had been with a woman could not serve at the altar. Eli's sons had been with these women, they were unclean; they still served at the altar. Eli's fault was that he had to know all about this, but did nothing to stop it or correct the problem.

And he said to them, "Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people?" I Samuel 2:23

Eli confronted his sons, but it was not a corrective confrontation, but a whining attack. The only thing such a whining confrontation accomplishes is to frustrate the person whining and infuriate the ones being confronted. If you look carefully at this question, it is clear that he did not expect an answer. Eli knew the answer. His sons were disobedient to God and he knew it. When Eli made this statement he was admitting

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that he knew what his sons were doing. Certainly, distressed people were telling him about the tragic conditions.

One of the facts that gets covered up is that these priests were giving a false impression of what a man of God should be. There is clear evidence that Eli whined, but his sons were not changed in any way.

"No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the Lord's people circulating. I Samuel 2:24

"No my sons"

This statement is further evidence that Eli certainly was well informed concerning these problems. The fact that Eli said, "No, my sons" indicates that there was probably a prolonged discussion that took place between verses 23 and 24.

"For the report is not good which I hear the LORD'S people circulating"

This particular statement tends to identify for us the content of the discussion that took place between verses 23 and 24. The response of the sons had to be insisting that Eli's claims were not true.

Observe that Eli responded that it was not just people who had informed him of the sins of his sons, but it was "the LORD'S people" who had done this. The clear intent of this emphasis is that the reports have to be considered credible because of the nature of those reporting.

There is at this time, sufficient evidence available for Eli to act upon the information he had at hand. It is just as clear that Eli failed to act upon this information and dismiss his sons from their ministry as priests.

If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death. I Samuel 2:25

Instead of acting upon this infraction, Eli chose to enter into discussion with his sons. In reality, no discussion was necessary. Infractions had been made and verified and the imposition of justice should have been carried out. It was not.

"If a man sins against another, God will mediate for him"

This part of the verse is a conditional statement (IF...THEN...) As you read it, it is immediately clear that it is a preliminary statement. It is an attempt to explain why their actions were so frightening. Eli reasoned that when you sin against another person, you need a mediator. God will be that mediator when no one else is willing. Eli had set the stage for a very severe contrast.

"But if a man sins against the LORD who can intercede for him?"

The use of the word "but" is evidence of the strong contrast that we mentioned. Eli's logic is compelling. God mediates between two estranged individuals because He is greater than both and thus commands their attention and compliance. If, however, the offended party is the LORD of the universe, who is there who will command His willingness to be restored? The unspoken answer, obviously, is "no one." Eli has set the stage for his sons to discover for themselves the severity of their sin against the LORD.

"But they would not listen to the voice of their father"

There is a contrast within this verse. Eli's reasoning and command of the issue was flawless. The response of his sons, however, makes no reasonable sense whatsoever. It is like saying, "We realize that we have sinned grievously and have placed ourselves at inescapable risk, but we are not going to pay any attention." Observe how the author reported, "They would not even listen to the voice of their father." It is not that they just refused to change. They would not even listen to him. This, by the way, is one more disobedience, added to their already devastating indictment. Eli was urging his sons to repent because their judgment was inescapable. He was right.

The boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men. I Samuel 2:26

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As we have seen repeatedly, this author leans heavily upon the tool called "contrast." Having just described the reckless, illogical position of Eli's sons, he now turns to a contrasting picture of young Samuel. Though Samuel was quite young, he was growing up physically, but he was also increasingly becoming a responsible person. Observe that as Samuel matured, he increased in favor with both the LORD and with the people – horizontally and vertically. It is interesting that Samuel was being seriously contrasted with Hophni and Phinehas. At the same time, he was also being contrasted with Eli as well. Samuel was succeeding where his mentor was failing. This gives us a sad picture of just how tragic things had become.

I Samuel 2:27-36 – The Prophet Announced the Death of Eli's two Sons

Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Did I not indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh's house?' I Samuel 2:27

"Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him,"

The text does not help us understand who this "man of God" was. He performed a prophetic office when he spoke. He spoke on behalf of the LORD. His message came in the form of several very telling questions, but only one is in this verse. There is no answer to this question, though one is clearly understood. The question is phrased as the LORD speaking to Eli, "Did I not indeed reveal myself to the house of your father?" The implied answer to this question is an obvious, "Yes!"

The question itself needs clarification. This prophet spoke about the "house of your father." The author did not identify whose house this was. We know that Eli was of the tribe of Levi. There were other members of the tribe of Levi in the Egyptian enslavement. It is my considered opinion that this is a reference to Aaron. It is interesting that after the initial confrontation and the plagues, we hear precious little about Aaron during the balance of the 400 years of captivity. The LORD did reveal Himself to Aaron and to all Israel in very vivid ways. The important issue of this question is that God was faithful and involved with His people in these devastating experiences of slavery. It was God's way of establishing a basis for His attack on Eli's failure to be responsible before the LORD. The LORD has been faithful, but Eli has not. One of the purposes of this was to establish a way of saying there is no possible way that you do not understand who God is and how God works on behalf of His people. It says to Eli, "You are without excuse. You know that God works faithfully with His people in distress, but He is a holy God. This should have caused you to control your sons rather than letting them sin, even in God's house."

And did I not choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I not give to the house of your father all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel? I Samuel 2:28

"And did I not choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before me?"

Observe that this question begins with the word "and." This suggests that this verse is a continuation of the previous question. This second question is presented in the same vain as the first. The implied answer to this question is "Yes!" In this question, He said, "Did I not choose them?" To some people, this verse sounds as though the LORD chose people from each of the 11 tribes as well as the tribe of Levi. That, of course, is not what the LORD was saying. He was saying that there were Levites located in the other tribes, Levites whom God called to care for the needs of the worship experience.

"And did I not give to your father all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel?"

Again, it is a way of saying, "Is there anything I did not give you in order that you should be well cared for?" It is like saying, "Is there any reason that you had to allow your sons to be so selfish about the sacrifices when they are quite well cared for.?"

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'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?' I Samuel 2:29

"Why did you kick at My sacrifice and at My offerings which I have commanded in My dwelling?"

Observe that the word "My" is used four times in this one verse. This repetition emphasizes the personal ownership of the temple and sacrifices to which the LORD refers in this question. Again, the LORD asked the question in such a way as to illicit a positive response. The question, however, is at a higher, more personal level. The word translated "kicked" is "baat" (בָּעַת) and means "to trample or despise." To use God's sacrificial system as a means for personal gain and satisfaction is to despise that which God has established as a means of grace for His people. The LORD used an image that Eli would understand very well. The image of "kicking" is an expression commonly used in dealing with animals. It expressed unusual contempt and condescension. This was a way to express how tragic their actions were against God.

"And honor your sons above me."

Had anyone said to Eli, "are you honoring your sons above the LORD", he would have been shocked and instantly cried, "never!" The fact is, however, that Eli disobeyed God by failing to control his sons and thus he was guilty.

"By making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of my people Israel"

This question is as strong as the first and at least as personal. If Eli honored God above his sons, he would confront the sons in a forceful way and refuse to allow them to commit the reported sins and still maintain their priestly ministry. He would not allow them to desecrate the sacrifice and abuse the people as they were doing.

"Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, 'I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever'; but now the LORD declares, 'Far be it from Me-- for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.' I Samuel 2:30

The word "therefore" indicates that there is a conclusion approaching. The conclusion, some seven verses long, is an indictment God pronounced on Eli's family for their evil ways and deeds. The pronounced judgment was given in the form of a contrast – the past: now. These are spelled out as follows:

1. In the past God said, "I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before me forever." This sounds as though this was an unconditional promise. If you look through the Old Testament, you will see that God makes eternal promises. There were times, such as with David's sons, when God set aside His promise because those involved were involved in disobedience. This is a perpetual plan of action that the LORD followed in earlier times and was followed in this instance. The other side of this is that a Holy God cannot honor such agreements without compromising His own nature when the people are involved in sin.
2. Now – "Far be it from me – for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me will be lightly esteemed."

When the LORD said, "Far be it from me," He placed the strongest possible negative emphasis upon what He was about to say. This indictment is in two contrasting parts. The basis of this indictment hinges upon the obedience of the person(s) involved. You will observe that this indictment involves both justice and mercy. As you study this indictment, it is clear that the disobedient, "those who despise me" draws the justice of the LORD. On the other hand, this justice is merciful. The two parts are not direct opposites. If they were direct opposites it would look like this, "Those who honor me, I will honor, those who despise me I will despise." This would be much harsher than what the LORD said, "Those who despise me will be lightly esteemed." Being "lightly esteemed" is a serious enough indictment. The word so translated is "qalal" (קָלַל). It means to receive less punishment than one really deserves. Nevertheless, it is a curse.

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'Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house. I Samuel 2:31

In this verse, the LORD continues to prophesy through the "man of God." Observe that this judgment will not happen in that day or week. There are two characteristics of the LORD'S judgment that are used repeatedly:

1. It is almost always announced well in advance, "the days are coming..."
2. The precise date is seldom, if ever, identified.

Again, in this prophecy, the LORD used the cultural understandings of the people as a vehicle through which to speak to Eli. Observe also that this is a divine action, not an enemy action, "I will break your strength."

"I will break your strength"

The more technically advanced a people become, the less they are dependant upon physical strength. The reverse is equally true. The less technically advanced a people are, the more they are totally dependant upon physical strength. Israel was one of the least technically advanced peoples in that part of the world. Other nations used horses and even camels in battle, but Israel did not. Other nations used chariots and Israel only had these advanced weaponries if they got them from the neighboring countries. Advanced weaponry from an Israelite point of view was a bow and arrow. Israel, and particularly Eli, was bound to the daily need for physical strength to survive like no other people in that part of the world. When the LORD threatened to break their strength it was tantamount to total destruction.

"And the strength of your father's house"

Many people think of this statement as a parallelism. Such as David used in the Psalms. In this case, however, the nearly parallel presentation adds emphasis, but also these words add a whole additional piece of information. If you say, "I will break your strength," this focuses on a single person. If, however, you say, "And the strength of your father's house," you are saying that the strength of the family is broken. You are prophesying the extinction of that family name. This is the cultural aspect of which we spoke earlier. The worst possible thing that could happen to a man would be for his name to become extinct. This, of course, is the basis of the Levirate law as described in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

"So that there will not be an old man in your house"

In Biblical times, old age was highly respected because old age was a blessing bestowed by God upon the obedient. In this instance, the LORD was saying that not only would the name die out; there would be no one in the family held in high respect. The entire family would be looked down upon. This raises the question about the children to the third and fourth generation suffering for the sins of their fathers. This quote is found in Exodus 34:7

who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grand-children to the third and fourth generations. " Exodus 34:7

It is not that the LORD was so angry that punishing one person did not assuage His fury, so He had to punish three other generations. God will forgive sin, but the consequences remain. The sins of the father have an effect upon his children and this effect in turn will impact their children for three generations if not many more.

'And you will see the distress of My dwelling, in spite of all that I do good for Israel; and an old man will not be in your house forever. I Samuel 2:32

"And you will see the distress of my dwelling, in spite of all that I do good for Israel"

In this verse, the "man of God" continued his prophetic pronouncement. The failure of Eli can not be overlooked. God made it clear, through this prophetic voice that Eli and his family would pay a heavy penalty. The other side of truth is that in several ways, Eli had been a faithful servant of God. The temple of God

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was very important to him. The second part of Eli's punishment was that God would break his heart as he viewed the temple experiencing indescribable distress. There is a slight difference in the Hebrew text. It would read, "Thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation in all the wealth God shall give to Israel." It is an indication of how the LORD will expose Eli to this terrible experience. On more than one occasion, the LORD allowed His people to be conquered and in some cases taken out of the land of promise when they sinned. This is the essence of this promise as well. Israel will be conquered and aliens will take up residence in the land.

"And an old man will not be in your house forever"

This is the second time in two verses that the LORD prophesied that the men of the family would be disgraced by the fact that none of them would be honored to live to old age. This places unusual emphasis on this harsh truth.

'Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar that your eyes may fail from weeping and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life. I Samuel 2:33

"Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from my altar"

"The man of God" has, in the last two verses, said twice that God would not leave a man of old age in the family of Eli. This is clearly an announcement of justice. There is a strong punishment for sin in these announcements.

As this verse begins, the man of God prophesies that God would not cut off all of Eli's house from serving at the temple altar. It would not be his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, but it would be someone in his father's family. At first reading, this sounds like mercy in the midst of judgment. That would not surprise us because the Old Testament is replete with illustrations where God judged, but even in His judgment, He showed mercy. As you read the verse, again and again, you discover there is another part to this sentence.

"That your eyes may fail from weeping and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life."

The first part of this sentence absolutely sounds like mercy in the midst of judgment. In one sense it is. If you read this part of the sentence carefully, you will note that it begins with the word "that." This should really be translated "so that." This word indicates you are dealing with a statement of purpose. It is going to explain why the LORD is going to temporarily spare some of those eligible to serve at the altar. In the statement of the LORD'S purpose, the "man of God" lists three judgments he will bring upon Eli's family. The Hebrew text reads something like this, "

"That the man of thine whom I shall not cut off from mine altar shall be to consume thine eyes and to grieve thine heart, and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age." (I Samuel 2:33 from Hebrew text)

1. "Consume their eyes"

The word translated "consume" is "kala" (כָּלָה). This is a broad term which literally means to bring a positive or negative process to conclusion. The best word for our purposes here is "totality" or "completeness." God will not destroy every man of the family who would be eligible to serve at the altar. This will bring such great sorrow that Eli's eyes will be completely taken up with weeping and sorrow.

2. "Grieve thine heart"

The word translated "grieve" is "adab" (אָדַב). It literally means more than grieving. It is "to grieve to the point of languishing." It is to be rendered inarticulate and immobile by the extent of one's grief.

3. "Die"

The word translated "die" is "mut" (מוֹת). This is an interesting word. It can be used to describe violent or natural death. It is used, however, to describe murder and execution much more than simple natural death. Perhaps these relatives dying in the prime of life may not all be dying natural deaths.

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If you study these three pronouncements, you will note, again, that they are progressive. Each is more intense and debilitating than the previous one. It is a strong way to emphasize just how terrible it is to choose one's own priorities rather than the service of God. At first glance, this verse may seem to be mercy in the midst of judgment. It is not. It is an emphatic way to describe just how devastating the punishment for sin can be.

'And this will be the sign to you which shall come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them shall die. I Samuel 2:34

In this particular verse, the "man of God" became much more specific. The indication to Eli that this is what God was doing was the fact that both his sons would die on the same day. This is given as proof, in advance, that it was not a coincidence. It was an act of God. When he got the news of their passing, he could be certain that this was the judgment of God for their sinful ways in the service of the house of God.

'But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always. I Samuel 2:35

This verse begins with the word "but." This always indicates that there is a strong contrast in operation. The contrast is between the fallacious ways of Eli and his sons on the one hand and Samuel on the other. Observe that this is something that God is going to do - "I will raise up for Myself..." Again, the difference is between the sinful sons of Eli and the faithful service of Samuel.

Observe that this is just one more example of the fact that God will never leave Himself without a faithful witness. In this verse, God evaluates the service of this one whom God will raise up for Himself. He is a faithful priest. This is in contrast to the unfaithful ways of Eli's sons- Hophni and Phinehas. This faithful priest "will do according to what is in my heart and in My soul." It seems that this unnamed person, whom I believe is Samuel, is one who would qualify to be in the list of the faithful in Hebrews 11.

As you look at this verse, there are two parts to it. The first part is what this unidentified priest will do in his relationship to God. There are three wonderful expressions:

1. He will be "raised up by God."
2. He will be a "faithful priest."
3. He "will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul"

Having described the beauty of this faithful, God then turns to what He will do on behalf of that faithful priest.

1. "I will build him an enduring house"
2. He will walk before My anointed always."

There was no family member of Eli that would fulfill this description. Samuel, who was under Eli's care, did fulfill that description. There is an additional thought that lingers concerning this verse. One must wonder to whom God refers when He mentioned "My anointed." Many would rush to say that this is a picture of Jesus and it could be. We must keep in mind, however, that there were a number of people who were anointed of God. My personal preference is Samuel even though at the end of his life he was not as brilliant as he was in his youth and early adulthood.

'And it shall come about that everyone who is left in your house shall come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread, and say, "Please assign me to one of the priest's offices so that I may eat a piece of bread."' " I Samuel 2:36

"And it shall come about that everyone who is left in your house shall come and bow down to him"

This is another prophetic word from "the man of God." If you look back through the verses of this chapter, the author quotes the man of God as referring to Hophni and Phinehas as "your two sons." Again, the author quotes the "man of God" as speaking of other men of Eli's extended family as "every man of yours" or

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"the men of your house." In this verse, the "man of God," has already finished his prophetic message against Hophni and Phinehas, in verse 34. Here, he is speaking of other eligible Levites of Eli's extended family.

This portion of the verse describes a part of the judgment the LORD will bring upon the men of Eli's extended family. The author speaks of the remnant of Eli's extended family in this manner, "they shall bow down to him." The text does not clarify the identity of "him." It appears that this is a reference to Samuel. In Eastern cultures, workers each day come and bow down before the one who supervises their work as a symbol of their readiness to work under this person's instruction. This is still practiced in Japan.

"For a piece of silver or a loaf of bread"

When priests came to serve at the temple, they were paid for their services in three different ways. We have already discussed the fact that when a worshipper brought an animal to be sacrificed, the priests received a portion of the meat for his consumption. The bread that was part of the things present in the "holy place" was changed every day. The priests received this bread for their consumption. As in any household, the family has other needs besides food. A portion of the money people presented to the LORD at the temple was provided for the priests to cover the expenses of their family. Keep in mind that this is part of the punishment of Eli and his two sons. They were Levites prepared to be the supervisory personnel at the temple, but will be under the command of one, whom we believe was Samuel, who is not a Levite and they will be subject to him. This is a personal humiliation and embarrassment to a Levitical family.

"And say, 'Please assign me to one of the priest's offices so that I may eat a piece of bread'"

The priesthood, though not permitted or required to pursue vocational employment, were well cared for. In this verse, "the man of God" continues to prophesy the details of God's punishment of Eli and his sons. We previously described the way in which the priesthood was compensated for their services. In this portion of the verse, "the man of God" describes how the members of Eli's extended family made request for their portion of food. Observe, this is the second time "the man of God" mentions the request for food in this one verse. The important matter in this second part of the verse is the way in which the members of Eli's extended family made their request. This was usually referred to as "the daily provision," or "their supply of bread." In this portion of the verse, the "man of God" speaks of the request in more meager terms, "that I may eat a piece of bread." The largess to which the priests were provided was noticeably missing.

A question naturally arises, If the sins of Hophni and Phinehas were as this chapter describes; and if the sin of Eli was that he did not stop his sons from their detestable practices; and if these members of Eli's extended family were not involved in these sins: why, then, are they included in the punishment that Eli and his two sons are going to receive? Good question! The text is not helpful at this point, so we are left to consider possibilities. There may be other possibilities, but these two seem more appropriate. It is possible that the extended family members were at least partially involved in the benefits of the sins of Hophni and Phinehas and did not confront them or refuse the proceeds of their sinful practices. The second possibility seems a bit more practical. Unlike American families, in eastern countries the extended family had responsibility to and for each other. There is little doubt that the extended family knew exactly what the two sons of Eli were doing. In our culture, we tend to "mind our own business" and thank others to do the same. It is quite different in most of the rest of the world. In the Near East, they would say, "your business IS my business." The extended family members were expected to confront Eli's sons for the sins that they and everyone else knew about. The extended family members were responsible to confront Eli to insist that he deal properly with his sons. If the extended family did not deal with their responsibility, then they were considered accomplices in these crimes. In this understanding, the family members who were also priests were responsible for the crimes the sons of Eli committed and would be justly punished by the LORD for these crimes.

Conclusion

As you reflect upon this chapter, an issue tends to stand out in your minds. There is a very frank presentation of the real consequences involved when the unique, holy nature of the call of God is compromised in favor of some lesser priority. This should give pause to each one of us since all of us are called of God to

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serve whether in the priesthood or the pew, we are to be His servants. There is a very serious consequence if one takes this call lightly.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 3

JEHOVAH SPOKE WITH SAMUEL – I SAMUEL 3:1 – 4:1a

1. There are four paragraphs in I Samuel chapter three. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

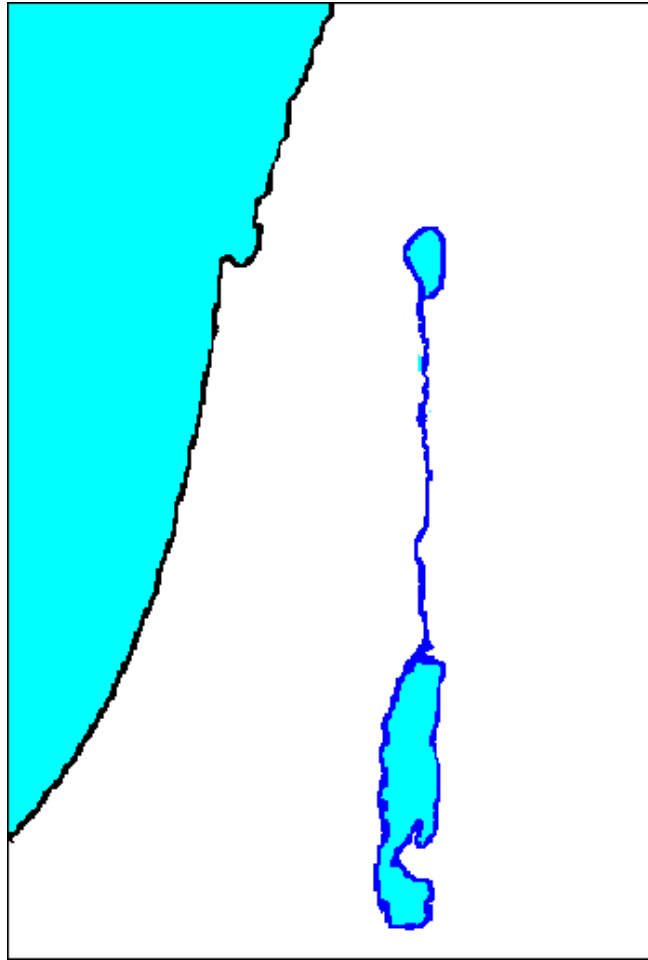
3:1-9	
3:10-14	
3:15-18	
3:19-4:1A	

2. In I Samuel 3:1-9, Jehovah spoke directly to Samuel
- In 3:1, the author described the way Samuel served in the temple.
 - The author used two descriptive statements about the spiritual condition in Israel.
 - What does the author mean by, "the word of the LORD was rare in those days"?
 - What did he mean, "visions were infrequent"?
 - Compare 3:1 with the statements in chapter two that describe the service of Phinehas and Hophni.
 - There is a contrast in this verse.
 - What two things are being contrasted?
 - What does this contrast accomplish?
 - In 3:2, the author provides a background for our thinking.
 - What facts does the author provide concerning Eli?
 - What is the significance of these pieces of information?
 - In 3:3, the author described the time of the setting with vividness.
 - Think carefully about this verse. What problems, if any, do you sense in this verse?
 - What did the author mean when he wrote, "the lamp of God had not yet gone out"?
 - In 3:4, the author said, "the LORD called Samuel." What questions can you ask about this verse?
 - In 3:5, the author reported Samuel's response to God's call.
 - According to this verse, what did Samuel think?
 - What does this fact tell us?
 - Read the verse again. What does this tell you about Eli?
 - In 3:6, God called Samuel a second time.
 - How did Samuel respond?
 - What does this tell us about Samuel's character?
 - What did you learn about Eli?
 - In 3:7, the author explained Samuel's misunderstanding of God's call.
 - What can we learn from this explanation?
 - What did the author mean when he said, "Samuel did not yet know the LORD"?
 - What did the author mean when he said, "nor had the word of the LORD been revealed to him"?
 - In 3:8, the author reported God's third call to Samuel.
 - Again, what NEW information does this present about Samuel?
 - The text says, "Eli discerned that the LORD was calling." What does this mean?
 - If you were Eli, what would you think when Samuel woke you up a third time when you had not called him?
 - Why would Eli discern that it was the LORD calling the third time when he had not realized it the two previous times?
 - In 3:9, the author reported Eli's NEW instruction to Samuel.

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- 1) In this verse, Eli said to Samuel, "IF He calls you..." What significance would you attach to the word "IF"?
 - 2) When Eli realized it was the LORD that called Samuel, what other options did he have?
 - 3) What does this say about Eli?
3. In I Samuel 3:10-14, God gave Samuel his first prophetic message to deliver to Eli.
- a. In 3:10, God spoke to Samuel a fourth time.
 - 1) What does this verse say about God?
 - 2) What does this verse say about Samuel?
 - b. In I Samuel 3:11, 12, God told Samuel the results of the prophetic message.
 - 1) What result did God announce?
 - 2) What did God mean when He said, "At which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle"?
 - 3) In 3:12, it was Eli's sons who dishonored their priesthood, but the LORD said, "I will carry out against Eli..." How would you explain this?
 - 4) What does this verse tell us about God?
 - c. In 3:13, 14, God explained why this devastating judgment would come on Eli's household.
 - 1) What explanation did the LORD give?
 - 2) Why would the LORD want Samuel to tell Eli this difficult message again?
 - 3) The LORD said, "The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever." In view of the "whosoever" passages in the New Testament, how can we explain this divine announcement?
4. In I Samuel 3:15-18, Samuel revealed the LORD'S message to Eli.
- a. In 3:15, the author described the morning after the LORD spoke to Samuel.
 - 1) What does this verse tell us about Samuel?
 - 2) Put yourself in Samuel's position.
 - a) How much sleeping would you be able to do the rest of that night?
 - b) This verse describes Samuel going about his regular duties. In what way would this be different after the LORD spoke this message to Samuel?
 - b. In 3:16, Eli approached Samuel. Read this verse again. What does it tell you about the relationship between Eli and Samuel?
 - c. In 3:17, Eli questioned Samuel about the events of the previous night.
 - 1) What tone do you detect in the words of Eli?
 - 2) It appears that Eli made some assumptions in this verse. What are they?
 - 3) If you were Samuel, how would you feel?
 - d. In 3:18, the author records Eli's response to the report Samuel gave. Eli said,
 - 1) "It is the LORD." How would he know this?
 - 2) What did he mean by this statement?
 - 3) In the last part of the quotation, Eli gave his response to the judgment Samuel reported.
 - a) How would you describe this response?
 - b) Put yourself in Eli's position. How would you feel saying these words?
5. In I Samuel 3:19-4:1a, the author described Samuel's growing reputation.
- a. In 3:19, the author made three statements about Samuel.
 1. What does it mean, "Thus Samuel grew"?
 2. What does it mean, "The LORD was with him"?
 3. What does it mean, "the LORD let none of his words fail"?
 - b. In 3:20, the author identified the spheres of Samuel's growing influence.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 3



- 1) On this map, locate the cities of Dan, Shiloh and Beer Sheba.
- 2) In what way could Samuel "be confirmed as a prophet of the LORD"?
- c. In 3:21-4:1a, the author continued to describe the growing reputation and influence of young Samuel. How would you explain the meaning of this passage?
6. This chapter deals with what it means to be a servant of the LORD. Reflect on this chapter, putting yourself in Samuel's position. What changes would be required in your life if you were to minister as Samuel did?

LESSON 3

JEHOVAH SPOKE WITH SAMUEL – I SAMUEL 3:1 – 4:1a

There are four paragraphs in I Samuel chapter three. You will find a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

3:1-9	Jehovah Spoke with Samuel
3:10-14	Samuel was Given Prophetic Message Concerning Eli
3:15-18	Samuel Revealed the Message to Eli
3:19-4:1A	Samuel's Reputation Grew with God and People

1 Samuel 3:1-9 – Jehovah Spoke With Samuel

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. I Samuel 3:1

"Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli."

The word "boy" does not appear in the Hebrew text. It does no violence to the text. It is simply an attempt on the part of the translators to further clarify what the author said. Though this is an Old Testament text, the author has carefully described how ever servant of God, in every age, performs his/her service to God. The service is always "before the LORD," but always in the presence of a fellow human being.

"And the word from the LORD was rare in those days."

The word translated "rare" or "precious" is "yakar" (יָקָר) and means "precious," "honorable," "costly," "clear," or "excellent reputation." It is a way of saying that this is a time when communication between the LORD and His people was almost if not completely nonexistent. This is a strange phenomenon. It is as present today as it was in the time of Samuel. The services of the place of worship were ongoing. The sacrifices were happening regularly. You have some people involved in a very serious relationship with God while others were just going through the motions. We are in a parallel situation. There are churches in every city. Services of many kinds and languages can easily be found. Some people have a vital relationship with God and His people. But there is almost no communication between God and His people. As so often happens, activity is mistaken for relationship and people are unaware of their distance from God.

"Visions were infrequent."

Though there is some variation between this phrase and the previous one, the message is essentially the same. "Word from the LORD" and "visions" essentially describe a means of communication God often used to speak to His people. In both instances, the author has indicated that this was not happening. This accomplishes two things:

1. It clearly indicates that there is a broken relationship between God and His people.
2. Repetition is the most common tool for strong emphasis. It is like the author is really stressing the fact that God and His people are in close proximity, but personally a great distance from each other.

And it happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well, I Samuel 3:2

"And it happened at that time,"

This is a way of saying that this was not a series of events happening one after the other. The author was saying that at this period in the life of Eli these conditions prevailed.

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"As Eli was lying down in his place"

Eli was the chief priest in this place of worship. Though he could not stay in the sanctuary itself, there was a place on the confines of the place of worship where the chief priest could stay. Other priests also could sleep there during their tour of duty. This is a night picture. Eli is lying down in his place of residence.

"Now his eyesight had begun to grow dim"

This was a time when there were no corrective glasses for a person to wear. As an individual aged, it was not uncommon for their eyesight to deteriorate or even for the aged person to become completely blind. This is what the author described in this phrase. The way in which this was written indicates that the process of deterioration has already begun, but Eli could still see to some extent.

"And he could not see well."

This statement is a form of repetition of the previous phrase. In most instances, repetition is for the purpose of emphasis. In this particular case, it does add emphasis, but its main purpose is clarification. The clarification is on the fact that he could see, to some extent, but his eyesight was definitely beginning to fail.

And the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, I Samuel 3:3

"And the lamp of God had not yet gone out"

There are at least two possible explanations for this text. We will list both and then identify which one we prefer.

1. It could be that the author indicated that though the worship of God was in sad condition, it was still in existence. There was a lamp in the place of worship that was to be kept burning at all times.
2. It also could be that the author described a current situation. There was also a lamp that burned in the place of worship that only burned when the priests and worshippers were present. When all activity in the place of worship ceased for the day, this lamp was put out.

This particular author's preference is the second option. This is because the statement is followed by the next statement which we will observe now.

"And Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord"

It sounds as though Samuel was sleeping in the sanctuary itself. As indicated earlier, there was a place for the priests and temple workers to relax and sleep. That place, however, was not in the proper place of worship. This would be perfectly clear to those who read this document in that day. It is not quite so clear to readers in our time.

"Where the ark of God was."

This phrase lends itself further to cause one to think that Samuel was sleeping in the most holy place. That, of course, was not possible. We must keep in mind that Jerusalem was the designated place of worship. This statement indicates that though the worship of God should take place in Jerusalem, the ark of God and the furniture normally found in the Holy of Holies was here. It was recognized as the official place of worship for the people of all Israel. In other words, the author used this phrase to emphasize that this is the official place of worship for Israel, not that the Holy of Holies was the place where Samuel slept.

That the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." I Samuel 3:4

"That the LORD called Samuel"

This sounds quite matter-of-fact. The truth is that this was quite a shocking turn of events. As previously indicated, this was a time in Israel when the communication between God and His people was all but extinct. Suddenly, God communicates with a young boy, rather than with Eli, the high priest. God communicated with a young boy who was not even a Levite, but God has not for, some time, communicated with any of the Levitical priests. This was a very surprising turn of events to say the least.

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Observe that this communication was quite personal. God called Samuel by name. Notice, also, that God initiated this communication. God did not wait for Samuel to plead with Him to communicate with Israel. He called Samuel by name.

"And he said, 'Here I am.'"

The author said, "the LORD called." The word "LORD" is a translation of the name "Jehovah," (יהוה). Throughout the Old Testament, this name for God was used in situations that speak of justice and even judgment. We will watch to see if this is one more evidence of that trend.

As you read the book of I Samuel, you will become increasingly aware of his intense, immediate obedience. This is a bit surprising since throughout the book of Samuel there is a strong contrast drawn between Samuel and the two sons of Eli.

Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down. I Samuel 3:5

"Then he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am for you called me.'"

We must keep in mind that Samuel was both young and inexperienced. He also was probably wakened after falling asleep. There would be very few occasions when Eli would need to call on Samuel for help after both of them had retired for the night. Though the text does not say, it seems doubtful that Eli had ever called Samuel for help during the night. Nevertheless, when Samuel heard his name, he ran to see what he could do for Eli. Did Samuel think he had recognized the voice of Eli? The text does not say. We might conjecture that Eli would be the only one who might call Samuel for help at this hour of the night.

This is a vivid picture of eager obedience. It is one thing to do what is required of you. It is quite another to not only go out to seek obedience, but to hurry to do so also. There is an unusual attitude toward obedience and service here.

Samuel was responding to the one who was his master – Eli. It was Samuel's responsibility to do as instructed. He went the extra mile. He went to seek out his instructions.

"But he said, 'I did not call, lie down again.'"

The use of the word "but" indicates that a strong contrast is in progress. The author will contrast what Samuel said, (you called me,) with what Eli knew. We must keep in mind that though Eli knew he had not called, he did not recognize that Jehovah had called. This was a time when the evils of Israel were so great that there was no guiding witness from the Lord. Even the spiritual leaders were not attuned to the voice of God.

Eli's response gives one the impression that he was surprised by Samuel's sudden appearance in the middle of the night. Eli probably thought that Samuel had been dreaming and was confused.

Whatever his mental state, Eli denied calling Samuel and instructed him to go back to lie down again. Could Eli have experienced the same level of frustration at being abruptly awakened? He might.

"So he went and lay down."

Put yourself in the place of Samuel for a moment. One can only conjecture about Samuel's feelings with this turn of events. There would have to be some level of confusion and serious question associated with these events. It should be noted, however, that Samuel did exactly as he had been instructed. It is clear that Hannah and Elkanah had trained their son very well.

Observe that in spite of the fact that this would create great confusion, Samuel did as he was instructed. He went and lay down. If you were Samuel, how would you feel? Would you feel distress? Confusion? Frustration? All of these?

And the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again." I Samuel 3:6

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"And the LORD called yet again, "Samuel."

The use of the word "and" emphasizes the idea of ongoing action. The LORD had called before in spite of the fact that neither Eli nor Samuel recognized that it was the LORD who called.

The fact that the LORD called again causes one to wonder why didn't the LORD simply identify Himself to Samuel the first time and give him the message? We will deal with the question again shortly. For now, however, it is important to raise the question even if we do not answer it here. One of the things that stands out in this story is the gentle patience of God. He did not chide Samuel for not understanding. He did not chastise Eli for not recognizing that it was God who was calling. God simply called again.

"So Samuel arose and went to Eli"

It was clear, again, that Samuel was confused about who it was who called him. He had no reason to think it would be anyone else except Eli. This description of these events highlights the careful and immediate obedience that Samuel offered to the elderly priest – Eli. Put yourself in the place of Samuel, again. In the middle of the night you hear your name and run to see what Eli wanted. The result was that you woke him, again, only to discover that he said he had not called. This would probably create a reluctance to make the same mistake again. This is intense confusion. You want to be obedient. At the same time, you don't want to wake Eli unnecessarily, again. Still, Samuel heard his name and went to see what Eli wanted of him. This is unrelenting obedience. Nevertheless, Samuel's desire to obey was greater than his desire not to upset Eli.

"And said, 'Here I am for you called me.'

In this response the author has given us a glimpse into the mind and heart of Samuel. There is a hint of both humility and willing service in the response of Samuel to what he supposed was the request of Eli.

It would be expected that Samuel would do exactly as Eli requested during the day when he was expected to be at Eli's beck and call. To be called to duty during the night, however, was far beyond normal expectations. Nevertheless, Samuel responded eagerly and quickly.

"But he answered, 'I did not call, my son, lie down again."

To say the least, both Eli and Samuel had to be confused increasingly and upset by this time. After all, this is the second time Samuel thought Eli had called him only to discover that it was not true. Again, it was also the second time Eli had to be wakened out of a sound sleep only to discover that it was again a false alarm. If Eli expressed some level of frustration and desperation at this second needless disturbance of his sleep, the author does not record it for our attention. He simply tells young Samuel to go back to lie down.

*Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him.
1 Samuel 3:7*

"Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD"

The use of the word "now" suggests that an explanation is in process. There is a plan evidently in progress. The author first reports two unexplained and irritating experiences which raise our curiosity. Only after this point does he explain some conditions that are at least in part responsible for the situation. When we talk about "knowing the LORD," we usually refer to a saving relationship with Christ. The word translated "know" is "yada" (יָדָע). The word literally means "to see." It commonly was used to express the idea of recognition. It is to be aware in a way one was never previously aware. It carries the idea of understanding. In the church, we use the phrase, "know the Lord" to refer to one whose sins have been forgiven. That is not the way it is used in the Old Testament. In this text, the author is trying to convey the idea that Samuel had no experience in hearing the Lord speak to him in prophetic messages. Later in his life, Samuel would become quite accustomed to hearing and recognizing the voice of the Lord when He spoke in prophetic messages.

At the least, the author is speaking of a relationship with God in which Samuel would recognize that it was God who was speaking to him. Also, it was a relationship in which Samuel was prepared to carry out

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the task God chose for him. It does not mean that Samuel was reluctant to obey. It simply means he had not experienced this kind of commissioning by God in the past.

"Nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him."

When we hear, "the word of the LORD," we immediately think of Scripture. That is not the author's intent here. When he used the phrase, "the word of the Lord," he referred to the message God intended for Samuel to share with the intended recipient or people. Samuel was not yet introduced to the ministry for which God was preparing him.

So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy. I Samuel 3:8

"So the Lord called Samuel again for the third time"

Along with the story of Samuel, the author is also painting a picture of what God is like. Here, the author points out the great patience of God. God simply called Samuel a third time. There were no derisive remarks or accusations. Fortunately, that is the way God is. He is patient with us one more time than we fail to understand and obey.

"And he arose and went to Eli"

Again, put yourself in the place of Samuel. You went to see what Eli wanted only to find out you had wakened him for no useful purpose. Most of us would sense great distress as well as frustration and fear of aggravating Eli, his mentor. Nevertheless, Samuel obediently went to see what Eli wanted.

"And said, 'Here I am, for you called.'"

Can you imagine the apprehension Samuel would feel saying these exact same words for the third time when twice before it was a false alarm? Nevertheless, it did not daunt his determination to obey the call of Eli.

"And Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy"

Finally, Eli figured it out that God really was the one calling Samuel. Eli had heard the voice of the LORD before. He had served as God's messenger to give warning to the people on God's behalf. The text does not indicate how Eli realized on this third that God was calling Samuel. The text is also silent about why Eli did not realize on the first two times that it was God who was calling. There are two reasons we should be generous with Eli at this point. First, Eli had no reason to think that God was calling anyone else when he was the one through whom God had been speaking. Second, Samuel was very young. There was no history to suggest that this was something God would be doing.

Note that the author used the name "LORD" in this verse. This is a translation of the name "Jehovah" or "Yahweh." This name was called "the unspoken name." This is because this name was too holy to be used commonly. It was only to be spoken by the High Priest, only on the Day of Atonement and only in the Holy of Holies. In Scripture, it was used in situations where the justice of God was being expressed. Each of the prophets use this name in the beginning of their prophetic message. The word identifies God as eternal. When Moses was trying to get God to change His mind about sending Moses back to Egypt, he said, "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say to them, 'the God of your fathers has sent me unto you,' And they shall say to me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" And God said unto Moses, 'I am that I am.' The words translated "I am that I am" are simply "Jehovah, Jehovah." See Exodus 3:14

And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Thy servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. I Samuel 3:9

"And Eli said to Samuel, 'Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, you shall say, 'Speak LORD for your servant is listening.'"

Though Eli apparently did not know it, he was setting a pattern for the rest of Samuel's life. One might ask why would Eli tell Samuel to "go lie down," when he anticipated that God would speak again? Good

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question! God had spoken to Eli before. He was convinced God would speak again. He also knew that though God had a message to convey, He was never in a hurry. God is faithful. He will definitely respond again. God spoke to His chosen servants in the midst of the ongoing events of their lives. That is exactly what God was doing in this instance.

"So Samuel went and lay down in his place"

Samuel returned to his quarters for the third time. The feelings and emotions are different this time. Instead of frustration and confusion, he is filled with anticipation. The obedience of Samuel was legendary.

This episode speaks volumes about Eli. He was the High Priest, the spiritual leader of Israel. It would be easy for him to feel that God ought to speak to Israel through him rather than through an inexperienced little boy. The text, however, gives us no hint concerning Eli's thoughts. He could have been distraught with jealousy. Instead, he not only gave Samuel the words to say, but also an appropriate atmosphere in which to say them. In stories you often see one good person in contact with one person not so good. In this case, it was different. We are dealing with two people both doing their very best.

I Samuel 3:10-14 – Samuel Given Prophetic Message Concerning Eli

Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Thy servant is listening." I Samuel 3:10

"Then the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Observe that it says, "The LORD came and stood." This is an accurate report, but it needs to be explained. This is an "anthropomorphism." The dictionary defines this as "attribute human shape or characteristics to gods, animals or objects."¹ It is speaking of God, a spiritual being, in human, physical terms. In one sense, God cannot "come," because He is omnipresent. He is at one time present everywhere. God is a spiritual being and has no body with which to stand. The author used a royal image to describe a divine activity. In a royal throne room, the king and his most trusted advisor were seated. Everyone else present were required to stand in the king's presence. As a gesture of strong emphasis, the king would often stand to make an important decree.

This announcement was not for just anyone who happened to be present. The Lord called Samuel specifically. God had a specific person in mind for a specific task.

"And Samuel said, 'Speak, for Thy servant is listening.'"

This response is almost word for word what Eli had told Samuel to say. Observe that Samuel left out the word "LORD." The picture you see about Samuel, in these early chapters, is one of prompt, total obedience.

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle." I Samuel 3:11

This appears to be the first time that God gave Samuel information in advance of when the event happened. The way this verse is written, "both ears," suggests that what God was about to disclose would be life changing in the lives of everyone involved.

When learning a new art or skill, we tend to begin with something simple. After mastering the basics, we then move on to something demanding greater skills. Observe how God introduced Samuel to a totally new, but different experience.

"In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end." I Samuel 3:12

¹ Jean L. McKechnie, Editor: New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Second edition, Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1979, P. 79

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This isn't really beginning with the simple, easy stuff. This immediately puts Samuel in a most awkward position. Prophetic utterances were seldom intended for the private consumption of the prophet and to be shared with no one else. God spoke to the prophet so that he would speak to others on God's behalf. Samuel certainly loved Eli and would not want to do anything to hurt him. Still, Samuel was very obedient to God. He would not want to do anything to disobey Him. God had not said what message he was about to give Samuel. Two things, however, would tell Samuel that this was a very tragic announcement:

1. Everyone who ever came to the place of worship knew that Eli's two sons were terrible priests and actively disobeyed God's commandments. If everything were to be told, this would be a devastating announcement for Eli, to say the least.
2. God emphasized that this announcement would make both ears tingle for everyone who heard it.

This was a difficult statement for many people. Eli was not an immoral, disobedient priest; his sons were. Still it is clear this judgment is against Eli. People wonder about whether or not this is just. It is just. Eli was the head of his house. He knew of the sins his sons were committing against God and the priesthood. Eli was both the head of his family and the one in charge of the place of worship. He could have taken the necessary, corrective action on either account. We know what these two sons had done, but we do not know if other members of his family were guilty of such vile acts. As in the New Testament, the priests were to be Holy to the Lord. There were no exceptions to this divine decree. Eli's wrongs were sins of omission.

"From beginning to end"

In one sense, this is repetition for purposes of emphasis. Without this phrase, the exact same message would be conveyed. The addition of these words emphasizes how thoroughly God is going to recompense this family for their evil deeds.

"For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. I Samuel 3:13

"For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knew,"

God has made several facts clear to Samuel.

1. God is aware of the evils committed by members of Eli's family.
2. Eli certainly knew what his sons had been doing.
3. God had determined to judge Eli's family for these sins.
4. This judgment is more than an instantaneous act. God spoke of this judgment as 'forever.'
5. God already had told Eli about the sins of his sons and the divine judgment which would befall them.

In both the Old Testament and the New, you see these same truths spelled out in detail. Jehovah, the omniscient one, knows the evil and will punish it severely in His own time, not ours.

"Because his sons brought a curse on themselves."

This is a fine point, but a very significant one. It is clear that Eli's sons committed a number of heinous sins. The author emphasized in these words that it was not God who brought the curse upon these people, but they brought it upon themselves. God established a system of law that enabled one to know when he is pleasing to God. The violation of this code carries previously identified penalties. God cannot be properly charged because these men brought a curse upon themselves. The same is true for us.

"And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever." I Samuel 3:14

And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli

This is taking an oath. It is a way to indicate that the pronouncement in this instance can never be changed. God has announced that this is inevitable.

Observe that this is not an announcement to Eli's sons, but to the whole house of Eli. It does not mean that Eli will be punished for what his sons have done. It is rather an announced judgment on the whole family which has tolerated and contributed to the evils which Eli's sons have committed. With this in mind, the

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whole family is under judgment. This judgment took the form of the death of the sons, thus ending the family name. This is the greatest tragedy a Jewish family could possibly encounter.

"That the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

Though the text does not indicate it, none of this was new information when told to Eli later. He did not know how or when it would come to pass. He did know it was coming.

We must consider carefully the content of this statement. The question comes to mind, is there any sin for which God considers it unpardonable other than the sin against the Holy Spirit? The issue here is not whether the sins of Eli's sons is pardonable or unpardonable. The issue is that there comes a point when mercy is past and the inevitable judgment is imminent. That is what this prophetic message is all about.

I Samuel 3:15-18 – Samuel Revealed The Message to Eli

So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. I Samuel 3:15

"So Samuel lay down until morning"

In the short span of these three chapters, it is abundantly clear that Samuel is an unusual young man who comes from most unusual parents. Think about this statement. Samuel who was young and quite inexperienced in the ways of God, was able to hear this devastating prophecy and then lie down until it was time to get ready for the day.

"Then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD"

In these words, one gets a glimpse of Samuel's growing maturity. A person less mature would want to deal with the issue immediately or else put it away for good. If this happened, nothing would convince them to share the message God had given Samuel to be different.

It is difficult to understand Samuel's position here. There are two problems:

- a. There is the problem of his age. A priest did not begin to serve in the temple until he was 30 years of age. We do not know how old Samuel was, but we can be absolutely certain that he was no where close to being 30 years of age.
- b. There is the problem of his tribal background. To be a priest, a man had to come from the tribe of Levi. Samuel was from the tribe of Ephraim. Nevertheless, young Ephraimite that he was, still he was working in the temple.

"But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli."

For all his growing maturity, Samuel was still very young and not old enough not to be scared. Frankly, it is doubtful if any amount of aging would have helped. How does one tell his mentor that he is a failure in his family and that they are going to be severely punished.

Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." I Samuel 3:16

"Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son."

Eli did not wait for Samuel to come to him. He called the young prophet. One has to wonder if Eli did not already know what was happening. We will see more.

"And he said, "Here I am"

We have seen this scene and heard these words before. Just the previous night, Samuel went running to Eli's room repeatedly because he thought Eli was calling him. On each occasion, this is what Samuel said upon entering Eli's room.

And he said, "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you." I Samuel 3:17

JEHOVAH SPOKE WITH SAMUEL

"And He said, 'What is the word that He spoke to you.'"

There is another hint here that Eli knew exactly what had happened. How did Eli know that God had spoken to Samuel? How could he be sure, unless God had revealed it to him already and this was simply confirmation? Whatever the case, For Eli, it was a case of what God said, not whether or not He spoke to Samuel.

"Please do not hide it from me"

There is a hint of desperation in Eli's words. That would not be at all surprising. The older man had to realize how difficult this would be for such a young boy with such a heavy message.

"May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me."

There is a hint of real conviction in the way Eli spoke to Samuel. It appears that he was determined to know what God said to Samuel no matter how much it might hurt. It is also clear that Eli knew that the discovery was going to hurt.

Did you notice how Eli spoke about deity? In previous verses, the word "LORD" was used. Now, in the midst of this painful discovery, the name "God" appears. As you know, the name "LORD" emphasizes the Father's judgment and justice. The name "God," on the other hand, emphasizes the Father's mercy. Eli's words were threatening, but hopeful; direct, but wistful.

"Of all the words He spoke to you."

For all his weakness, Eli wanted to hear every painful word God had said to Samuel. Eli might be seen as aggressive. It is more that he wanted to know every painful word that God had said to Samuel.

So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him." I Samuel 3:18

"So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him."

We have here, another picture of the total obedience of Samuel. It was painful. It was frightening. Nevertheless, Samuel once more stood tall in the face of painful responsibility before God. It was only a foretaste of what he would one day be called upon to do.

"It is the LORD; Let Him do what seems good to Him."

This is a very different picture of Eli. Also, having refused to do his duty as a father, his sons grew up wild. Having failed to do his duty as a chief priest, his sons profaned the house of God and violently destroyed the sanctity of God's house. Now, keenly aware of his failure, Eli courageously faced the pain of God's judgment. No whining; no begging to negotiate. Eli just accepted God's judgment upon his family.

I Samuel 3:19-4:1a – Samuel's Reputation Grew With God and People

Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail. I Samuel 3:19

"Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him."

This is a beautiful picture of the way God prepared a choice servant to be the staunch prophet God intended him to be.

The important thing, however, was not the strength and integrity of the prophet, but the presence of God in his life. God developed Samuel's ability to hear. God enabled Samuel to convey a message that would be difficult for people to hear, but necessary for their survival.

The ability of a prophet to be able to serve God in this most difficult ministry depended, at least in part, upon his retained reputation as a dependable spokesperson for God. Because of this, people could have confidence that no matter how harsh, he spoke the word of God.

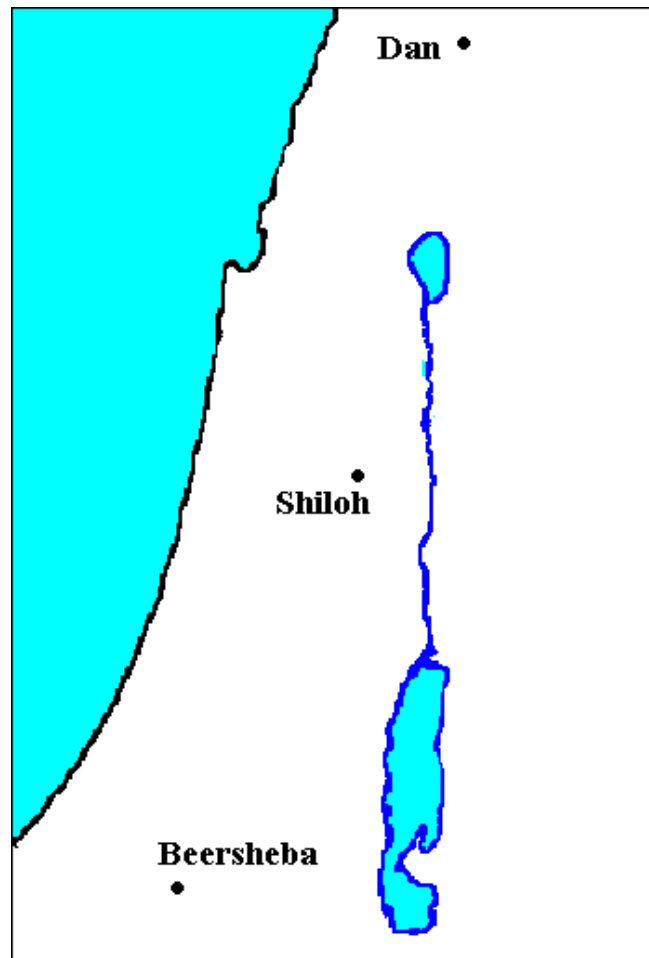
"And let none of his words fail"

Universally, a prophet was proven to be a "true prophet" or a "false prophet" on the basis of whether or not his prophecies proved to be true or not. The author said that the LORD did not allow any of his prophe-

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cies to fail. The author does not explain what this means. It could mean that God spoke to him in such a way that what Samuel understood and prophesied was exactly what God was going to do. On the other hand, it could possibly mean that whatever Samuel prophesied God caused it to happen in order to protect the reputation of Samuel. It was highly probably that the former possibility was what the author had in mind.

And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. I Samuel 3:20



As you can see on this map, it is about 35 miles from Beer Sheba to Shiloh. It was about 75 miles from Dan to Shiloh. It is a way to say that people from all over Israel knew of the reputation of Samuel. This would be very exciting news for the people of Israel. For many decades there had been no prophet in Israel because of their rebellion and disobedience. Now Israel had a prophet, again. Samuel would be the one through whom God would lead Israel, again.

And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, because the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD. I Samuel 3:21

"And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh."

This statement gives us a glimpse into the nature and character of God. When there are responsible leaders and obedient followers, God will be active in the midst of these people and guide them in righteousness. On the other hand, if leaders are not responsible before God and when those who follow turn to rebellion, God will not be active among them. Again, when God turns from a rebellious people, He will grant them another opportunity to live in obedience before Him. This is His merciful nature.

JEHOVAH SPOKE WITH SAMUEL

"Because the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel by the word of the Lord"

There are a number of ways God speaks to those who love Him. He shows His might power through the startling powers and displays of nature. God also revealed Himself through His inspired word. In this revelation, He described the wonder of His nature and character as well as the delicacy of His Holy will. God also chooses to reveal His character and will as well as His urging of the wanderers to return to Him through His chosen servants to whom He gives a message to speak on His behalf.

Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. 1 Samuel 4:1a

Samuel was the voice of God to Israel. This provided an added dimension to the place of worship at Shiloh. For long decades, Shiloh had just been a place where regular sacrifices could be made to the LORD. There had been no revelation. There had been no one to identify for them what God would have them to be and do. Now that was changed. In the past, religious events had taken place in Shiloh. The active presence of God, however, was not a part of it.

Conclusion

In this chapter, one can see the essential ingredients of being used of God. Samuel was in the place where God could use him. Samuel was available to God to be His servant. Samuel was obedient, even at greatest cost.

When God uses a person, it always stretches that person's relationship with God and others. However, when we are willing to be stretched in obedience, God always will open yet greater ways to serve Him and His people.

Think carefully about your relationship to God. In what ways can you see that God has used your life to accomplish His will? In what ways has He stretched your relationship to Him and others as you serve Him? What new opportunities of service and obedience have your obedience to God opened for you?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 4

THE PHILISTINES CAPTURE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT – I SAMUEL 4:1b-22

1. There are four paragraphs in I Samuel chapter four. On the following table, write a brief summary of six to eight words, for each paragraph.

4:1b-4	
4:5-11	
4:12-18	
4:19-22	

2. In I Samuel 4:1b-4, the author tells the story of the Philistines shocking defeat of the army of Israel.
- In 4:1, the author described the battle situation. In a Bible Atlas or the back of your Bible, find the location of the Philistine and Israelite camp.
 - What is the terrain like?
 - How close are these camps to each other?
 - Does the location provide either army with an advantage?
 - In 4:2, the author described the battle.
 - Is there any hint in the text or in your study of the maps why one army would win and the other would lose?
 - How would you describe the Philistine victory?
 - In 4:3, the elders of Israel responded to the shocking news.
 - What did they say?
 - What does this mean?
 - In view of the elders question, why would they decide to take the ark into battle?
 - Explain the reason they offered.
 - In 4:4, the author described the moving of the ark of the Covenant.
 - On the basis of the text, how did they move the ark?
 - How far did they have to move the ark?
3. In I Samuel 4:5-11, the author described the Philistine's capture of the ark.
- In 4:5, the author described the reaction of the Jewish soldiers to the coming of the ark. What does he really say?
 - In 4:6, the author described the Philistine reaction to the outcry of the Israelite soldiers when they first saw the ark of the Covenant.
 - How would you describe this reaction?
 - This verse indicates that the Philistines discovered the reason for the Israelite outcry. How would they discover this?
 - In 4:7, the author gave an additional reaction by the Philistines.
 - What was this second reaction?
 - What did they say?
 - In 4:8, the Philistines continue their lament.
 - Read the verse again. Do you see anything unusual here?
 - The author quoted the Philistines, "These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness."
 - How would they know this?
 - What were these Philistines saying?

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- e. In 4:9, the Philistine leader tried to encourage his soldiers.
 - 1) He used three different means to get his men ready for the fight. What are these means?
 - 2) Is this what was commonly done?
 - f. In 4:10, the author described the battle.
 - 1) He used four descriptives to portray the way the battle was carried out. Identify the four ways.
 - 2) Explain what the author meant by each one.
 - g. In 4:11, the author described the "taking of the ark of God."
 - 1) Study this verse carefully. What did you discover concerning the chronology of events?
 - 2) In this verse, the author linked the taking of the ark with the death of Eli's two sons. Are these two events naturally linked? If so how?
4. In I Samuel 4:12-18, the author described the report of the capture of the ark.
- a. In 4:12, the author indicated that a soldier of the tribe of Benjamin ran to give this tragic report.
 - 1) How far did he run?
 - 2) What does this verse tell us about the way Saul established his army?
 - 3) The author mentioned the soldiers hair and clothing. What is the significance of this?
 - b. In 4:13, there are two emphases – one on the soldier from Benjamin; the other on Eli.
 - 1) Why would the author do this?
 - 2) Describe what the author said about the Benjamite soldier.
 - 3) Describe what the author said about Eli.
 - c. In 4:14, the spotlight is on Eli.
 - 1) What does the author infer about Eli?
 - 2) What does the author say about the Benjamite?
 - d. In 4:15, the author presents a parenthesis in the story.
 - 1) In this parenthesis, the author gives us two pieces of information. What are they?
 - 2) These two pieces of information give us several things. What are they?
 - e. In 4:16, the Benjamite soldier came to speak personally to Eli.
 - 1) What hint did the Benjamite give when speaking with Eli?
 - 2) In view of the reports in 4:13-15, why would Eli ask the question he asked in this verse?
 - f. In 4:17, the soldier provided Eli with four pieces of information.
 - 1) What are these four pieces of information?
 - 2) In view of what the Lord said to Eli in I Samuel 2:27 f.f., and the confirming information God gave Samuel in 3:10-14, why would Eli be shocked that his sons had died?
 - g. In 4:18, the author details the information about the way Eli died.
 - 1) What is the significance of the way Eli died?
 - 2) There is a second sentence at the close of this verse.
 - a) What does it say?
 - b) Why does he say it this way?
 - c) What additional insights do we gain because of this statement?
5. In I Samuel 4:19-22, the author described the death of Phinehas' wife.
- a. In 4:19, the author described the events leading up to the birth of Ichabod.
 - 1) Study this verse very carefully. How does the author describe the tragic events mentioned in this verse?
 - 2) Evaluate the extent of her loss that she became aware of in a period of about one minute.
 - b. In 4:20, the author dealt with the birth process.
 - 1) How would you identify the woman who stood by her?
 - 2) What did this woman say?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 4

- 3) What does this mean?
- 4) The verse closes with the words, "but she did not answer or pay attention." What are the possibilities of the meaning of this statement?
- c. In 4:21, it says, "and "SHE" called the boy Ichabod."
 - 1) Whom would you identify as the woman called "SHE"?
 - 2) This verse also gives some closing information. How does this help us identify "SHE"?
- d. In 4:22, "SHE" speaks again.
 - 1) Again, who is "SHE"?
 - 2) Compare 4:21 and 4:22. How would you account for the difference?
6. As you reflect upon the message of this chapter, what do you understand to be God's message to you through these experiences?

LESSON 4

THE PHILISTINES CAPTURE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT – I SAMUEL 4:1b – 22

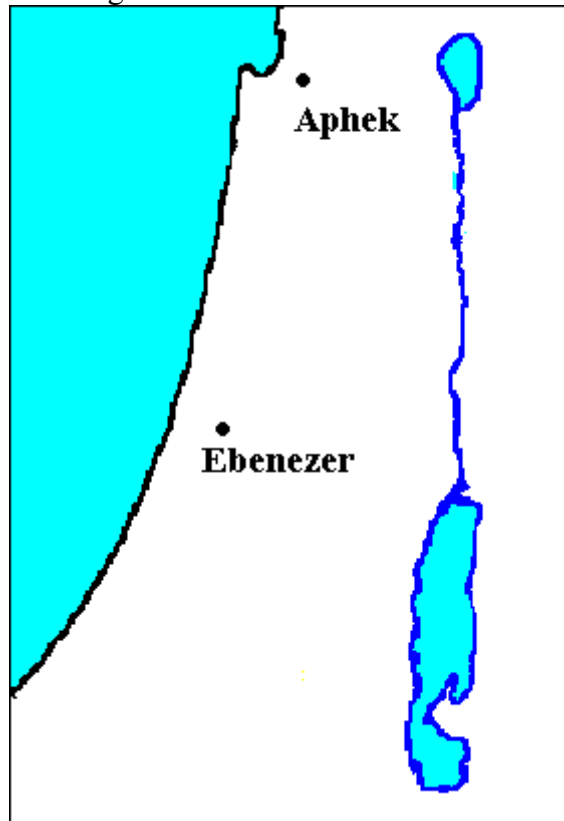
You will find a summary of the four paragraphs of I Samuel chapter four on the following table.

4:1b - 4	Philistines Defeating Israel: Ark Brought to Battlefield
4:5-11	Philistines Capture the Ark
4:12-18	Report: Ark Captured: Sons Killed; Samuel Died
4:19-22	Phinehas' Wife Died Bearing Ichabod

I Samuel 4:1b-4 - Philistines Defeating Israel: Ark Brought to Battlefield

Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek. I Samuel 4:1

The use of the word "thus" was a clear reference to the statements the author made in 3:19-21. In that paragraph, the author pointed out that though God, in the past, had not been speaking to Israel because of their sin, now He was speaking to Israel through Samuel. You will see these locations on the map.



The area where Aphek and Ebenezer are located is a beautiful coastal plain. About half way between the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Jordan River on the east is a very high hill that runs north and south in Israel. The winds bring moisture off the Sea and deposit it against the west side of this hill. This makes the Sea side of the hill rather plush while the east side is quite barren in many places.

The area right next to the Mediterranean Sea is quite flat. This is a very natural place for the trade route. Indeed, it is called the Via Mara, the way of the Sea. Historically, the great nations of that part of the world met there for battle repeatedly over the centuries.

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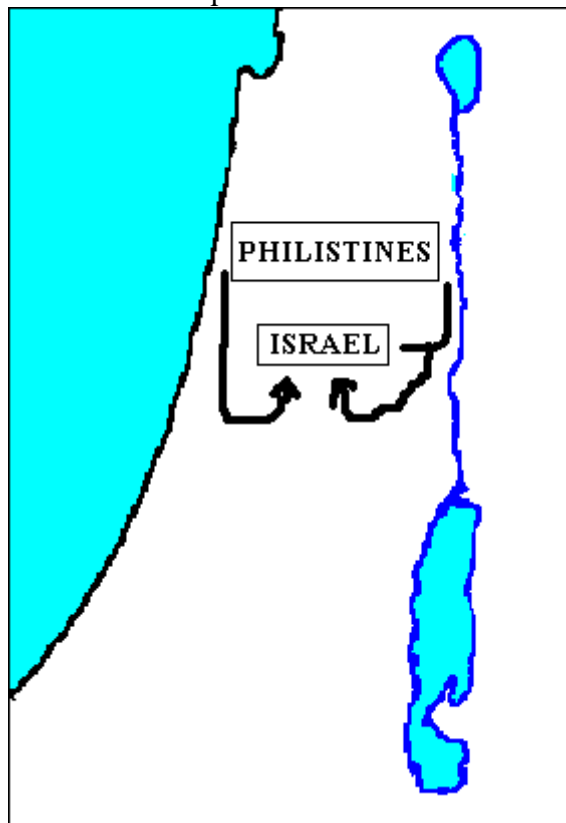
The Philistines located their camp at Aphek. The Philistine camp was on slightly higher ground than the camp of Israel. This gave them a slight advantage in terms of location. The Israelites located their camp at Ebenezer. This is an area much like the place where the Philistines were located.

And the Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. I Samuel 4:2

Notice that the author indicated that the Philistines "drew up in battle array." In that time, armies would make a long line of soldiers and fight in this position. In such a strategy, the general with the most soldiers had a decided advantage. Each army would probe the enemy lines looking for a vulnerable position. At the same time, each general would try to outflank the line of the other army in order to be able to go around the flank of the enemy and in so doing attack the enemy army both from the front and from the rear. The army that accomplished this maneuver was certain to be victorious. This strategy was very obvious in the Gulf War in 1991.

Observe that the author said, "When the battle spread." This was a strategic move. The soldiers would line up along a very long line to engage the enemy in battle. As the battle was set, each army would try to do two things:

1. They would try to spread out in order to get around the flank of the enemy army.
2. They would try to spread out along the line in such a way that they would not sacrifice the strength of the line in order to place the soldiers in a position to outflank their enemy.



You can see this drawn out on the map. We should keep in mind that the Israelite army was very adept at these maneuvers. They had done this many times. On this occasion, however, they were outmaneuvered by the Philistines and soundly defeated, losing some 4,000 men.

When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies." I Samuel 4:3

THE PHILISTINES CAPTURE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The events described in verse three were a serious shock to the people of Israel. That surprise was unwarranted. The Philistines were great warriors and enjoyed the battle. Israel's army was also very good, but perhaps a bit overconfident. Whatever the cause, it was a stinging blow and all Israel was shocked by it.

Notice how the elders of Israel evaluated this turn of events. "Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines. " It is as though the army of Israel fought against the Lord and lost the battle while the Philistines watched from the sidelines.

As usual, the name of God used by Old Testament writers was always very significant. In this instance, he used the name "LORD" as one might expect. This is the name for God that is used in most situations of justice and judgment.

The author told us what the elders did and said. He did not tell us the reason why. Look at the verse again. He told us the Lord defeated them. He then told us they decided to go to Shiloh and get the ark of the Covenant. The stated purpose was, "that it (the ark) may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies." The question is, in what frame of mind did they do this? Was this a decision out of deep, intense anger? Was this one of those, "we will show them" moments? This is very important because of the unusualness of their decision for action. The ark was placed in the Shiloh temple and was to remain there until permanently placed in Jerusalem, the city where "God placed His name." To carry the ark to the field of battle was considered a terrible move. The battlefield was a place of human blood. This would contaminate the ark. Second, the battlefield was occupied by Gentiles whose presence was defiling.

There is a hint concerning their motivation. Observe their statement, "that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies." They expected the ark of Covenant to deliver them from the power of their enemies. This was using the ark of the Covenant as a rabbit's foot. Observe, also, the name by which they identified the ark. They used the words "ark of the Covenant." The Covenant to which they referred was God's promise to give Israel the land He promised to Abraham. Now they wanted God to use the ark to fulfill that promise on their timetable. That, of course, never happens.

So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. I Samuel 4:4

As you carefully read this verse, it seems to shift about half way through. Notice how it begins. "So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark." The word "they" is the antecedent of "people." It appears that the people carried the ark. There are two things wrong with that understanding. First, it would not be the decision of the people to bring the ark out of the temple/tabernacle. This would be a request of the leaders approaching Eli for permission.

Observe the way the author identifies the ark. It is "the ark of the Covenant." It is "the ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts". It is "the ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts who sits above the Cherubim." This is an identification which celebrates the greatness of God. The designation "Lord of Hosts" identifies the powerful leader of an irresistible army. The words "who sits above the cherubim" focus attention upon the Holy of Holies. The only reason the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies to the ark of the Covenant was to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat that covered the ark. This was placed directly below the Cherubim. The ark of the Covenant was mentioned amid two unique foci – the power of God over every foe; the mercy of God in the presence of the sin of His people.

In the second part of this verse, the author mentioned the fact that Hophni and Phinehas were there with the ark. In this second part of the verse, it appears that Hophni and Phinehas carried the ark from Shiloh to the battlefield. This was a distance of approximately 20 miles.

It is interesting that there is no mention of the possibility that Eli's sons were asked if it was acceptable to take the ark. No mention was made that Eli agreed that it was acceptable to take the ark. It just happened. Priests were not permitted to take up arms and fight. There is no hint that they did this. They are pictured as

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just being around when the ark was brought into the camp. If they took their position seriously, they should have been making their disagreement known even if they were in no position to stop it.

I Samuel 4:5-11 – Philistines Capture the Ark

And it happened as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, that all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded. I Samuel 4:5

A military camp is a place of unusual discipline. Unnecessary noises could be costly. During World War II, there was a slogan that was widely used in the United States, "a slip of the lip could sink a ship."

The author indicated that when the "ark of the Covenant of the LORD" arrived, there arose a great shout from all over the camp. The author even described the intensity of the shout. It was such that the earth resounded the shout. No astute general would tolerate such a breach of military composure. This could be very costly to say the least. This could deprive them of the element of surprise, an army's most useful weapon.

And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. I Samuel 4:6

Observe that the author said, "And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout." As we began the study of this chapter, there was a map of the location of the Philistine and Israelite camps. These camps were at least one mile apart. This gives us an even clearer understanding of the intensity of the shouting.

The Philistines were outstanding military people. They knew that on the battlefield everything is important. They had to be absolutely certain that there were no possible surprises. The author pointed out that the Philistines immediately wanted to know what this shout was all about. This was a reasonable question. We must keep in mind that the Philistine army had just soundly defeated Israel and killed at least 4,000 Israelite soldiers. This is hardly something to shout about.

The text does not tell us, but apparently the Philistines sent their spies to discover what was happening in the camp of Israel. By whatever means, the Philistines discovered that "the ark of the Lord had come into the camp." A question immediately comes to mind, how did they know that it was "the ark of the LORD"? They had never seen it before. It was doubtful if any of the Israelite soldiers had ever seen the ark before. Did they really identify it as "the ark of the LORD" or did they identify it as a religious symbol of some sort? We do not know. We do know that by whatever means, the Philistines associated this object with the shout with which the Israelites greeted it.

And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. I Samuel 4:7

The author's description was immediate. "And the Philistines were afraid." The word translated "afraid" is "yare" (יָרָא). It is "throbbing fear." It is what Jacob felt when he prayed, "Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him lest he come and smite me..." Genesis 32:11. This word describes Jacob's panic for his life. It is the terror the people of Israel felt when they saw the fire on Mount Sinai. That is what the author described taking place in the Philistine camp.

The verbal response of the Philistines is understandable. They said, "God has come into the camp." We must keep in mind that the Philistines were idolaters. They worshipped the god – Dagon. They considered Dagon to be present when his sculpted image was visible. They thought that the ark of the Covenant must be an enclosure in which the God of Israel was kept. Though untrue, they tended to think of all gods in terms such as they thought of Dagon. It would have been even more frightening to think of Jehovah as omnipresent – present and powerful everywhere at one and the same time.

THE PHILISTINES CAPTURE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

They continued, "Woe to us! for nothing like this has happened before." That was truer than they knew about. The ark had never been brought to the battlefield before. The word translated "woe" is "owy" (וָיָהוּ). This is a desperate cry of despair. They knew that their very lives really were in jeopardy.

Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. I Samuel 4:8

This is a repetition of the "woe to us!" It stresses the dire feelings that gripped the Philistine camp. Observe how the Philistines described their dire circumstances, "Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods?" As you can see, the Philistines referred to Jehovah in the plural. It is not immediately clear what they meant by this plural form. There is more than one possibility. It could mean that they are thinking of more than one god. On the other hand, we know that in the Old Testament there are places where Jehovah is referred to in the plural. One of the most obvious references is found in Genesis.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Genesis 1:26

This is referred to as the plural of respect. It is a way of speaking of God not in the plural, but in grandiose terms.

If this situation is unclear in the first part of the verse, it is somewhat clearer in the later section of the verse. Observe how the author quotes these Philistines. "These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness." In this statement, though it is not altogether clear, it sounds very much like the Philistines are speaking of Jehovah as several gods who struck the Egyptians with a variety of plagues.

Note what the thought of the presence of Jehovah brought to the minds of the Philistines. Their immediate thought was of the unbearable conditions Jehovah brought upon the Egyptians and they were helpless to stop the plagues He brought against them. It is like saying, He probably is going to do the same thing to us and there is nothing that we can do.

"Take courage and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight." I Samuel 4:9

When you threaten a person's life, there is more than one possible response. There are some who will "freeze" and be unable to act. On the other hand, there are others who when threatened with certain death become invincible.

In this verse, someone, probably an officer, gave the Philistine army a "pep talk." He did more than just get them "psyched up" for the fight. He gave them a reason. He gave them a serious alternative. They could either take courage and fight like men, or they would certainly become slaves to the Jews. He gave them an additional incentive, "as they have been slaves to you." This leader pointed out that the Israelites had been their slaves. Slaves have a way of being mistreated simply because their owners have power and they do not. In such a scenario there is nothing the slave can do about his mistreatment. However, if the tables are turned, the slave becomes the owner and the owner becomes the slave; there are no limits to the terrible things the former slave will do to his former owner just because he can. This is the point the officer was making to his men.

There is another ingredient in this brief talk. He made a stinging closing remark, he said, "Therefore be men and fight." The insinuation in this remark is saying, in no uncertain terms, if you do not fight and win, you aren't even men. These are fighting words, especially for a group of veteran soldiers. That, of course, is exactly what he wanted to accomplish in this brief speech.

So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent, and the slaughter was very great; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. I Samuel 4:10

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It worked! The officer succeeded in frightening his men to the point that they would fight for their lives. Israel, on the other hand, was a bit complacent. After all, they had the ark of the Covenant in their camp and God would defeat the Philistines for them. It isn't just that Israel was defeated, as tragic as that would be. Notice that the author wrote, "every man fled to his tent." By this statement, he did not mean his tent in the army camp at Ebenezer. He was saying that the Israelite men abandoned the army and went home. The army disbanded. This is, at least in large part, the reason 30,000 Jews were killed. Any time soldiers turn their backs and run away from their enemy, the carnage will be extremely high. 30,000 dead is extremely high. This was one of the most humiliating days of battle in the history of Israel.

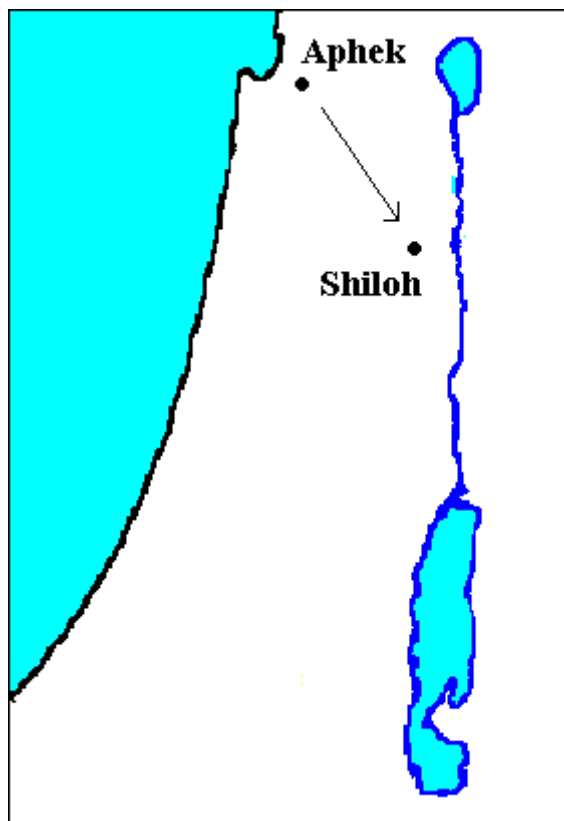
And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. I Samuel 4:11

At first reading, this seems terribly tragic, and it is. The shocking thing is that it could have been much, much worse. Granted, the ark was their most treasured possession in Israel. Nevertheless, the Israelite army fled giving no thought to the protection to this symbol of God's presence that had sparked such excitement just the day before. This left the ark easy prey for the Philistines. Now, the Philistines did not want the ark for their own use. They wanted to use it to humiliate Israel and their defeated God. Indeed, they thought of this campaign not as a victory of the Philistines over the Israelites, but as a victory of Dagon over Jehovah. With no army around to protect them, and the ark, Hophni and Phinehas were killed and the ark was taken.

There is another tragedy that for some reason the Israelites escaped. When the army of Israel disbanded and fled, the Philistine forces were in an excellent position to take over all the land of Israel. For some unexplained reason, the Philistine army was content to take their prize, the ark, and go home. They could have made a fortune selling the Jewish population as slaves to their wealthy neighbors. This was not even mentioned and may not have dawned on them at all.

I Samuel 4:12-18 – Report: Ark Captured: Sons Killed: Samuel Died

Now a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head. I Samuel 4:12



THE PHILISTINES CAPTURE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

As you can see on the map, both Aphek and Ebenezer are located in western Ephraim. The Benjamite mentioned in this verse ran from Aphek to Shiloh which is a distance of about 25 miles.

This also gives us an insight into the makeup of the army of Israel. Saul had people in the army from all over Israel. This man had to be in very good condition. He ran the way marathon runners run their races today.

Observe that the author tells us that he had torn his clothes and had dust in his hair. Torn clothes and dust in his hair do not represent the fatigue of battle. It was, rather, the symbol of extensive sorrow and the announcement of tragedy. In our culture, we have had some of the same kinds of symbols. Among some of the elderly, if a man's wife dies, he will wear a black armband or lapel piece the rest of his life. It announces, to people who see him, that he is in mourning and has lost his wife. If a woman's husband dies, she will dress in black (called widow's weeds) the rest of her life. Again, it used to be that if a letter was sent in which the sender was telling of someone's death, the outside of the envelope was edged in black. In times of extreme sorrow, Israelites would tear their clothing and throw dirt into the air. Indeed, they had professional mourners who would fix their clothes so that they could tear them and then fix them so that at the next funeral they could tear their clothes again without doing damage to them. These people would throw dirt into the air in such a way that it would come down on their heads. When the people of Shiloh saw this man coming, they would know that he bore bad news long before he said one word. No one would attempt to comfort a person in this situation. It was a warning to leave the sorrowing individual alone in his sorrow.

When he came, behold, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road eagerly watching, because his heart was trembling for the ark of God. So the man came to tell it in the city, and all the city cried out.
I Samuel 4:13

This verse points out just how concerned Eli was. The text talks about Eli "watching." We need to be clear about the author's intention. We know for certain that Eli was totally blind. He could not be watching in the normal meaning of that word. However, this can also identify a situation where a person was not using their eyes, but were straining intently to discover any piece of news that would help them understand what was happening. That was what Eli was doing.

The author gives the reason that Eli was so intent on discovering news from the battlefield, "because his heart was trembling for the ark." Our author speaks of Eli as the Judge as well as the High Priest of the Temple. In either position, he would be the person who would be responsible for making the decision concerning allowing the ark of the Covenant to be taken to the battlefield. It is doubtful that Eli suggested that they take the ark to the battlefield. Though he was the one in charge of the tabernacle, it is not beyond reason that they might not even have asked his permission to take the ark. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were not deeply committed to the traditions of the priesthood. It is not beyond reason that they may have collaborated with the military to secure the presence of the ark. It is clear that whether or not Eli gave that permission, he was extremely anxious about the safety of the ark.

Observe that the author continued with the story, saying, "so the man came to tell it in the city." We need to keep their communications capabilities in mind. There were no electronic media of any kind, but they were able to keep in touch with what was happening. This was called the "city gate." The person would share the information with the city elders while town's people listened in. The eye-witness might share his news with many in town, but never before telling the elders of the city.

The author continued his report by sharing the response of the people who listened, "And all the city cried out." This response was to be expected. The ark of the Covenant that was usually housed in their city had been captured. Eli's sons, their priests, had been killed. Thirty thousand others also died in this devastating military campaign. These people had to be as shocked as the military that God permitted the Ark to be captured and the Israelite army routed with a major loss of 30,000 men.

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When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What does the noise of this commotion mean?" Then the man came hurriedly and told Eli. I Samuel 4:14

It is very clear that Eli was not present when the soldier gave his devastating report. Eli had a number of reasons to be concerned about this outcry. His sons were involved. The ark of the Covenant, for which he was responsible, was in jeopardy. Eli moved with great difficulty. He was blind and needed to be guided from place to place. Eli's question described his situation very well, "What does the noise of this commotion mean?" It is possible that this suggests that Eli had a hearing problem along with his other ailments. Put yourself in Eli's place. As far as you know, your two sons and the ark of the Covenant are all exposed. You know that there is news; you do not know what the news is, but it sounds ominous. How would you feel?

Fortunately, because Eli was involved, the soldier came to explain the recent events to him personally. Can't you just see Eli falling over himself trying to get the soldier to hurry up and tell him the news he brought?

Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set so that he could not see. I Samuel 4:15

This verse is a brief parenthesis in the midst of the story. Locked within this brief parenthesis is a volume of information. The verse begins, "Now Eli was ninety-eight years old." We know that Eli was a priest. We know that there was a strict code for the priestly service at the temple. A Levitical priest began his training at the age of 25. The training lasted for five years. At age 30, he would be baptized and serve at the altar for the first time. The length of his service was 20 years. He would retire at the age of 50. He then would be involved in assisting on feast days as long as he could or was needed. Other than this, he was retired. Our verse speaks of Eli, at this point, as being 98 years of age. It means that he should have been retired for the past 48 years. The impression I Samuel gives us is that he is still functioning as a regular priest and not just assisting on the Day of Atonement and other feasts. One suspects that this points to the fact that they did not have the priests they needed and it was necessary for him to continue in service though his retirement was long overdue. It also suggests that the Levitical families, bound by divine command to be available for nothing other than divine service have not been obedient to the divine command.

In this parenthetical statement, the author also said, "His eyes were set so that he could not see." Temple/tabernacle instructions made it abundantly clear that persons with a malady would not be allowed into the temple. Here is Eli, a victim of blindness. He should have been refused entrance into the temple. Instead, he was a priest in charge of the temple and of worship. Again, this points to the fact that temple decorum had totally declined and they did not have the priests they needed to conduct appropriate worship. One must ask, "Why are there not enough priests when the whole tribe of Levi was set apart for this ministry?"

And the man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battle line. Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today." And he said, "How did things go, my son?" I Samuel 4:16

It was a kindly act the weary soldier did for Eli. The soldier began with this report, "I am the one who came from the battle line." In this statement, the soldier established his credibility.

The soldier continued, "Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today." The fact that the soldier used the word "escaped" should have indicated to Eli that this was a devastating report. Eli then asked the question that causes one to wonder, "How did things go, my son?" One wonders in disbelief. Didn't Eli just hear the soldier say he "had escaped from the battle line"? The answer to this question is, apparently not. Here is a second suggestion that Eli may have been hard of hearing or nearly deaf as well as blind. Whatever Eli's physical condition, he must have been nearly beside himself at this point.

Then the one who brought the news answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken." I Samuel 4:17

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Here, the soldier spoke more clearly to answer Eli's question. He said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines." This would be a frightening announcement to any Jew no matter how old he was. The Philistines had a reputation for either killing all their captives or selling them as slaves. That was almost more than any Jew could handle.

The soldier continued, "There has been a great slaughter among the people." This would be devastating to Eli. Many of the people who were killed were folks he had known and for whom he had pronounced release from their sins on the Day of Atonement.

Then the soldier said, "And your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead." These two sons, in whom he had placed his hope and joy in their youth, were now dead. God's prophetic word pronounced personally and through Samuel as well had come to pass. It also meant that his name would now die out. There were no other sons to carry on Eli's family name.

The text does not say whether or not Eli surmised the next devastating announcement, "And the ark of God has been taken." If the two priests charged with the care of the ark were killed, there was no hope that the ark was left for the Israelites. It is hard to believe that Eli would be surprised by this tragic report.

And it came about when he mentioned the ark of God that Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years. I Samuel 4:18

The previous verse gives us no clue as to how this message affected Eli. This verse describes it clearly. The author wrote, "When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backwards beside the gate." The question arises, Why would this happen when the soldier mentioned the ark of God rather than when he mentioned the death of Eli's sons? If you go back to God's prophetic message to Samuel in I Samuel 3:11-14, there is no specific mention of the ark. There is mention of the punishment of the two sons. Also, the text indicates that God had already made this prophetic message known to Samuel, who confirmed it to Eli before giving it to Samuel, who confirmed it to Eli. In God's message to Eli, did He also mention the capture of the ark? We do not know. The news of the ark was so devastating that Eli lost his balance and fell backwards off the stool upon which he sat.

The author continued his report, "And his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy." Eli had been a trusted servant of God. He had been allowed to be the intercessor for the people, a high honor for a man from his tribe. Still, he had failed. If you go back to I Samuel 2:27-34, you will see how God announced the coming destruction of Eli's household and the reasons for which He did that. It was clear that though he represented a faithful lineage, the judgment of God was upon him because he "(you) honor your sons above Me." v. 29.

Observe that the author closed this verse with a familiar statement, "Thus he judged Israel forty years." The people of Israel would describe the life of a very good man by highlighting the extent of the persons advanced age or length of service. That is precisely what the author has done in this sentence. At the same time, he has given us an important piece of information. As previously indicated, Eli should have retired from the active priesthood at the age of 50. It is clear that he did not do so. However, in this verse, the author has indicated that Eli served as a Judge in Israel for the past 40 years. Thus, eight years after the time Eli was supposed to be retired, God chose him to be the Judge of His people. He served in that capacity until the day of his death.

I Samuel 4:19-22 – Phinehas' Wife Died Bearing Ichabod

Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant and about to give birth; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she kneeled down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. I Samuel 4:19

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

This verse gives us several pieces of information along with the story of events at Shiloh. In Israel, when two brothers are mentioned, the older one will almost always be mentioned first. In this story, Hophni is always mentioned first. We assume that this suggests he was the older of Eli's two sons.

It also was the rule that children in the family, especially the girls, were only to be married in the order of their birth. You remember the difficulty Jacob had with Leah.

One of the times that an expectant mother really wants her husband to be with her is the time when her baby is due. Now, that was not possible for the wife of Phinehas.

Observe the losses this woman discovered within the space of about a minute:

1. Her father-in-law died.
2. The ark of the Covenant was captured and taken away and it was in the custody of her husband at the time.
3. She was informed that her husband had been killed.
4. Now she was ready to give birth.

All of this was just a bit more than most women are able to handle all at once. Observe, also, the order in which these tragedies she heard about were recorded.

1. The ark of the Covenant was taken.
2. Her father-in-law died.
3. Her husband died.

This is very significant because in Scripture, events tend to be recorded in the order they occurred or in the order of their importance. If you study this list, it is immediately clear that these three events did not happen in the order they are reported. As you study the list, however, you realize that this is an unusual order of importance, at least from her perspective.

And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son." But she did not answer or pay attention. I Samuel 4:20

As we begin the study of this verse and the next, we need to keep in mind that there are a number of serious questions about the intent of the text. The answers to these questions are not at all clear. We will attempt to present our understanding and explain why we hold that position. We wish to make clear that we cannot prove these assertions.

"And about the time of her death"

Notice that it says, "And about the time of her death." It does not say that she died at this time. It, also, does not say that she did not.

"The woman who stood by her said to her."

This is a description of a midwife. In the balance of these two verses, it is difficult to identify the person to whom the word "she" refers.

"Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son."

This statement made perfect sense to them. It is difficult for us to imagine why giving birth to a son should cause the new mother not to be afraid. Remember, this new mother just discovered that her husband had been killed. That means that she has no valid means of support for the foreseeable future. However, the fact that she had given birth to a son meant that in her old age she could depend upon him to care for her when she was unable to care for herself.

"But she did not answer or pay attention"

Some interpreters take this statement to mean that she had died and thus could not answer. It is possible that this is true, but the text does not say so. We need to be fair and recognize that the opposite is just as possible.

And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband. I Samuel 4:21

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"And SHE called the boy Ichabod."

The major question in these two verses is, "Who is 'SHE'?" It is possible that "she" is the midwife. On the other hand, it is also possible that "she" is the wife of Phinehas. We need to keep in mind the way a child received a name among the Jewish people. There is an ancient tradition that is still practiced among the Arab people in that part of the world. When a baby was born, it was normally cleaned up as nicely as possible and placed on the father's lap. If he touched the baby, this meant that the baby would be kept. If he refused to touch the baby, it meant the baby would not be kept. In modern Bethlehem, there is a truck that goes up and down the streets of the city looking for little bundles on the curb side. These are children rejected by the father and removed from the household. These little ones are taken to a Christian hospital. Surgery is performed on their eyes and deformed feet and eventually you will see them running and playing like all other children. This is usually the fate of little girls. These little girls are kept at the hospital taught a trade and prepared to take their place in society.

It is the father that gives the Jewish child a name. You may remember in the beginning of Luke's Gospel, the neighbors wanted to name the baby "Zecharias." Elizabeth told them that the child was to be John. Unhappy with this report, the neighbors went to talk with Zecharias. He did not say the baby "should be called John." He said, "His name IS John." End of discussion. There was no husband there to give the baby a name. It appears to this author that she gave the name.

"Saying the glory has departed from Israel."

A question that needed an answer is, "Is the ark of the Covenant the glory of Israel?" In one sense, this is true. The ark was one of the symbols of God's presence in Israel.

Observe, however, what else is stated in this verse. "Because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband." One might be willing to accept the ark of the Covenant as "the glory of Israel." As important as father-in-law and husband are, they do not represent the "glory of Israel." This verse represents one of the pieces of information that some hold supports the idea that Phinehas' wife was the one who named her son "Ichabod."

And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken." I Samuel 4:22

"And she said, 'The glory has departed from Israel.'"

This is the second time in two verses that this statement has appeared. In almost every instance, when this kind of repetition happens it is intended to make a very strong emphasis on a very important statement. That is certainly the case in this instance.

"For the ark of God was taken."

This is different from the statement in verse 21. You may remember that in verse 21 three reasons were given for saying that the "glory has departed from Israel."

1. The ark of God was taken.
2. Because of her father-in-law
3. Because of her husband.

As you can see, in verse 22, the only reason given is that "the ark of God was taken." This in itself is sufficient reason to make such a statement.

To be fair, to the wife of Phinehas, there is great trauma in this experience, but it is on three different levels.

1. There is an indescribable tragedy when the visible symbol of God's presence is removed from His people.
2. There is a very different kind of trauma and tragedy involved when a new mother's husband dies.
3. There is still a third level of trauma when the last remaining member of your family dies leaving you alone in the world.

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Conclusion

Three important truths stand out in this chapter:

1. It is possible for God's people to attempt to use the LORD'S means of grace (here the ark) to meet their own selfish purposes (battle victory).
2. Some people feel God must defend them lest His own reputation be discredited. Here and in several other places, the LORD demonstrates His willingness to experience temporary defamation in order to punish evil and draw His people back to Himself.
3. The LORD is merciful, but He will punish every form of evil, especially among chosen servants.

We no longer have an ark of the Covenant, but there are current ways that we as God's people can do exactly what Israel did – attempt to use the means of grace to meet our own selfish purposes and goals. The warning of this chapter is vivid. Whenever God's people compromise their priority of serving Him first and foremost, He will punish quickly and firmly. As the LORD warned Israel, in this chapter He warns us that it is vitally important that our priorities must be clear and faithful. The cost of failure is much too high.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 5

AGREEMENT TO RETURN THE ARK OF THE COVENANT –I SAMUEL 5:1 - 12

1. There are only two paragraphs in the fifth chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a summary of six or eight words for each paragraph.

5:1-5	
5:6-12	

2. In I Samuel 5:1-5, the author tells of the ark of the Covenant being placed in Dagon's temple.
- In 5:1, the author described the movement from Ebenezer to Ashdod.
 - Look in a Biblical Atlas or the maps in the back of your Bible to see approximately how far they traveled.
 - Most of these maps indicate, by color, the kind of terrain that can be found in any given area. Describe the physical characteristics of this trip.
 - In 5:2, the author described what the Philistines did with the ark. Read this sentence very carefully. What was the author trying to tell us?
 - In 5:3, the author described a shocking turn of events.
 - What happened?
 - If you were one of the worshippers of Dagon, how would you feel?
 - In 5:4, the author described another shocking event.
 - What happened?
 - Again, if you were a worshipper of Dagon, how would you feel after being shocked like this on two occasions?
 - In 5:5, the author gives us a parenthetical insight into the after-effects of the events in 5:4 upon the people who worship Dagon. How would you describe the effect this event had on the philistines?
3. In I Samuel 5:6-12, the author described the outbreak of tumors on the Philistines when the ark was brought into their area.
- In 5:6, the author described God's action to deal with the people of Ashdod.
 - How would you describe God's actions?
 - In the minds of people of that day, international events were considered encounters between deities. In view of this, how do you think they thought of the capture of the ark? How would they feel about the outbreak of tumors?
 - In 5:7, the author described the reaction of the Ashdod officials to the outbreak of tumors.
 - What were they saying?
 - What were they really saying about Jehovah?
 - In 5:8, the officials of Ashdod met with the religious/political leaders.
 - What was their complaint?
 - What solution did they suggest?
 - Why do you think they made that suggestion?
 - In 5:9, the author described what happened when the ark was brought to Gath.
 - Compare/contrast 5:9 with 5:6.
 - What, if any, difference do you see?
 - If you see a difference, how would you account for this?
 - In 5:10, the author described the movement of the ark from Gath to Ekron.
 - Why would they do this?
 - Describe the reaction of the people of Ekron to the arrival of the ark.

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- 3) Compare the arrival of the ark in Gath, 5:9, with its arrival in Ekron, 5:10. What difference(s), if any, do you see here?
- f. In 5:11, the people of Ekron dealt with the problems created by the coming of the ark.
 - 1) What did they do?
 - 2) In what ways was this different from the actions of the leaders of Ashdod and Gath?
3. Review the 12 verses of this chapter.
 - a. How would you describe the events that took place in this chapter?
 - b. In what way, if any, do you see a parallel between life as they experienced it and life as you live it today?
 - c. What helpful information can you gather concerning your own life and problems?

LESSON 5

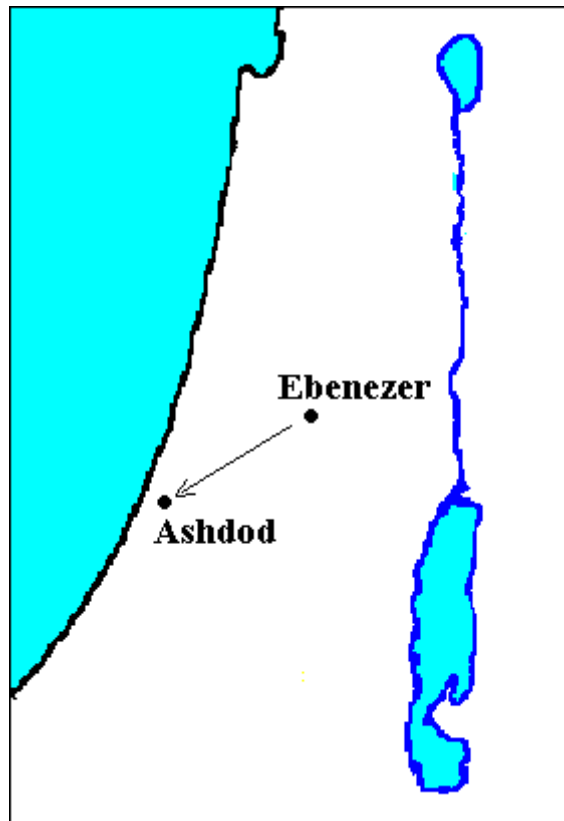
AGREEMENT TO RETURN THE ARK OF THE COVENANT – I SAMUEL 5:1 – 12

There are only two brief paragraphs in the fifth chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, you will find a brief summary of each paragraph.

5:1-5	Ark Placed in Dagon's Temple; Dagon Broken
5:6-12	Philistines Smitten with Tumors Wherever Ark was Taken

I Samuel 5:1-5 – The Ark Was Placed In Dagon's Temple: Dagon Broken

*Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.
I Samuel 5:1*



When the Philistines captured the ark, they moved it from the camp in Ebenezer to the city of Ashdod. As you can see on the map, this is a distance of about 25 miles. Some of these miles, however, are very difficult ones. As we indicated earlier, there is a mountain range that runs loosely north to south. This range is about midway between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Ebenezer is on the west side of this range, but the area is far from being smooth for travel. Ashdod, on the other hand, is on the flat plain by the sea and easy to traverse. One should not be surprised if the ark of the Covenant suffered a few dents as a result of this trip.

*Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.
I Samuel 5:2*

The whole idea in bringing the ark of the Covenant to Ashdod was to take it to the temple of Dagon. A person from that era reading this verse would immediately understand what the message was. Observe that the text of verse two says, "And set it (the ark) by Dagon." This is the way these people spoke about their

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slaves. It is the way a slave would place himself in relation to his owner and master. This was their way to humiliate Jehovah in relation to Dagon. At the same time, it was a vivid visual to praise Dagon for his victory over Israel and Jehovah, their worst enemies.

When the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again. I Samuel 5:3

Though the text does not say so, there had to be a great celebration that night in Ashdod. This was clearly the most obvious victory of Dagon over Jehovah that they could possibly experience.

It was common for these people to praise and worship Dagon the first thing every morning. Because the temple was located in Ashdod, they went to the shrine to perform their daily ritual. The morning after the ark was placed beside the statue of Dagon in the Ashdod temple, the Philistines were shocked to discover that their image of Dagon had fallen prostrate to the ground in front of the ark of the Covenant. What had started out to be one more way to humiliate Jehovah turned out to be an embarrassment to Dagon, their god. If you think carefully, this is exactly the way God works time after time.

This episode highlights one of the differences between Jehovah and the gods of the nations. Their idols were like baby dolls. They were lifeless and helpless. If they fell over, someone had to pick them up. If they were to move from one place to another, someone had to move them or they would stay where they were.

But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. I Samuel 5:4

On the next day, the Philistines came again to praise and worship their god. They discovered that they corrected one humiliating experience only to set the stage for another. This time, however, the humiliation was worse. The statue had again fallen prostrate before the ark of the Covenant. Observe that this time the statue not only fell prostrate before the ark, but now the head and both hands had broken off. Now, only the torso of their god was intact. For all intents and purposes, a box they brought into the shrine in triumph had destroyed their god. Bringing the ark into their temple was their idea of making fun of Jehovah. Now they had to remove the ark in total humiliation. Keep in mind, the Philistines were a very proud people. They did not take kindly to such abject humiliation.

Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. I Samuel 5:5

Verse five is a parenthesis in the story. This is a cultural explanation of the after effects of an event of grave national importance. From the day that the priests first found that the statue of Dagon fell prostrate before the ark with head and both hands broken off, the priests and all the Philistines refused to step on the threshold of the door in the temple of Dagon in Ashdod. One feels certain that this phenomenon caused many questions among the young and untutored. i.e. Why is it such a bad thing to step on the threshold when we come into the temple of Dagon? It doesn't seem to matter in other buildings, Why is it wrong here? This tended to keep the story alive. One generation after another would have to discover the humiliation of Dagon before the God of Israel. This book was written some years after the episode in Dagon's temple. It gives us just a glimpse of just how great the impact was on those who worshipped Dagon.

I Samuel 5:6-12 – The Philistines Smitten with Tumors Wherever the Ark was Taken

Now the hand of the LORD was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He ravaged them and smote them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories. I Samuel 5:6

The word "now", in this instance, is a transitional word. The author said, "The hand of the Lord was heavy on the Ashdodites." It was much more than the humiliation of Dagon before Jehovah. The people of the city reveled in the victory of Dagon over Jehovah. It was time for clarification. Some people say that

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God took revenge on the people of Ashdod. The Scriptures clearly say, "vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Romans 12:19. One can understand why they might say this. The worshippers of Dagon believed a lie and just telling them would convince no one. God had to show them in convincing fashion that there is no God but Jehovah. The means God chose was most convincing. It wasn't an astonishing battle that changed the minds of the Philistines. Very often, God does earth-shaking things in a quiet, unassuming manner. God quietly caused tumors to develop on all the people of Ashdod and the surrounding territories. We must keep in mind that strength is not always displayed by volume. God showed Himself strong by causing the statue of Dagon to fall and then to break as if it happened all by itself. God showed Himself strong by simply causing the people of Ashdod to break out in most painful sores which no one ever had before the ark of the covenant was brought into their country. We must remember that in the minds of the people, international events were considered encounters between deities. There was nothing Dagon or his priests could do to stop these painful outbreaks. By bringing this painful experience upon all the people, God interjected a sense of urgency into this entire situation.

When the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god." I Samuel 5:7

It did not take the people of Ashdod long to figure out what was happening. Jehovah had totally humiliated their deity and now He was devastating them and they knew it.

Some might wonder why God brought this painful experience on all the common people. Why not do this with the leaders who were responsible for getting the common people to worship Dagon in the first place? We will see, later, that events convinced the common people, but there were some leaders who were unwilling to admit that they were wrong. They clung to the outside possibility that this was just a chance event and not an act of Jehovah. We will deal with this again when we come to that section of the story.

As happens so often, the common people see the situation much earlier and more clearly than their leaders who have an emotional investment in the decisions they have made. Here, the common people saw through the situation with great clarity, "His (Jehovah's) hand is severe upon us and on Dagon our god." This is precisely the point God wanted them to see. The people's discovery of the solution was as clear as their analysis of the problem, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us." They recognized that their only hope of survival was to distance themselves from the God of Israel whose presence was symbolized in the ark of the Covenant.

So they sent and gathered all the lords of the Philistines to them and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" And they said, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." And they brought the ark of the God of Israel around. I Samuel 5:8

This was now a national crisis among the Philistine people, but the situation was awkward. Both the leaders and the common people were suffering with these open sores. With nothing to lose but their pain, the common people were prepared to get rid of the Ark of God without considering what else this might entail. The common people would not lose face if they admitted error and got rid of the Ark. The leaders had no such luxury. If they admitted that Jehovah had done this they would lose the confidence of all the people.

We must also remember that these religious leaders had a definite mindset about deities. They thought that their deity and thus all deities were location limited – powerful in one place and powerless elsewhere. Again, they were not convinced that this was not accidental.

It was clear, however, that the common people would not buy into this idea and the ark had to at least be removed from their city. The leaders made a leader's decision to remove the ark from Ashdod and send it to Gath. This would calm the people of Ashdod and perhaps the people of Gath would not have the same experience.

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And it came about that after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city with very great confusion; and He smote the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. I Samuel 5:9

They removed the ark of the Covenant from Ashdod and took it to Gath. Surely, the people of Ashdod would rejoice at the possibility that their pain would go away. The people of Gath just may not have been quite as happy. The worst possible scenario took form. Many times when the Scriptures use the words, "both young and old," it is a way of saying that this happened to every person in the city. These cities were not out of touch with each other. The people of Gath knew what happened in Ashdod. The day before the ark was brought to Gath no one in the town had tumors. The ark came into town and now every person in the city was stricken with these painful sores.

Look at the statement in the text, "The hand of the LORD was against the city with great confusion." It is clear that the "confusion" was as devastating as the tumors.

Again, the common people previously knew there were no tumors. The leaders of the Philistines sent them Israel's Ark of the Covenant and now there are painful tumors on every person in the city. Again, there was no fanfare or lavish displays of God's power. There was just that quiet display of God's power in the land that worshipped a different god. Sores just started to break out.

So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it happened as the ark of God came to Ekron that the Ekronites cried out, saying, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel around to us, to kill us and our people." I Samuel 5:10

It very quickly became clear that moving the ark to Gath was not going to solve this problem. Still the leaders found themselves unable to admit that they were wrong. Not having learned from their last mistake, the leaders decided to move the Ark to Ekron. The people of Ekron knew what had happened in Ashdod and Gath. Before the ark had even been brought into the city, they cried out, "They have brought the Ark of the God of Israel around to us to kill us and our people." This is really an accusation of murder. This would be quite a greeting for a representative during an election year. Notice a change in the people's response. When the ark of God came to Gath there as no outcry until the men of the city, "both young and old," were smitten with tumors. Now the ark was taken to Ekron and the outcry began even before the ark came into the city. The religious/political leaders were running out of options. They did not want to admit that this painful experience was of their making. At the same time, the evidence against the position they held was growing quickly.

They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people." For there was a deadly confusion throughout the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. I Samuel 5:11

It is obvious that the people of Ekron are, at least at this point, much more aggressive than the people of Gath. They did not just sit and wait for tragedy to overtake them. They sent a delegation to put pressure on the lords of the Philistines. This delegation looked at the problem in a different way. In both Ashdod and Gath, the plea was send this "blessing" to someone else. Now, the leaders of Ekron urged the Philistine leaders to send the ark back where it belonged. They knew that if the ark was not returned, it would mean death to their people just as it had in Gath and Ashdod.

Notice that the text says, "there was deadly confusion there." The word translated "confusion" is "hoom" (חֹמ) and means "an uproar involving destruction, tumult and vexation." This gives us a different glimpse of the situation in Ekron. It is not just that people were already dying; it was also that this catastrophe created a sense of unrest that every ruler feared – revolt. The author identified the cause of this entire situation – "the hand of God was heavy there."

AGREEMENT TO RETURN THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

By the way, there is an unusual situation in this verse. Twice in the verse the name "God" (Elohim) appears. The unusual part of this is that in situations where God brings pain and suffering on a people, invariably the name for God that is used is "LORD" (Jehovah) which stresses His justice. Why is it different in this situation? The meaning of the two names is involved here. The name "LORD" (in English biblical text) stresses the fact that the God of Israel is eternal and judges the disobedient. The name "God" in the English text, stresses the omnipotence of God and is used repeatedly in situations involving His mercy. It points to the purpose of God's action against the Philistines. They thought that Dagon was powerful and Jehovah was not. God demonstrated His limitless power and the Philistine's appeals to Dagon were useless against the God of gods. One might add that though this was a terrible thing in the eyes of the Philistine people; it could have been much worse. God could have wiped out the entire nation just as easily. Now the Philistine mockery of Jehovah was silenced.

And the men who did not die were smitten with tumors and the cry of the city went up to heaven. 1 Samuel 5:12

There are times of tragedy when people solemnly realize that there are things that are worse than death. People were dying on every hand. This was one of those times. Worse still, everyone else who had not died as yet was smitten with tumors. This was frighteningly critical because there was no cure for their tumors. They were looking at certain death.

The closing statement in the chapter is a telling one. "The cry of the city went up to heaven." What does this mean? It is an interesting statement. To speak of the cry of the city going up to heaven can mean at least two things.

1. The cry going up to heaven can deal with the volume of their tragic outcry.
2. It can also mean they were crying out to God to have mercy on them.

It certainly does not mean that they were addressing their prayers to Dagon because they did not think that heaven was the place of his abode. They thought of Dagon as dwelling in the temple in neighboring Ashdod. If this is a cry to Jehovah to have mercy on them, then the thing that God set out to show them indeed was accomplished.

Conclusion

There is a single theme that moves quietly through this chapter. It expresses itself in three different forms.

- a. God takes what appears to be humiliating defeat, for Him and for His people, and turns it into resounding victory. The story of Joseph is a vivid case in point.
- b. People look for God to act in dramatic, bombastic ways. He can and sometimes does. More often, however, He chooses to move in quiet inauspicious, but equally effective ways to proclaim His lordship and watch over those who love and serve Him. Elijah heard from God in "the still small voice."
- c. God is persistent in both His love and His judgment. People will attempt to avoid divine judgment and its consequences. God will persist in His judgment seeking to proclaim His sovereignty and accomplish His will.

These three truths stand out in this chapter. There is a common thread that runs through each of them. This thread expresses itself in two particular ways:

1. **FOR THE OBEDIENT** – It is clear that God does not protect His faithful from painful experiences in life. He does protect them in the midst of the painful experiences.
2. **FOR THE DISOBEDIENT** – What appears to be an astounding victory over God and His people; what appears to be an avoidance of punishment for disobedience is always temporary. God never failed to bless obedience and punish disobedience.

God's faithful actions are a source of confidence and certainty that God is in control. Our lives are never out of His control. He will always be victor, but always in His unique way and time.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

In times of stress, this is a source of comfort and trust. In His time; in His way: God moves slowly, but surely to accomplish His irresistible will in the midst of my frightening weakness.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT RETURNED – I SAMUEL 6:1 – 7:2

1. There are four paragraphs in the sixth chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of six to eight words for each paragraph.

6:1-9	
6:10-16	
6:17-18	
6:19- 7:2	

2. In I Samuel 6:1-9, the author described the instructions for the return of the ark of the Covenant.
- In 6:1, the author gave us a significant piece of information.
 - What does he tell us?
 - How does this help our understanding?
 - In 6:2, the common Philistine people took the initiative to solve the terrible dilemma that ravaged their cities.
 - What did they do?
 - Why did they have to do this?
 - In 6:3, the religious leaders gave instructions for returning the ark of the LORD. Read this carefully.
 - What were their instructions?
 - What are the implications of these instructions?
 - Do you see agreement or disagreement between the common people and the religious leaders in these instructions?
 - In 6:4, the religious leaders gave their instructions for the guilt offering the Philistines were to make.
 - What is the significance of the number "5"?
 - Why would the religious leaders instruct them to make golden tumors and golden mice?
 - What is the significance of the statement, "for one plague was on all of you and on your lord"?
 - In 6:5, the religious leaders instructed them, "You shall make likenesses of your tumors and likenesses of your mice that ravaged the land and you shall give glory to the God of Israel."
 - What does this mean?
 - Observe the religious leaders said, "Perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods and your land." What are the implications of these instructions?
 - Read 6:6 very carefully.
 - Who said this?
 - What does this sound like?
 - Why would they say this?
 - Read this in view of the integrity of the speaker. What did you find?
 - If you were one of the listening crowd when this statement was made, what would you think?
 - In 6:7, the religious leaders continue to speak.
 - Look carefully at these instructions. What special emphasis, if any, do you see?
 - The religious leaders are insisting that the people give special care to the ark. Why, in view of their past actions, would they be doing this?
 - What is the benefit in the use of two milch cows rather than bulls?
 - In 6:8, these religious leaders gave some careful instructions on how the ark of the LORD was to be placed on the cart.
 - In view of what we know about the movement of the ark of the LORD, how would you describe the instructions that the religious leaders gave the Philistine people?

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- 2) Read the last sentence in verse eight again. What significance, if any, can you attach to these words?
- i. In 6:9, the priests continued their instructions.
 - 1) How would you describe these instructions?
 - 2) What do these instructions tell you about the attitude of these religious leaders?
 - 3) In view of the way they spoke, what does it appear that these religious leaders were trying to do with these instructions?
3. In I Samuel 6:10-16, the author described the return of the ark to Beth-shemesh
 - a. In 6:10, the author described how the people began to deal with the instructions of the religious leaders.
 - 1) What did they do?
 - 2) How carefully did they obey the instructions that were given them by the religious leaders?
 - b. In 6:11, the author continued his description of the way the people followed the instructions of the religious leaders.
 - 1) What did they do?
 - 2) What, if any, piece of information did you anticipate, but did not find?
 - c. In 6:12, the author described the trip from Ekron to Beth-shemesh.
 - 1) Earlier, the religious leaders said that if the unguided cart went straight to Beth-shemesh, then this would be an indication that the God of Israel had indeed brought this trouble on them. If on the other hand, the unguided cart stopped or went in another direction, then this was an indication that it was just an accident. What would this verse tell us that their conclusion would have to be?
 - 2) How, if at all, did the religious leaders explain what had happened?
 - 3) Look, again, at the last sentence in this verse. Why would the religious leaders follow the cart to the border of Beth-shemesh?
 - d. In 6:13, the scene shifted from the Philistines to the people of Beth-shemesh.
 - 1) Read this verse again, carefully. What information can one gain from this verse?
 - 2) Why would this information be important?
 - e. In 6:14, the author said, "THEY split the wood of the cart."
 - 1) Whom has the author identified as "they"?
 - 2) What is the significance of the "large stone"?
 - 3) The text states that the cows were offered as a burnt offering to the Lord.
 - a) Why would these cows be offered as a burnt offering?
 - b) How appropriate would this be as a burnt offering?
 - f. In 6:15, the author gives us a different picture of the arrival of the ark.
 - 1) The text states that the Levites took the ark down from the cart.
 - a) How did they do this?
 - b) Read verses 14 and 15 together.
 - 1) What, if anything, did you observe about the two verses?
 - 2) What can one say about these two verses?
 - 2) What would be the significance of the sacrifices that were made on this occasion?
 - g. In 6:16, the scene shifted back to the Philistine religious leaders.
 - 1) On the basis of this verse, what previous observations did you make, if any, that now seem unfounded?
 - 2) What conclusions can you draw on the basis of this verse?
 4. In I Samuel 6:17-18, the scene shifts back to the instructions given by the Philistine religious leaders.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6

- a. In 6:17, the author indicated that the five golden tumors were given as a guilt offering for each of the five cities?
 - 1) What additional information does this verse give you concerning the reason the ark of the LORD was taken to the cities where it was taken?
 - 2) How do Gaza and Ashkelon fit into this picture?
 - b. In 6:17, the author indicates the reasoning behind the number of the golden mice.
 - 1) How is the statement in this verse different from the statement in verse 17?
 - 2) Read the last sentence in this verse again. What information does it provide for your understanding?
5. In I Samuel 6:19 – 7:2, the author gives us a glimpse into the events that took place while the ark of the LORD was in Beth-shemesh.
- a. In 6:19, the author indicated that many of the people of Beth-shemesh looked into the Ark.
 - 1) Why would this be a problem?
 - 2) What is the apparent evil committed by these more than 50,000 men?
 - 3) Specifically, what was the reaction of the people?
 - 4) What is the difference between what happened here and what happened in Gath and Ekron?
 - b. In 6:20, the men of Beth-shemesh reacted to what God had done.
 - 1) What emotion do you sense in this verse?
 - 2) Read the verse carefully, again. What do you notice about their reference to God?
 - c. In 7:1, there are several pieces of helpful information.
 - 1) Can you see any reason why they would choose Kiriath-jearim as the new location for the ark rather than some other city?
 - 2) The text indicates that the men of Kiriath-jearim consecrated Eleazar to keep the ark.
 - a) Why might they consecrate Eleazar rather than his father Abinidab?
 - b) What else does this piece of information tell us?
 - d. In 7:2, the author tells us about the time that the ark was in the care of Eleazar.
 - 1) What does the text tell us about this time?
 - 2) Why would the house of Israel "lament after the Lord"?
 - 3) What does this mean?
6. Reflect upon your study of this chapter.
- a. Do you see any places where your failures might, in some way, parallel those of the people mentioned in the chapter?
 - b. Do you see any places where your obedience might be enlightened by the failures of people in this chapter?
 - c. In what way is your spiritual journey affected by what you have studied here?

LESSON 6

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT RETURNED – I SAMUEL 6:1 – 7:2

There is a brief summary of the four paragraphs of I Samuel chapter six on the following table.

6:1-9	Instructions for Returning The Ark
6:10-16	Philistine Lords Return the Ark to Beth-Shemesh
6:17-18	Five Philistine Lords Identified
6:19 – 7:2	50,070 Beth-Shemesh Men Killed for Looking Into the Ark

I Samuel 6:1-9 – Instructions for Returning the Ark

Now the ark of the LORD had been in the country of the Philistines seven months. I Samuel 6:1

This verse gives two very helpful pieces of information.

1. It tells us how long the ark had been in the hands of the Philistines.
2. It also puts a time line on the duration during which the Philistines had been suffering.

Three different cities had been devastated while they retained the captured ark of the Covenant. There were hundreds of people who had died. It is impossible to describe the extent of the suffering of these people because of their supposed victory. Families had been decimated and their confidence in Dagon had been destroyed. Finally the people of Ekron thought of more than their own suffering and insisted that the ark be returned where it belonged.

And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we shall send it to its place." I Samuel 6:2

It is interesting that it was the common people who called for the priests and diviners rather than the other way around. Unfortunately, this is not too surprising. Far too often, the professionals have something to lose; some position to defend that inhibits them from making the necessary decisions concerning their faith. The common people had already lost too much and were now demanding action.

Their question is most informative, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord?" This question makes it clear that these people were not prepared, any longer, to follow instructions designed to protect the honor of Dagon at the expense of their families. They knew it was time to send the ark back and nothing the diviners could say would change that. They were asking, "HOW do we do this?" They were not asking, "SHOULD do we do this?"

If this was not clear enough, they asked their question another way, "Tell us how we shall send it to its place." They were not prepared to negotiate. It is in our city and it is destroying us. Tell us how to send it back where it belongs. This is a classic case of the people exercising greater wisdom than the trained leadership. The priests of Dagon would be infuriated with the question, even if they could not avoid it. It was clear that if they did not admit defeat and send the ark home, the Philistines would be destroyed without the Israelite army ever coming near them.

And they said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but you shall surely return to Him a guilt offering. Then you shall be healed and it shall be known to you why His hand is not removed from you." I Samuel 6:3

Observe the way the priests and diviners answered their inquiry. "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel." It is clear that the priests and the common people viewed this situation differently. The priests viewed it as a distant possibility. The common people viewed it as a foregone conclusion. The people said, "the ark must be returned." The priests and diviners had not made such a decision. They said, "If you send

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away the ark of the God of Israel." One wonders what it might take to convince these religious professionals that Jehovah was, indeed, much greater than Dagon and had demonstrated it on four different occasions.

Their advice continued, "Do not send it away empty." To add insult to injury, they instructed them, "If you must send it back, send also a gift." There is a cultural picture here. It is a picture of a worship situation. When a person came to worship Jehovah, they would bring a sacrifice for their sins. It is an act of subservience and confession. They were conceding that they were wrong in what they did. They finally conceded that their god was no equal to the power of Jehovah. This is a switch of positions. Israel was, indeed, the defeated army, but now it is the Philistines being admonished to humble themselves before their enemy like a defeated army.

They made it even worse. Notice how they identified their "gift." "You shall surely return to Him (Jehovah) a guilt offering." The only time it was appropriate to make a guilt offering was when you flatly admit that you have done something wrong.

The priests continued, "Then it shall be known to you why His hand is not removed from you." We will demonstrate, shortly, that they did not really mean what they said. If we take this situation at face value, even the priests and diviners know even if they will not admit it, that what was happening was an act of the omnipotent power of God. This is an acknowledgement that they had affronted Jehovah and wished to placate Him with a guilt offering rather than suffer from His wrath any longer.

It is quite interesting that these religious leaders having conceded that Jehovah was greater than Dagon; having conceded that they sinned: did not abandon Dagon and worship Jehovah. It gives one a glimpse into the depths of fallenness of which the human heart is most capable.

Then they said, "What shall be the guilt offering which we shall return to Him?" And they said, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for one plague was on all of you and on your lords. I Samuel 6:4

The common people were pressing for answers and the religious/political leaders were behaving like political leaders – do not speak to the issue any more than you have to do. In this verse, the people became very specific, "What shall be the guilt offering which we shall return to Him (Jehovah)?" In this question, the common people are not disputing the fact that there has been guilt on the part of the Philistines. They just want to know how to make the necessary sacrifice for that guilt.

It is interesting that the religious/political leaders gave the answer they gave. They said, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice according to the number of the lords of the Philistines." The leaders, in a somewhat obtuse way were admitting their responsibility for this terrible situation. They instructed the people to give five golden tumors and five golden mice, "according to the number of the lords of the Philistines." This is not complete proof. It can be viewed in at least two ways:

1. It can be understood to mean that they should give five golden tumors and five golden mice because there are five Philistine religious leaders who brought the ark into the Temple of Dagon and then moved it to two other cities when the problems developed.
2. It can also be understood to mean that they should send five golden tumors and five golden mice simply because there are five leaders. People in the Near East did and do use numbers in this symbolic way.

My own feeling is that the five leaders would certainly prefer the second possibility, but the first suggestion would be the more plausible one.

The author is speaking of the problems – tumors and mice. He then said, "For one plague was on all of you and on your lords." In our thinking, the thing that God brought on the Philistines was the tumors. We must then answer the question, "Why do the leaders insist on five golden mice as well?" Were the mice a second problem God brought on these people along with the tumors? It would appear so. If this is true, we must ask just how were the mice involved in this life-threatening situation? Was this an infection brought about by the mushrooming presence of the mice?

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT RETURNED

There is an additional piece of information here. Observe that the leaders commented, "One plague was on all of you AND ON YOUR LORDS" (capitalization added). The requests for a solution to this great trauma were made only by the common people. This verse indicates, however, that the leaders were as involved as any other Philistine. It would follow that they were as anxious to get rid of this problem as anyone else. This does not necessarily mean they were as anxious as anyone else to return the Ark because it would mean defeat for Dagon and humiliation for them. They would certainly want relief from pain, but would definitely want a different solution, one that would not point the finger of blame in their direction.

"So you shall make likenesses of your tumors and likenesses of your mice that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods, and your land. I Samuel 6:5

Read this verse again. It is clear that the verse identifies the two major sources of pain – tumors on the people and mice on the fields. Notice, in particular, how the author reported this situation.

- a. Did he suggest that they make five golden tumors – like the tumors on the people, and then make five golden mice like the critters that are devastating your land?
- b. Did he suggest they make five golden tumors and five golden mice, much like most of these curses that ravaged the Philistine land.
- c. I believe he is saying the latter.

Observe also that these priests of Dagon said, "You shall give glory to the God of Israel." This is a far cry from the beginning of chapter five where they brought the ark of the Covenant to the temple of Dagon in order to make fun of Jehovah and the people of Israel. The word translated "glory" is "kawbode" (כָּבוֹד) which means "to attribute honor to the deserving one." Verses four and five represent a complete capitulation on the part of the Philistine religious leaders. There is an interesting phenomenon at least from our perspective. These religious leaders suggest a guilt offering. They urged them to give glory to Jehovah; but they themselves did not at this point take part in that praise for Jehovah or participate in His worship.

The author continued, "Perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods and your land." This is a careful confession that the Philistine people, land and deities were totally under the control of Jehovah. There was nothing among the Philistines that was outside Jehovah's control.

Observe the way these religious leaders gave this instruction, "PERHAPS he will ease His hand..." It is not just that Jehovah has all Philistine life under His control. It is also that there is no telling if or when He might possibly release that control even if only a little bit. Israel may have lost on the battlefield, but Jehovah won valiantly in the household of the enemy.

"Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had severely dealt with them, did they not allow the people to go, and they departed? I Samuel 6:6

In this verse, it is still the Philistine religious leaders who are speaking. Frankly, they sound a bit like Moses. Observe what they said, "Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts." This is a bit confusing, to say the least. These religious leaders are the ones preaching. It is as though the common people are the ones who are a bit reluctant to act. Actually, it is the common people urging that the ark be returned. It was the religious leaders who wanted to send the ark to yet another city rather than to admit their failure and return the ark to Israel, where it belonged.

Notice, they drew a comparison between their situation and that of the Egyptians after the 10 plagues. This is an apt comparison. After the ten plagues in Egypt, the land was totally devastated. The Egyptian deities had demonstrated amply their inability to cope with the omnipotence of Jehovah. The Philistines were in the same decimated situation.

The religious leaders continued their insincere plea, "When He had severely dealt with them, did they not allow the people to go, and they departed?" Again, this is a bit difficult to comprehend. The religious leaders were the ones who were reluctant to act in a responsible way. Now, they chastise the people as though the

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common people, were the ones who were hard to convince. Of course, these men were political leaders; the people for whom this seems to be normal activity.

If, however, you look at the last question, there is a very telling piece of information there. They carefully drew the parallel, "He (Jehovah) had severely dealt with them." This had already happened to the Philistines. In the balance of this question these religious leaders pointed out just how futile it is to struggle against Jehovah. We have yet to see just how committed they were to their prescribed course of action. Having described how futile it is to take a stand against Jehovah, they never took the next step and identified the fact that they themselves had been guilty of this very thing.

"Now therefore take and prepare a new cart and two milch cows on which there has never been a yoke; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home, away from them. I Samuel 6:7

The religious/political leaders are still talking to the people of Ekron. They finally got around to the instructions the people requested in the beginning. The instructions were very specific.

"Take and prepare a new cart."

The emphasis is on the fact that this cart is new. The emphasis on new indicates their intention that this cart must be clean – pure.

"And two milch cows on which there has never been a yoke."

Again, these are not suggestions, but commands. There is a continuing emphasis on newness; the idea of never having been used. It would be recognized that if these animals had never been under a yoke before they might be a bit skittish, but the greater concern would be purity, according to their understanding. This was a description they would associate with purity. There is an element of purity as well as control in wanting the people to use cows rather than bulls which were usually used to pull such a cart. Remember, they are suggesting that it be cows that have never had a yoke on them. They are to be cows with young calves. This would make them even more difficult to manage. The leaders are not making it easy for their people to do this.

"And hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home away from them."

Though the Philistines were warriors, they were also agrarian people. They knew that it is almost impossible to get a cow with a new calf to do anything except watch over and care for her new calf. If you can take the calf away safely, the cow will do whatever you want hoping to get back to her calf again. As we will soon see, they had some good if not personal reasons to want this control over the cows.

"And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side. Then send it away that it may go. I Samuel 6:8

The religious leaders gave some explicit instructions, but from our point of view, they left out some strategic facts. The leaders said,

"And take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart."

For a Philistine, these were clear proper instructions. From a Jewish perspective, however, there is at least one glaring question, "How do you take the ark of the Covenant and how do you place it on the cart?" Did they pick up the ark with their hands? If so, did they immediately die? Uzzah died and he simply touched the ark. These religious leaders may well have observed Hophni and Phinehas use poles to move the ark and followed their example. One suspects they had seen Eli's two sons move the ark and moved it the same way.

The religious leaders continued,

"And put the articles of gold which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side."

The text does not disclose how the Philistines moved the ark. It just reports that they placed the ark on the new cart. The religious leaders instructed the people of Ekron to place the guilt offering pieces in a box and place it beside the ark. It is a way of making a sacrifice to the Lord.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT RETURNED

"Then send it away that it may go."

Notice carefully the way the instructions were given. The leaders did not say, "Take it away to return it to Israel." They said, "SEND it away that it may go." The idea is send the wagon away and see if it will go all the way back to Israel or will it go just part way and stop. They were not talking about sending a driver to accompany the cart. The cart was to be started to see if it would go on its own. The thing that would be surprising would be to see if the cart would go any distance at all before the cows would stop, not wanting to go any further without their calves.

"And watch, if it goes up by the way of its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance." I Samuel 6:9

Now it is clear that the religious leaders had not learned their lesson at all. They still were willing to admit the remote possibility that it was Jehovah who had done these terrible things. They also left the door wide open to accept the idea that it was all accidental and in no way represented the power of Jehovah over Dagon their god. One can understand their reluctance to admit the possibility that it was Jehovah who had done this. They had placed their complete trust in Dagon. They had taught their people that there was no power in the world as powerful as their god. They had given the instructions about what to do in order to totally humiliate the God of Israel. It had been a total disaster. If they admitted that Jehovah was greater than Dagon, then the entire responsibility for this terrible disaster rested squarely on their shoulders.

No one ever wants that kind of responsibility. This was their last ditch effort to absolve themselves of this calamity.

I Samuel 6:10-16 – Philistine Lords Return the Ark to Beth-Shemesh

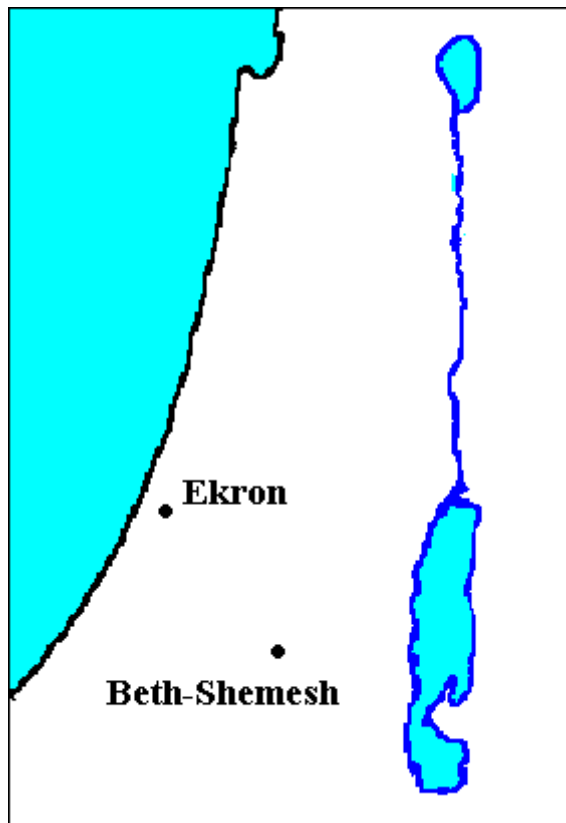
Then the men did so, and took two milch cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. I Samuel 6:10

The men did exactly as the religious leaders had instructed. It should be noted that the instructions of the religious leaders were given in such a way as to favor their finding that it was all accidental. If they really wanted this cart to go to Beth-Shemesh, then they would have put the bulls on the cart. If they really wanted the cart to go to Beth-Shemesh, they would have taken cows that did not have calves with them all the time. A cow will do most anything to keep from being separated from her calf. The test was now set and the religious leaders were in hopes that it would be clearly demonstrated that this was all an accident.

And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the likenesses of their tumors. I Samuel 6:11

As you read this verse, a whole series of questions filter through your mind. Did they pick up the ark by touching it? If so, did they die the same way as Uzzah would later? Did they use the poles as they certainly had seen Eli's sons do when they moved the ark? The text is silent on these questions. One thing is certainly true, if they moved the Ark by touching it and did not die, we will have some very serious questions when we come to the story of Uzzah.

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As you look at the map of Israel, you will notice where both Ekron and Beth-Shemesh are. Both of these places are in the hill country of Israel. It is a vastly different terrain than you would find in the area around Ashdod. The roads are not straight. The terrain is very hilly and difficult to negotiate. The religious leaders had set this up to be as much in their favor as possible without raising questions in the minds of the people. Nevertheless, the men did exactly as the religious leaders had instructed them.

If the cows went straight toward Beth Shemesh it would be another miracle of the power of God.

And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh. I Samuel 6:12

We should not be surprised to discover that the cows did exactly as the religious leaders would hope they would not. Not only did they go in the direction of Beth-Shemesh, they went in a hurry. The idea of their lowing as they went is an indication that though religious history was in the making, the cows had only one thing on their minds. They wanted to get back to their calves just as quickly as possible. The truth of the matter is that these cows never saw their calves again.

We should keep in mind that it was the religious leaders who set up the criteria, not God. The direction the cows took clearly indicated to them that this was certainly an act of Jehovah and not chance. It had to be a severe disappointment to the religious leaders that the cows went straight toward Beth Shemesh.

One might wonder, why did they choose to send the ark to Beth-Shemesh rather than some other city in the area near the Philistine border. For one reason, it was nearby. For another, Beth-Shemesh appears more in I Samuel than in any other book of the Old Testament. According to Joshua 19:22, there were 16 Jewish cities and their "daughters" that were in this rugged area. (a "daughter" is an unwalled village in the vicinity of a walled city.) The people of the village provide necessities for the people in the walled city.

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Another reason they might send the cart in the direction of Beth-Shemesh is that this was a large city in a very fertile valley. There would certainly be lots of Jewish people there to receive the ark. This would be much more important to the people of Ekron than it would for the religious leaders of the Philistines.

Yet another reason for sending the cart to Beth-Shemesh had to do with the history of both Israel and the Philistines. When the people of Israel came into the land, they were unable to drive the Philistine people out of the land, so they lived among them. It associated the area with an historic victory for Dagon. That too would play into the hands of the religious leaders.

One more reason to send the cart to Beth-Shemesh is the fact that this is a place where the Levitical families lived. They would be the ones who would be responsible for the ark. It would be appropriate to send the cart there.

Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see it. 1 Samuel 6:13

This verse gives us some valuable information. This happened at harvest time. Harvest time would be in the Fall according to our calendar. Depending on the season, it could take place at the time of the Passover feast. We cannot say that this is what happened, but it is highly possible.

This verse also indicated that the Jews did not know that the ark was coming. According to the text, the Jews were pleasantly surprised to see the ark. After all, it had been taken away about seven months previously. It could indicate that they would not have been surprised if they never saw the ark again. One can imagine how excited they would be to look up from their harvest work and see the ark coming on a cart with no one leading it.

It is not surprising that the Philistines did not announce in advance that the ark was being returned. There were both religious and military reasons for this silence. The Philistines had made no secret of their joy over the conquest of the ark. It is not a stretch of the imagination to think of the way the Philistines mocked the Jews and Jehovah when the ark was captured. They certainly would not want to endure the same kind of humiliation they had imposed upon the soldiers of Israel. There was a history of bad blood between the Philistines and the Jews concerning the God that each worshipped. This would be a time of great embarrassment for the Philistine god and especially for the religious leaders who had tried to make such a mockery of the ark in the temple of Dagon.

From a military standpoint, nations at that time considered international incidents a confrontation between the gods of the two nations. Six or seven months earlier, it appeared that Dagon had soundly defeated Jehovah and the Philistines relished that victory. Now it had become clear that what had appeared to be a Philistine victory was a resounding defeat at the hands of Jehovah. The leaders of the Philistines would be very alert to make sure that the return of the ark did not spark a return to battle for the army of Israel.

The harvest season in Israel was always a time of great joy. Imagine just how much more joyful it would be to realize that the ark had been returned. One suspects that to say that they were glad to see the ark was the understatement of the year.

And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite and stood there where there was a large stone; and they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. 1 Samuel 6:14

The city of Beth-Shemesh is located about 15 miles west of Jerusalem. The ark had traveled about ten miles coming from Ekron. There were Levites living in Beth-Shemesh. Note that the text says that the cart came into the field of a man by the name of "Joshua the Beth-shemite." It is interesting that the cart carrying the ark was able to stay on the road for the ten difficult miles from Ekron to Beth-shemesh and then go into the field of a Jew who lived in Beth-shemesh. Miracles come in a number of shapes and sizes.

Note that the text says, "They split the wood of the cart." There is nowhere, however, where it identifies who "they" are. We assume that it means that the word "they" represents the Levites. The people would

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bring animals for sacrifice, but it was always the Levites who made the sacrifices on behalf of the people. We know that there were Levitical families in the area and it is not difficult to believe that they are the ones to whom the author refers.

Observe, also, that the text indicates that when the cart was chopped up and the two cows sacrificed, this was a whole burnt offering. It means that the entire body of each animal was completely consumed by the flames. We need to ask ourselves why this had to be a whole burnt offering. First, we must keep in mind that the burnt offering was an offering for the sin of the people. It was their thinking that the Philistines had committed a grave error in taking the ark and making fun of Jehovah. Also, the Israelites sinned grievously when they decided to take the ark into the battle field rather than leaving it in the temple in Shiloh. On behalf of both of these groups, the sin sacrifice had to be made if they were ever to be accepted before God again.

And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was with it, in which were the articles of gold, and put them on the large stone; and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to the LORD. I Samuel 6:15

Observe that it was the Levites who "took down the ark." It was very clear to them that the ark was not to be touched, but to be lifted and carried by two men. Before long, we will come to a situation where this care was not followed, and with dire consequences. Observe also that when the Levites took the ark off the Cart, they placed it on the large stone that was previously mentioned. In those days, they often used such a large stone as an altar to the Lord.

There are some observations that need to be made here. First, note that it tells about placing both the ark and the box with the golden tumors and mice in it on the large stone. The text, however, does not tell us what happened to the tumors and mice when the animals were sacrificed.

Read verses 14 and 15 together. These two verses are not in chronological order. In verse 14, they chopped up the cart and sacrificed the cows. In verse 15, the Levites removed the ark from the cart and then the men of the city offered sacrifices. We cannot be sure why this was done in this way.

Notice also that the text does not tell us how the Levites took the ark down off the cart. Did they touch the ark with their hands? Did they get poles which were made for the purpose in order to move the ark? We can only conjecture what they did. One suspects that they did use the poles in order to move the ark.

And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned to Ekron that day. I Samuel 6:16

This is the first mention of the fact that any Philistine, much less the Lords of the Philistines, accompanied the ark on its trip to Beth-shemesh. The text does not indicate how this happened. It would appear that these five leaders observed the progress of the cart carrying the ark from a safe distance. One thing is quite sure, the religious leaders of the Philistines watched to see that the ark was safely in the hands of the Jews before they returned home.

It was a 10-15 mile trip from Ekron to Beth-shemesh. This makes a roundtrip of 20 to 30 miles for these leaders. It is most doubtful that they made this entire trip in one day. For one thing, the cart would go very slowly. This would mean that they would probably not be able to cover the 20 miles in a day which a person walking could do without too much trouble. If people had to travel long distances, it was not uncommon for them to make camp and sleep along the road. If they happened upon a house or tent, they would gladly accept the hospitality of the owners. There was a problem. These Philistine leaders traveled a considerable distance in Israelite territory. They would not be prone to accept the hospitality of a Jewish family living in the area. Though the text is silent, at this point, it appears that they did have to stop and stay overnight along the road.

I Samuel 6:17-18 – Five Philistine Lords Identified

And these are the golden tumors which the Philistines returned for a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; I Samuel 6:17

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This verse gives us some additional information, but also creates a slight problem for us. If you remember our study of I Samuel 6:4, you will remember that the text there said, "five golden tumors and five golden mice according to the number of the lords of the Philistines." Now in this verse, the text clearly states that these golden tumors were a guilt offering to the LORD, "one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron." It does not mention the mice at all. This certainly appears to be two different explanations for the same phenomenon.

One of the first things we must realize is that it was a very common thing for the people of that part of the world to attach great significance to numerical values. There is nothing in this verse to help us understand why the text in 6:4 and 6:17 appear to give different reports of the same situation. The next verse, however, may be of help.

And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities and of country villages. The large stone on which they set the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite. I Samuel 6:18

Notice what the author said, "And the golden mice, according to the number of the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords." In this statement, observe that the author associated the number of tumors and mice with both the lords and the cities over which they ruled.

The author continued, "both of fortified cities and of country villages." In a number of places in the Old Testament, these "country villages" are referred to as "daughters" of the fortified cities. A fortified city, one with a wall around it, was of necessity very cramped for space. The people who lived within the walls were unable to provide the food they needed. Because of this, small villages of very poor people would establish small clans just adjacent to the walled city and sell food or goods to the people who lived inside the walls. It was the hope of the people of these villages that if danger came, the people to whom they sold or gave food would invite them into the city to be protected. For the most part, this never happened.

Observe also the closing remark in this verse. The author's use of the words "to this day" indicate that this book was written quite some time after the events described in it. The author is saying that though a long period of time has passed, the large stone in this field is still a silent reminder of what the Lord had done in this place.

I Samuel 6:19-7:2 – 50,070 Beth-Shemish Men Killed for Looking Into the Ark

And He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck down of all the people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter. I Samuel 6:19

The scene changes drastically. The word "He" is obviously a reference to God. For some reason, some of the men of Beth-shemesh decided to look into the ark of the Lord. We should keep in mind that many if not most of the people who lived in Beth-shemesh were Levitical families. They knew all about the care of the ark and how it was to be treated and especially how it was not to be treated. Ignorance, they could not claim. The author reported, "The people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter." The word translated "mourned" is "abal" (אָבַל). Officially it means "to mourn or lament." It is the mourning rite for the dead. There were professional mourners who were hired to scream uncontrollably and tear their clothes and throw dirt in their hair to express the depth of the sorrow of the family. This is what the city did when so many of their people died after looking into the ark.

The text does not tell us why these people felt the great need to look into the ark. It is possible that they simply wanted to see if the original contents were still in the ark or if they had been removed. That question, however, would have been answered when the very first person looked into the ark. It had to be more than just wondering whether the original contents were there and in good condition. There can be little doubt that there was some level of curiosity. This, however, does not help us understand why these Levitical families

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would have forgotten how the ark was to be treated. There is yet one more serious possibility. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the sons of Eli had corrupted the worship of God. We also know that this was a time when the worship of God had fallen into disregard and was not taken too seriously in many quarters. It would not be at all surprising if the people had begun to think that the ark was just another piece of symbolic temple furniture and had forgotten about the awe with which it should have been regarded.

We can be absolutely certain that the people of the city would know every detail of how holy this ark really was. They would know that they must not touch the ark. Now, the text does not say that they touched the ark, but it does say that over 50,000 people looked into the ark.

It should be noted that some texts say, "looked UPON the Ark" while our text says, "looked INTO the Ark." This issue has not been resolved nor does it appear that it will be in the near future. It is quite certain, however, that there is a sin involved here and the sin is not curiosity. The sin is disobedience. These people knew exactly what they should do in relationship to the ark, but they did not do it.

This was a punishment for desecrating that which is holy. It is the sin of disobedience. The casual appearance is that God dealt with them in exactly the same way that He dealt with the Philistines. The two failures are quite different. The Philistines were idolaters and needed to discover the surpassing power of the Lord. The Jews, on the other hand, were knowingly disobedient to a well understood command of God. The shocking slaughter of over 50,000 people caused indescribable mourning in the city of Levites.

And the men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?" I Samuel 6:20

The questions recorded in this verse give us some valuable information. First, they blamed God for what they had done. They treated the ark as something impersonal and casual and God had instructed them to treat these holy things with great care and reverence. The people of Beth-shemesh knew that God was holy, but dealt with Him in a distant, impersonal way. It would not seem to them as though He was "their God."

The people of Beth-shemesh did not see that it was something that they did that caused this great slaughter. This, by the way, gives us a careful picture of the size of Beth-shemesh. Beth-shemesh appears to have been a huge metropolis. More than 50,000 people were killed and that was not the whole population of the city. This suggests that this city was much larger than Jerusalem at that time.

It is certain that the people of Beth-shemesh were really frightened. It is as though something terrible had happened and they had no clue as to why this happened.

Observe the way they refer to Jehovah - "this holy God." There is absolutely nothing personal in this identification. Israel repeatedly spoke of "the LORD our God." This is a very personal appellation. The name these Jewish people used here was carefully chosen.

So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up to you." I Samuel 6:21

There is no explanation as to why the people of Beth-shemesh chose Kiriath-jearim as the new destination for the ark. In your mind, make a comparison between the way the people of Beth-shemesh dealt with the problems accompanying the ark and the way the people of Gath dealt with it. It was certainly a big problem for both cities. They didn't know what to do with the ark, but they were certain that it should go somewhere else. There was, apparently, no conversation about the fact that it might do the same kind of harm to the new destination as it had done to them. Essentially, the two cities dealt with the problem in the same manner. They thought only of themselves. The shocking thing about this is that Gath was a Philistine city that did not honor God and Beth-shemesh was an Israelite city that was supposed to be worshipping God.

Notice that though the people of Beth-shemesh wanted to get rid of the ark lest it become an even greater problem, they were not even willing to take the ark to another city. "Come down and take it up to you," this was their attitude.

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Observe the way the people of Beth-shemesh referred to God. They spoke of Jehovah as "this holy God". This is a most impersonal way to speak of God. In other circumstances they spoke of God as "the God of Israel" or "the God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob." Observe, also that they did not say, "to whom shall the Ark go up from here." They said "to whom shall He go up from here." They were all for sending God somewhere else, anywhere else. It seems fair to assume that they wanted nothing to do with God. It also appears that they considered this tragedy to be God's responsibility, not theirs.

We know that the place for Jewish worship was Shiloh. One wonders why they would not think to send the ark back to Shiloh from whence it was taken by the Philistines. Obviously, the text is silent at this point. It is possible that the Philistines still held Shiloh or that they were so close that the Jews feared that they might come and take it away again. There was no danger of this, but the Jews might not have known about it. Whatever the reason, the priests at Beth-shemesh wanted the ark to be removed from their territory as quickly as possible.

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the ark of the LORD and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. 1 Samuel 7:1

This is a very interesting verse. Though the text is silent, it appears that the people of Kiriath-jearim had to know all about the problems that the Philistine cities had as well as the tragedy that took place in Beth-shemesh. Nevertheless, the men from Kiriath-jearim came to take the ark home with them. This says something quite significant about the people of Kiriath-jearim.

Observe, also, that these men took the ark back to their city and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. This may suggest that there was another man in the city by the name of Abinadab. One of the interesting things about this verse is that it says that, "they consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord." The consecrating of people to serve the Lord was not the ministry of the common people. This was a task that was reserved for the priests. It appears to suggest that this, also, was a city where many of the Levites lived. Only they would be able to consecrate someone to care for the ark of the Lord.

It is interesting that the men of Kiriath-jearim consecrated Eleazar to keep the ark rather than his father. There are a number of possible reasons. There is little doubt that the men who did the consecrating were Levites. Because this person was consecrated to care for the ark of God, this had to be done by the priests and was probably reserved for priestly families. If that were the case, and we do not know if it was or not, it may well indicate that Abinadab was of a priestly family and if that is true, then Eleazar would be a Levite as well. Again, if all this is true, it is entirely possible that Eleazar was consecrated to care for the ark because his father was already retired. There is, of course, no reason to believe that there was any other possible motive for such an assignment. This was not a hidden incident in Israel. If Abinadab was a retired priest, the only assignment that he could receive was to share in the preparation of the sin offerings on the day of Atonement.

And it came about from the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim that the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. 1 Samuel 7:2

Eleazar had no way to understand just how long he would be charged to care for the ark of God. It ended up that he was responsible to care for the ark for over 20 years. No part of this story would take place without the people of Israel knowing all about it.

Again, the text reads, "all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD." The word translated "lamented" is "nahah (נָחַח) which means "to bewail," or "to groan." It describes the kind of mourning people did when a family member died. It is wailing uncontrollably and tearing the clothes in grief. It gives us an idea of just how intensely these people were seeking God for His help. It is another reminder that though God will forgive our sin and failure, He still allows us to experience the consequences of our actions. It helps us to remember more clearly. There is another reminder here. God, from the very beginning of this guilt ridden ex-

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perience, wanted the people of Israel to return to Him. Now, slowly to be sure, they were lamenting the fact that God was no longer among them.

Conclusion

This chapter raises a long list of issues that require one's contemplation. Let me list a few:

- a. 6:2 – It was the common people who concluded that the ark of the Covenant had to be returned and insisted that it be done immediately. The political/religious leaders had positions to defend and reputations to protect and were thus unwilling to really agree with the obvious truth.
- b. 6:12 – God did not do anything bombastic to bring about the return of the ark. His irresistible power was clearly evident in the sickness that accompanied the ark from one city to another. The LORD allowed the cry of the Philistine people to move the leaders to return the ark.
- c. 6:12 – The LORD will turn deceptive plans back upon their perpetrators. The leaders developed a plan to insure that the ark would not return to Israel. They trusted the cows to either stop or go in the wrong direction. That would seem logical. Their plan was foiled when the cows went immediately to Beth-Shemish. The plan was intended to prove that the problems were coincidental. It failed. It really convinced the Philistine people that these problems were the actions of Jehovah, who was more powerful than Dagon.
- d. 6:19 – Disobedience, whatever the form, is disobedience and will be either forgiven or judged, depending upon the heart of the disobedient.
- e. 6:20 – One should never underestimate the human ability to shift blame away from themselves. The Beth-Shemites blamed God; the Philistine leaders blamed chance.
- f. 7:1 – One obedient man did for at least 20 years what more than 50,000 Beth-Shemites could not do for just a few days – stand in awe of the ark of the Covenant - the symbol of the LORD'S presence.

As I ponder this short list, all of them impact my thinking. Each one of these represents something that I must take very seriously in my life and ministry.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 7

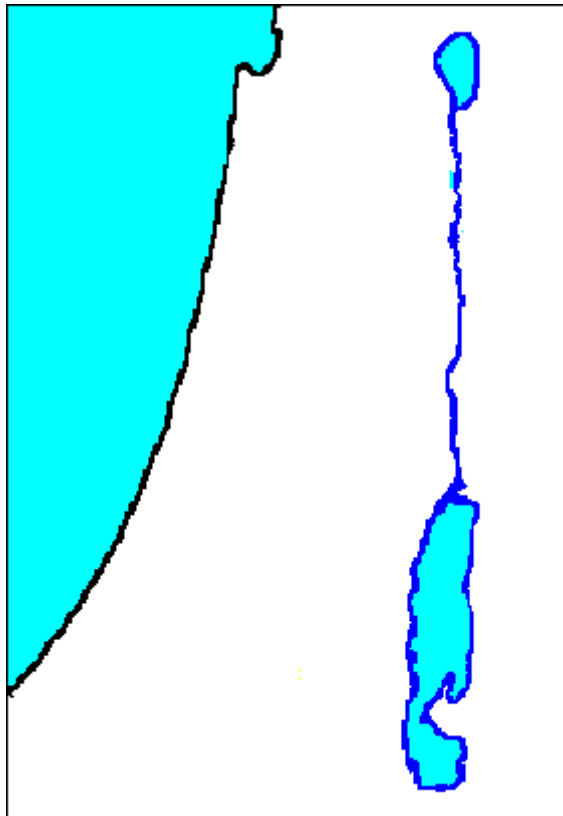
ISRAEL DEFEATED AND SUBDUED THE PHILISTINES – I SAMUEL 7:3 – 17

(Note: as you can see, this study begins with verse three. This is because verses one and two are part of the previous paragraph and chapter.)

1. There are only four paragraphs in the seventh chapter of I Samuel. There is a brief summary of each one on the following table.

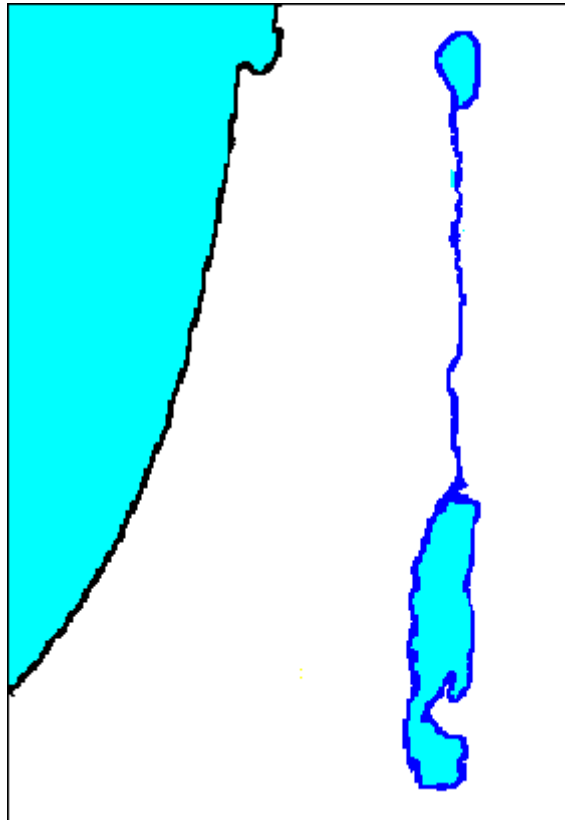
7:3, 4	
7:5-11	
7:12- 14	
7:15-17	

2. In I Samuel 7:3, 4, Samuel urged Israel to put away their idols
 - a. In 7:3, Samuel made a conditional statement urging the Israelites to return to the LORD.
 - 1) Identify the four conditions Samuel mentioned.
 - 2) What does this tell you about Israel?
 - 3) What promise did Samuel make contingent upon Israel meeting these four conditions?
 - 4) What can we learn about Israel from this verse?
 - b. In 7:4, the author recorded Israel's response to Samuel's plea.
 - 1) How did Israel respond?
 - 2) What did this mean?
3. In I Samuel 7:5-11, the Philistines attacked Israel.



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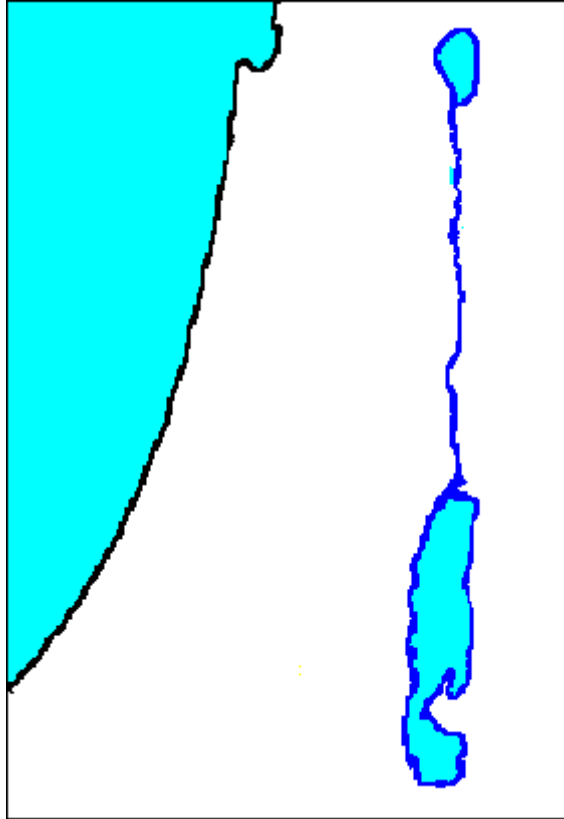
- a. In 7:5, Samuel, who lived in Ramah, told the people to gather in Mizpah and he would pray for them. Locate Ramah, Mizpah, and Shiloh on this map.
 - 1. Why did he want them to go to Mizpah where he would pray for them?
 - 2. Shiloh was the location of the temple. Why not pray for them there?
 - 3. Why not just gather in Ramah where he was located? After all, Samuel was getting older.
- b. In 7:6, the people gathered in Mizpah and poured out water as a sacrifice to the LORD.
 - 1) What is a pouring offering?
 - 2) What did Samuel do when he "judged the sons of Israel"?
- c. In 7:7-9, the Philistines learned that Israel had gathered at Mizpah and came to fight with Israel there.
 - 1) Why would the Philistines want to fight Israel again?
 - 2) How did the Israelites react? Why?
 - 3) In 7:9, Samuel offered a "whole burnt offering." What is this?
- d. In 7:10, the LORD answered Samuel's prayer and sacrifice by thundering against the Philistines.
 - 1) How did the Philistines react?
 - 2) Why would they react in this manner?
- e. In 7:11, the Israelites pursued the Philistines as far as Beth Car.



- 1) On this map, identify the location of Mizpah and Beth Car.
 - 2) The Israelites gathered at Mizpah to sacrifice and pray. When they were attacked in Mizpah, however, they pursued and killed the Philistines. What does this tell us?
- 4. In I Samuel 7:12-14, Samuel set up the Ebenezer stone near Mizpah.
 - a. In 7:12, Samuel set up a stone and called it "Ebenezer."
 - 1) What was the meaning of Samuel's action?
 - 2) Why was this necessary?
 - b. In 7:13, the author described a new phenomenon.
 - 1) What did he describe?

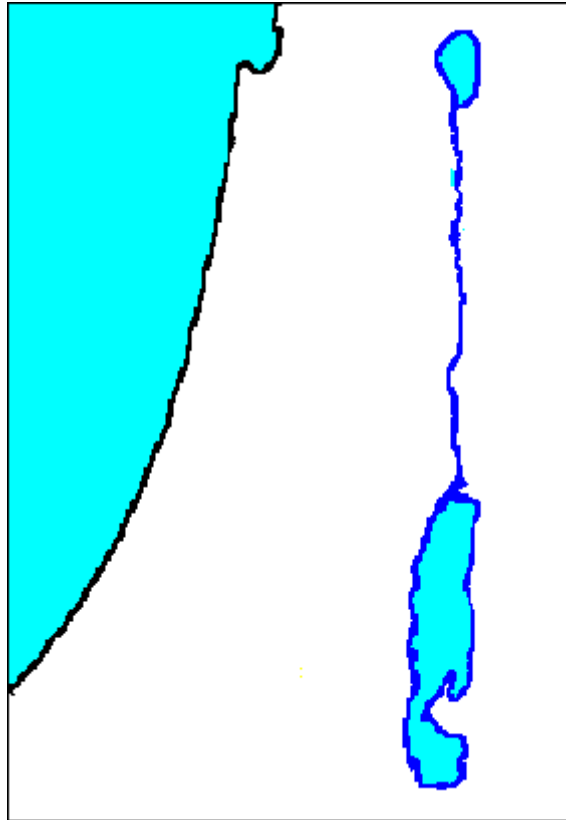
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 7

- 2) How long did this last?
- 3) What does the author tell us about the basis for this situation?
- c. In 7:14, the author gave some surprising information.



- 1) On this map, identify the locations mentioned in this verse.
- 2) Now, review I Samuel chapters five and six.
 - a) What, if any, connection is there between chapters five and six with 7:14?
 - b) Can you explain this situation?
3. In this verse the author speaks of both the "Philistines" and the "Amorites."
 - a) What is the relationship between the two groups?
 - b) If these are two separate groups, does this mean that there was peace between Israel and the Amorites, but not between Israel and the Philistines?
5. In I Samuel 7:15-17, Samuel judged Israel the rest of his life.
 - a. In 7:15, the author reported that "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life."
 - 1) What was he saying in this statement?
 - 2) Why would this be important?
 - b. In 7:16, 17, the author described the way in which Samuel served the spiritual needs of Israel.

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- 1) On this map, identify the locations Samuel visited in this circuit.
- 2) Review I Samuel chapter one. How does 7:16, 17, differ from the practice in chapter one? Can you suggest any reason for this?
- 3) In 7:17, the author indicates three pieces of information about Ramah.
 - a) What are these pieces of information?
 - b) It says he built an altar at Ramah. The Hebrew place of worship was in Shiloh. Can you explain this situation?
6. Review your study of this chapter. There is an overarching ribbon of truth that runs throughout the chapter.
 - a. What is this strand of truth?
 - b. What does this chapter say about that truth?
 - c. How is this going to affect your life?

LESSON 7

ISRAEL DEFEATED AND SUBDUED THE PHILISTINES – I SAMUEL 7:3 – 17

There are four paragraphs in this portion of I Samuel chapter seven. A brief summary of each paragraph appears on the following table.

7:3,4	Samuel Urged Israel To Put Away Idols
7:5-11	Philistines Attacked Israel: Jehovah Discomfited Philistines
7:12-14	Samuel Set up Ebenezer Stone Near Mizpah
7:15-17	Samuel Judged Israel The Rest of His Life

I Samuel 7:3,4 – Samuel Urged Israel To Put Away Idols

Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtarothe from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." I Samuel 7:3

The context of this passage is very important. Israel had suffered several defeats at the hands of the Philistines. Though their keeping of the ark of the LORD brought havoc throughout the country, still the Philistines knew that they had soundly defeated Israel on the battlefield and were convinced that they could do it again. If they were to continue to believe in Dagon, they would have to defeat Israel at least one more time. Israel, on the other hand, had been defeated and humiliated in battle with the loss of thousands of troops. They had been humiliated by the capture of the ark of God. Now, Israel stood at the crossroads. They could be sure that the Philistines would want to get revenge for the thousands of their people who had died as a result of the presence of the ark in their cities. The Philistines were a warlike people who loved to fight. They had a weak neighbor that they knew they could defeat and humiliate. It was only a matter of time until the Philistines would attack again.

Now, as Israel stood at the crossroads, Samuel gathered the people to speak to them. Look carefully at the conditional statement with which he began his talk. There are four parts to the "condition" and one part to the "promise." There are four separate conditional requirements, but they are intimately related to one another. One of the things we must do is point out in what ways they are to some extent synonymous and to what extent they are different from each other.

"If you return to the LORD with all your heart."

Samuel's statement of this condition is very precise. Israel had returned to the Lord many times, but in most instances it was because they were having trouble and wanted relief from pain and struggle rather than seeking a meaningful relationship with God. When Samuel added the words, "with all your heart," he had come to the core of Israel's problem. To return with all their heart would involve a commitment to serve Him and Him alone out of the joy of fellowship with Him.

"(IF) you remove the foreign gods and the Ashtarothe from among you"

The word "(IF)" in parentheses is added to identify what the author was trying to convey in this unusual conditional statement. Observe also, that God made a difference between "foreign gods" and "Ashtarothe." The God of Israel made this distinction because it was appropriate to do so. Jewish people had adopted the worship of the gods their neighbors worshipped. We must keep in mind that people who worship idols are uncomfortable unless everyone worships the idols they worship. They were afraid that their god would be angry if the neighbors did not also worship their favorite idol. The Philistines had numerous gods that they worshipped, but their main deity was Dagon with Ashtarothe his female companion. Ashtarothe was the goddess of fertility and the worship of this goddess was nothing more than an orgy.

It is important to point out the difference between "returning to the Lord with all your heart" and removing the foreign gods and the ashtarothe." The two conditions are not exactly the same. Granted, if one returns

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to the LORD with all their heart, they will indeed remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth. We need to be clear that the second is the outworking of the first. It is not the same as the first.

"(IF) you direct your hearts to the LORD"

A more appropriate translation of these words might be, "prepare your hearts unto the Lord." The word translated "direct" or "prepare" is "koon" (כִּוֵּן) The word literally means "to stand upright." It is "to make provision for" or "to make matters right." Samuel was telling the Jewish people that it was important for them to make their hearts right with the LORD.

It is important to discern how this condition relates to the ones we have already reviewed. "Return to the LORD" deals with repentance. "remove the foreign gods" deals with the evidence of that repentance. "Direct your hearts to the Lord" focuses attention on the attitude in which we demonstrate the veracity of our repentance.

"(IF) you serve Him alone"

The fourth condition was carefully stated. There were many in Israel who had been willing to serve God all along. The problem was that they also wanted the option of serving the idols and participating in the orgies that comprised their worship. The inclusion of the word "alone" completely changes the scene. Samuel was telling them that the only way God was willing to accept their worship was if they were willing to serve Him and Him alone. The service of God is and must always be a unique experience, shared with none other. This was not a singular experience for the people of that day. There are many in our time who are quite willing to serve God so long as they are still able to serve their idols of money, position, possession and power. The message for our time is exactly the same. We must be willing to serve God alone.

"(THEN) He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."

Observe that the word "then" is in parentheses. This is because it is understood in the text, but the word does not appear there. This is the promise portion of the conditional statement. This is an unconditional promise. If these people fulfill every condition God has established through Samuel, then there are no terms under which God will be free to change His mind about keeping this promise. He has given His word, He must fulfill it.

The promise is that He will deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines. This was a tall order. The Philistines were a warlike people. They liked a good battle. They were fierce fighters. They had repeatedly defeated Israel and everyone knew that they could do it again and again. Nevertheless, God has given His word. He will deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines. God does not indicate how He will do this. He only states that He will deliver the weak people of Israel from the powerful hand of the Philistines.

Even in this wonderful promise, there is an implication. It is that if, on the other hand, they do not fulfill these conditions, then God will not deliver them from the Philistines. This is a frightening thought because there were a number of people in Israel who would not really want to obey the conditions that God has presented through Samuel.

So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the LORD alone. I Samuel 7:4

This is a surprising development. There were many in Israel who would not want to make a total commitment to serve Jehovah alone. Nevertheless, the people heard the message of Samuel and removed the Baals and Ashtaroth. They were prepared to serve God alone. We must keep in mind that this involved more than just taking the wood and stone carvings out of their homes. It involved doing away with the adulterous way of life they had adopted from the Philistines. As indicated previously, the Philistines basically worshipped Baal, the male god of war. They also worshipped his consort, Ashtaroth, the goddess of fertility. The fact that they removed these idols and committed themselves to serve God alone is a sign of real repentance. They were getting rid of the evil of their past. They were committing themselves to worship only Jehovah.

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I Samuel 7:5-11 – The Philistines Attacked Israel: Jehovah Discomfited the Philistines

Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." I Samuel 7:5

This verse raises a number of questions. One must ask, why would Samuel ask that "all Israel" come together at Mizpah. Though Israel now had their ark of the Covenant returned, it did not mean that the threat of the Philistines had vanished. Indeed, from a military standpoint, the possibility of another attack by the Philistines was more probable now than ever. Because they were a warlike people, the Philistines would have a healthy regard for revenge; especially when they had suffered so much in their "apparent" victory. If Samuel brought the whole nation to Mizpah, then they were leaving themselves quite vulnerable before the Philistines.

The question remains, why would Samuel ask that all Israel go to Mizpah? He was in Ramah, which is apparently where his home was. Some would ask, because Shiloh was the place where the temple was, why not go there? We are not sure. It is possible that the city of Shiloh was still in the hands of the Philistines. We cannot be sure of this. It also is possible that Samuel wanted them to go to Mizpah because it would not as far for him to travel in his older age.

If one goes back to the book of Judges, you will remember that Israel had been gathered together at Mizpah when they were being punished for their sin against Jehovah. This was the situation where the Levites concubine was abused and died on the doorstep. Mizpah was a reminder of what happens when people fail to keep their agreements with their God. To tell all Israel to gather there again would certainly remind them of their previous experience there and the consequences of their previous failures.

Samuel told them to gather at Mizpah and he would pray for them. He was going to serve as their priest in this situation. The priestly ministry was essential when people had violated their covenant with God. We should keep in mind that Samuel was not of the priestly tribe. Nevertheless, God was going to hear his prayer on behalf of the people. This probably was essential because the priestly families had become as involved in the idolatry as the people were. For whatever reason, Samuel was the one who was going to seek the forgiveness of God on behalf of all the people.

And they gathered to Mizpah, 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 sons of Israel at Mizpah. I Samuel 7:6

There are differences of opinion among Hebrew scholars about the meaning of this verse. Some say that this describes a specific sacrifice of pouring out water before the Lord. Other scholars, however, look upon this as an acknowledgement that water was their most valuable commodity and they would use it as a gift to God in view of their sinful acts. We can be certain, however, that the people were of a mind to confess their sins before the Lord. They knew that they had not been faithful to God. They knew that they had suffered because of their disobedience and they wanted this to cease. Whenever people confess their sins in this manner, God hears and forgives their sin.

Observe, however, that the very next statement is that Samuel judged Israel at Mizpah. The word translated "judged" is "shaphat" (שָׁפַט) means "to pronounce sentence." It is to condemn or to rule. In some instances, it was used to convey the idea of "to reason." God had chosen Samuel to rule over His people through a number of means to control them in their proneness to sin.

Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. I Samuel 7:7

The Philistines were a warlike people. They enjoyed nothing more than a good battle. Add to this the fact that they had defeated Israel less than a year earlier, killing thousands of the soldiers of Israel. They had

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heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah and feared that this was the precursor to an attack. They responded immediately by preparing for battle against an enemy they were sure they could easily defeat.

The Israelites had a very short memory. In verse three, Samuel told them that if they would obey God, He would deliver them from the Philistines. It appears that they had begun to serve God alone and should have been at peace knowing that God would keep His word. Nevertheless, they were afraid that the Philistines would repeat their devastating victory over Israel.

Then the sons of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines." I Samuel 7:8

This is clear evidence of the inability of the Jews to really trust in Jehovah. Observe that the people are treating Samuel as their priest. He is being asked to petition God on their behalf. They did not think to pray for themselves. They did not call upon the Levitical priests, if there were any at this point, to pray for them. Rather, they called upon a member of the tribe of Ephraim to pray on their behalf. This gives us an impression of the way the people of Israel thought about Samuel.

In almost all instances, the name Old Testament authors used for God is significant in terms of the message being conveyed. In this verse, the author used the name "the LORD our God." In the Hebrew text, this is "YHWH Elohim," The use of this name places an emphasis on God as the merciful judge. This uses both the names Jehovah and Elohim. It also speaks of God as both eternal and all-powerful. In this particular instance, it appears that the author wants to stress both of these impressions.

And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the LORD; and Samuel cried to the LORD for Israel and the LORD answered him. I Samuel 7:9

If one reads this verse carefully, one wonders whether Samuel is the one who actually makes the sacrifice or if he is credited with making the sacrifice, but the actual sacrificing action was taken by a Levitical priest. The text is not helpful in this instance. If one looks at the way this is dealt with throughout the rest of I and II Samuel it is clear that there are a number of times when Samuel, though not a Levitical priest is the one who actually does the sacrificing. One would not be surprised if that were the case in this situation.

Observe that the text states that Samuel offered a "whole burnt offering". The whole burnt offering was offered when one was seeking forgiveness for sins. The sacrificial animal was totally consumed. Samuel was concerned about the approaching Philistines, but he was more concerned about the spiritual condition of the people of Israel.

Notice that in verse eight, the people requested that Samuel pray to "the LORD our God". However, when Samuel prayed, he addressed the "LORD." There is nothing wrong with this way to address God. It does, however, display the difference in the tension levels between Samuel and the rest of Israel. You may remember that in this book the text says, that "there was no frequent vision." The difference is obedience. Samuel was obedient and God answered him. The people of Israel were disobedient and the LORD did not answer them.

Observe also that the verse is concluded by the statement, "and the LORD answered him." This is in keeping with the way God has dealt with Samuel from the time when as a young lad he was instructed to convey the difficult message to Eli. God is going to not only use Samuel, but also give him credibility in the eyes of the people of Israel.

Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel. I Samuel 7:10

It is interesting that Samuel did not respond in military fashion – implementing emergency procedures. He had been preparing the sacrifice. He continued the sacrifice and petition for God to help His people. This

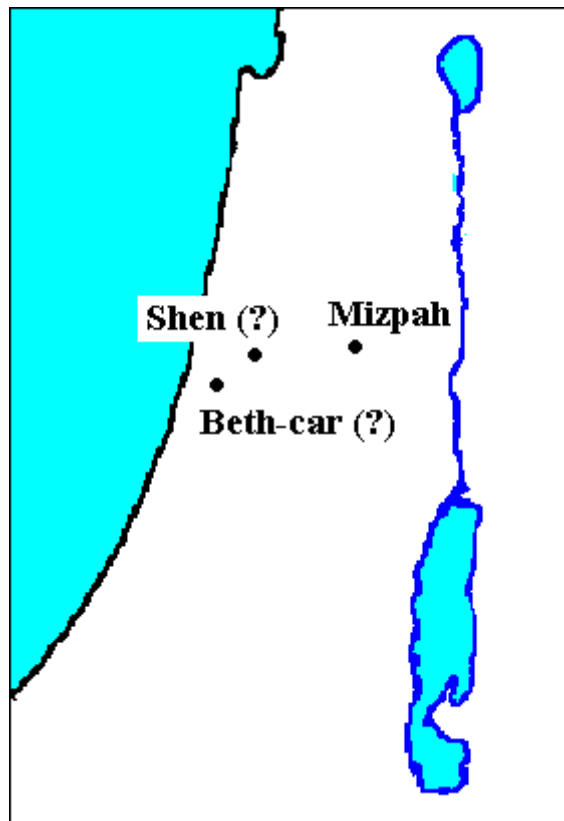
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is a picture of a crisis in the making. The Philistines were approaching for battle. Contact with this enemy seemed inevitable and Samuel is making a sacrifice.

While Samuel was making the sacrifice, the Philistines came within battle range. Notice that the author begins the next sentence with the word "but." This signals the approach of a serious contrast. The Philistines were approaching, but the Lord thundered with a great thunder. There are two very important factors at this point: One, thunder and rain are both serious problems when a battle is in process. The rain makes footing insecure. The thunder places an element of fear in the soldiers lest there be lightning. These men were carrying metal shields and this made them very vulnerable and hindered their ability to concentrate on the battle itself. The second factor is that the Philistines worshipped the god of thunder. Now, suddenly the god they worshipped seemed to make it difficult for them to concentrate on the task at hand – defeating the Israelites. To say that the Philistines were confused was to put it lightly. Add to this the fact that this thunder was very severe and added confusion to their fear. The result was that the Philistines were routed by the Israelites even though the Philistines had superior forces and had defeated this little army on more than one occasion. The fact that it was the thunder and not the strength of Israel's army that brought about this rout makes it impossible for Israel to claim that the victory came as a result of their great strength.

And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as below Beth-car. I Samuel 7:11

Though the army of Israel had earlier been defeated by the Philistines, the army of Israel chased after the Philistines and killed a large number of them. The army of Israel chased after the routed Philistines from Mizpah to an area below Beth-car.



As you can see on the map, this is a distance of 20 miles. In a battle where one army is severely routed, it is virtually impossible for the fleeing army to escape alive. To say the least, it was a new experience for Israel to be the one who chased after the fleeing enemy and killed them one by one. They knew a lot about being the ones who fled, but this was a new experience for them.

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I Samuel 7:12-14 – Samuel Set Up Ebenezer Stone Near Mizpah

Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." I Samuel 7:12

Many things were done with a stone in Israel. One reason was that it would prove to be much more permanent than other materials. Second, there was no shortage of stone anywhere in Israel. As you can see, we do not know the exact location of the city of Shen, but it has to be west of Mizpah and not too far south of Beth-Car. Samuel used this action as a way to remind Israel that this victory was not of their doing, even though they were the ones who killed the enemy soldiers. Had it not been for the thunder that confused the Philistines, the battle might well have gone in a different direction.

By naming the stone "Ebenezer", Samuel made it clear that this was clearly the LORD'S doing and not the efforts of the army of Israel. It is easy to see that Samuel wanted to be very careful to keep before the people a strong reminder that God was working on their behalf. It was a way of saying that when God's people obey His voice, He never fails them.

So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. I Samuel 7:13

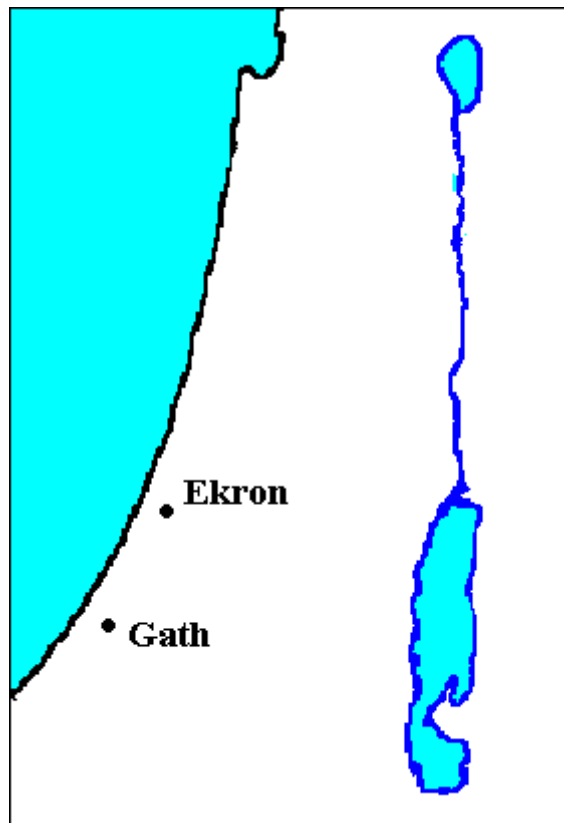
This is a summary statement about the battle. "The Philistines were subdued." This is a brief statement, but a shocking one for the people of Israel as well as the Philistines. No one would have predicted that the small army of Israel would be able to beat the warlike Philistines.

One can see the impact that this had on the leaders of the Philistines. These are people who loved battle. They always had been looking for someone to fight. Suddenly the Israelites defeated them and the effect was so strong that they did not come within the borders of Israel any more.

Observe the closing statement in this verse. "The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." This is one more picture of the way God protected the reputation of Samuel so that he would be able to convey God's message to His people and have that word accepted as divine. Again, it was not the great might of Israel. It was, rather, that Samuel was an obedient servant of God and that relationship was protected by God Himself.

And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. I Samuel 7:14

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It was not that the Philistines decided to leave Israel alone. The Philistines had taken a great deal of territory away from Israel. Now, all these cities and territories were being taken back. Again, it was more than the fact that the Philistines were losing territory they had taken in conquest. The fact that it was being taken away by the Israelites was painful evidence of the power of Jehovah over the gods of the Philistines. The Philistines were helpless to stop this drain of land.

We should notice the way the author wrote this verse. He said that the Philistines restored some of the conquered territory. He also said that in some cases the Israelites took these territories away from the Philistines.

Observe that the author did not say, "There was peace between Israel and the Philistines." He said, "There was peace between Israel and the Amorites." Immediately, one is forced to ask the question, why did the author say this, this way? We know that there were some Amorites in the area. We also know that they sometimes fought alongside the Philistines. We must keep in mind, however, that these were two separate enemies of Israel. In a sense, the author has said that the Amorites, also, were at peace with Israel. This, by the way, did not happen too often. The pagan enemies of Israel seemed to take turns initiating combat against the people of Israel.

I Samuel 7:15-17 – Samuel Judged Israel the Rest of His Life

Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. I Samuel 7:15

This is a summary statement. It is viewed with a degree of skepticism by some scholars. These scholars believe that Boaz, Ruth's second husband, was the last of the judges. There is another apparent problem. This verse indicates that "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." The problem is that during his life Samuel anointed two kings, Saul and David, and lived during the entire reign of Saul.

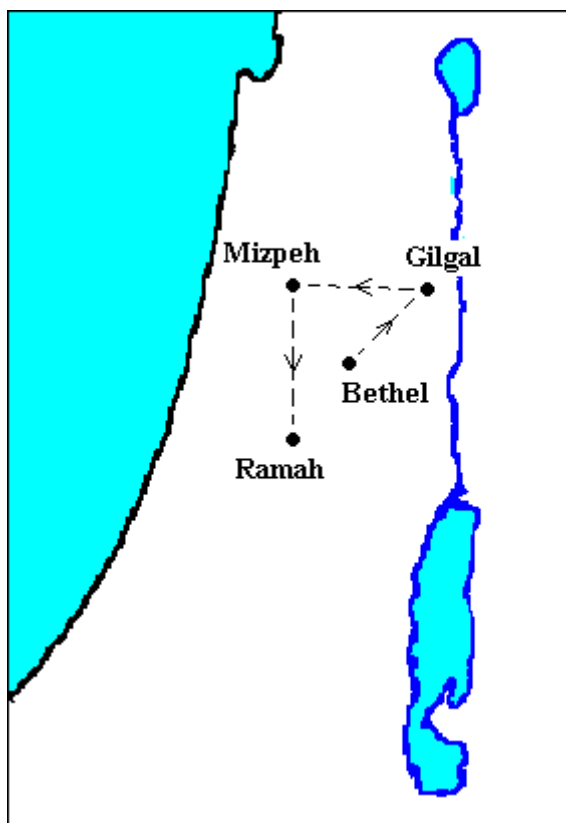
The fact is that both positions are true. Samuel did anoint the two kings. He did live during the entire reign of Saul and He did judge Israel all the days of his life. Being a judge and having a king at the same time

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is not impossible. When we come to chapter 13, you will see Saul being king and Samuel functioning as the judge in Israel.

This summary sounds as though it is almost the end of Samuel's life and ministry. We know that is not true. This must cause one to ask the question, then why would the author use such a summary? We do not know the total answer. We can observe from the text that this comes just following some very successful events in the life of Israel. Israel had been soundly defeated and lost the ark of the Covenant. God had devastated the Philistines so that they were eager to return the ark. Israel had defeated the Philistine army and regained the lands that had been taken away by the Philistines. This is probably the reason the author used such a summary statement at this point.

And he used to go annually on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. I Samuel 7:16



We must keep in mind that at this time, Samuel was getting old. To make the trip, in this mountainous area, would not be an easy task to say the least. These three locations were major cities in Israel. The people of Israel would come to these cities to meet with Samuel. This was a bit like the traveling judge in the American West. Samuel was used by God to be the spiritual leader of the nation. As you look at the map, you will notice that on each leg of the journey, he must crisscross the mountain that runs north to south through most of the land of Israel. This was a way to give spiritual counsel to the people who for some time had strayed from the worship of God. Again, in some instances, there were problems that developed within communities. In this instance, Samuel served in much the same capacity that Moses served when he was the leader of Israel.

If you review chapter one and compare/contrast it with 7:15, 16, you will see a very important change in the religious life of the people of Israel. In chapter one, you have a single place of worship to which the people would come to worship. Here, Samuel went to these three places to conduct the services of worship. He still performed the ministry of a priest making sacrifices on behalf of the people.

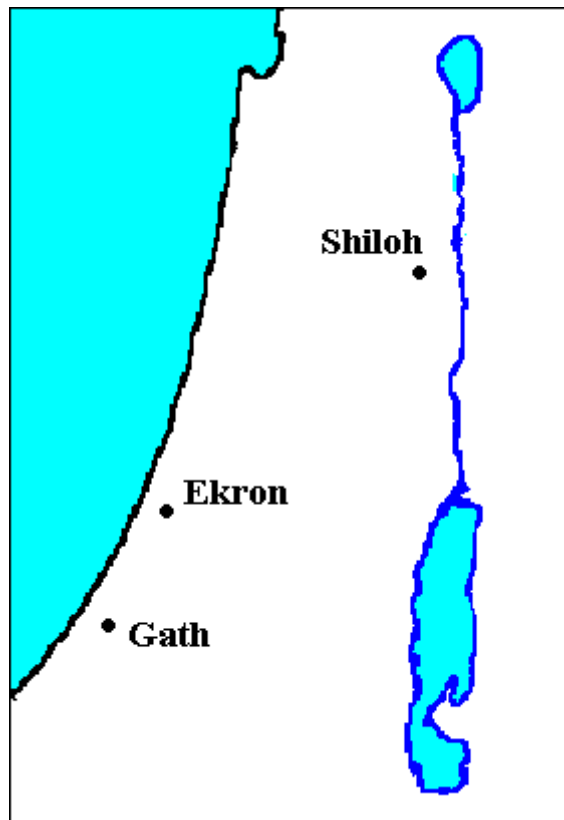
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Then his return was to Ramah, for his house was there, and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar to the LORD. I Samuel 7:17

Some might wonder why Samuel lived in Ramah when the place of worship had been, for a long time, in Shiloh. We must keep in mind that when the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Israel, it was not taken to Shiloh and the tabernacle/temple worship was not reinstated. No reason is given for this fact. It may be that when the Philistines took the Ark, they also destroyed the place of worship. Whatever the reason, Samuel lived in Ramah, the city of his birth. He was able to perform the duties of the judge of Israel while living in that place. If you look at the location of the city, you will note that it is on the line between Israel and Judah. This was a strategic move on the part of Samuel.

Observe that the text also states that Samuel "built there an altar to the LORD." It is doubtful if he would build an altar to the Lord there if there was a place of worship at Shiloh. Also, it is a clear indication that Samuel was determined to reestablish the worship of God as the priority of the people of Israel. We don't know exactly how much time has elapsed since the ark of the Covenant had been captured. One suspects that it is a bit more than it would appear. There is yet one other consideration. We have been told that the ark of the Covenant was returned to Israel. We have not been told, however, that the city of Shiloh was returned. The closest thing to such an announcement was in 7:14 where it said

And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. I Samuel 7:14 (emphasis mine)



This may include the city of Shiloh, but that is doubtful. If you look at the map, the text mentions the cities from Ekron to Gath. Shiloh is not located in that vicinity. It may be that Shiloh was still in Philistine hands. One wonders what the people from the extreme north and south of the country did in order to participate in the annual sacrifices. We do not know for sure. It may well be that these people were still worshipping the idols of their neighbors, but that is not stated in the text.

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Samuel, though he had weaknesses, was a man committed to placing his trust in the LORD and not in the forces of Israel. His establishment of the rock "Ebenezer" and the building an altar to the LORD in Ramah is evidence of that attitude on his part. We must keep in mind that when Samuel became the spiritual force in Israel, much of the nation was worshipping the idols of their pagan neighbors. Throughout his life, Samuel increasingly drew the people back to the worship of God and God blessed his efforts with peace and safety.

Conclusion

There is a thread of truth that runs throughout this entire chapter. There are a number of places in the text that highlight this for us. Here are a few:

1. God always brings people to a crossroads of obedience. They must choose to obey or disobey. 7:3
2. When one chooses to obey, count on it, a test will be given. 7:7
3. God will deliver His obedient ones in His own way, which is often quiet and unassuming. Some would call it coincidental. 7:10
4. Samuel's help was firm in the fact that he knew whence his help came. 7:12
5. God will do miracles on behalf of those who obey. 7:13, 14

The issue is that God proclaims in advance, He blesses the obedient and punishes the disobedient. Nevertheless, we must make a choice. I must look at every decision that confronts me with this in mind. It is what Jesus meant, in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

We sometimes feel alone and abandoned. That, of course, is never true, but it feels that way. We wonder why it seems that our prayers are not answered; miracles just do not seem to happen in our lives. One suspects it has everything to do with the kinds of choices we make.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 8

ISRAEL DEMANDED A KING – I SAMUEL 8:1 – 22

1. We know that there are four paragraphs in the eighth chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

8:1-3	
8:4-9	
8:10-18	
8:19-22	

2. In I Samuel 8:1-3, Samuel appointed his sons to be judges, but they were evil.
- In 8:1,2, the author gave us background information on Samuel's two sons. What hint, if any, do you see concerning their character in these two verses?
 - In 8:3, the author makes three accusations against Samuel's two sons.
 - What are the three accusations?
 - What does the author accomplish by these accusations?
 - Describe what the author meant by each of the three accusations.
 - Read verse three in the light of verse two. What did you learn?
3. In I Samuel 8:4-9, Israel's elders demanded a king be anointed.
- In 8:4, all the elders of Israel gathered to meet with Samuel about their judges.
 - Study this verse very carefully.
 - What does this verse tell you about conditions?
 - In 8:5, all the elders of Israel started their coordinated complaint to Samuel.
 - What is the basis of their complaint?
 - Explain how the demand they made would solve the problem they presented?
 - How would you evaluate the validity of their complaint?
 - Can you think of any other solution to the problem they presented?
 - In 8:6, Samuel reacted to the demands of the elders. Samuel was obviously upset by this demand. Think of every possible reason this would upset Samuel.
 - In 8:7, the LORD responded to Samuel's prayer.
 - If you were Samuel, how would you feel when you heard the LORD say this?
 - Think carefully about what the LORD said to Samuel. What was the LORD really saying?
 - In 8:8, the LORD explained the actions of the elders.
 - What does Egypt have to do with this demand?
 - The LORD characterized the demand of the elders.
 - What does this verse tell you about the LORD?
 - Why would these two commands be important for Samuel to do?
4. In I Samuel 8:10-18, Samuel obeyed the two commands of the LORD.
- In 8:10, Samuel obeyed the LORD'S commands. Put yourself in Samuel's position. We know that Samuel was clear that God did not want Israel to have a king. Samuel did not want Israel to have a king. How would he feel as he obeyed this difficult command?
 - Summarize the message, in 8:11, of how a king will run the country.
 - Summarize the message, in 8:12, of how the king will run the country.
 - Summarize the message, in 8:13, of how the king will run the country.
 - Summarize the message, in 8:14, of how the king will run the country.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

- f. Summarize the message, in 8:15, of how the king will run the country.
 - g. Summarize the message, in 8:16, of how the king will run the country.
 - h. Summarize the message, in 8:17, of how the king will run the country.
 - i. Summarize the message, in 8:18, of how the LORD will deal with the cry of the people who are determined to have a king.
 - j. Review the summaries you made of this paragraph. In one sentence, indicate what will happen when Israel has a king.
5. In I Samuel 8:19-22 – Samuel complied with the people’s demand for a king.
- a. In 8:19, the author reported the elders response to the message the LORD instructed Samuel to give to them.
 - 1) What did they say?
 - 2) What does this mean?
 - b. The elders made three announcements in 8:20.
 - 1) What are these announcements?
 - 2) What do these announcements constitute?
 - c. In 8:21, Samuel reported the people’s reply to the message he conveyed. How would you describe the tone expressed in this verse?
 - d. In 8:22, the LORD gave Samuel additional instructions concerning the demand for a king.
 - 1) Compare the message the LORD gave Samuel in this verse with what He said in 8:9. What did you discover?
 - 2) How carefully did Samuel obey the command of the LORD given him in 8:22?
 - 3) Again, describe the tone you discern in this verse.
6. Review your study of this chapter.
- a. Record the major theme(s) you discover in the chapter.
 - b. What did you learn about the people of God?
 - c. What did you learn about yourself?
 - d. How will you use this information?

LESSON 8

ISRAEL DEMANDED A KING – I SAMUEL 8:1 – 22

In the eighth chapter of I Samuel there are four paragraphs. You will find a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

8:1-3	Samuel's Sons Were Evil Judges
8:4-9	The Elders Demanded A King
8:10-18	Samuel Explained What A King Would Do
8:19-22	People Insisted on a King: Samuel Complied

I Samuel 8:1-3 – Samuel's sons were evil judges

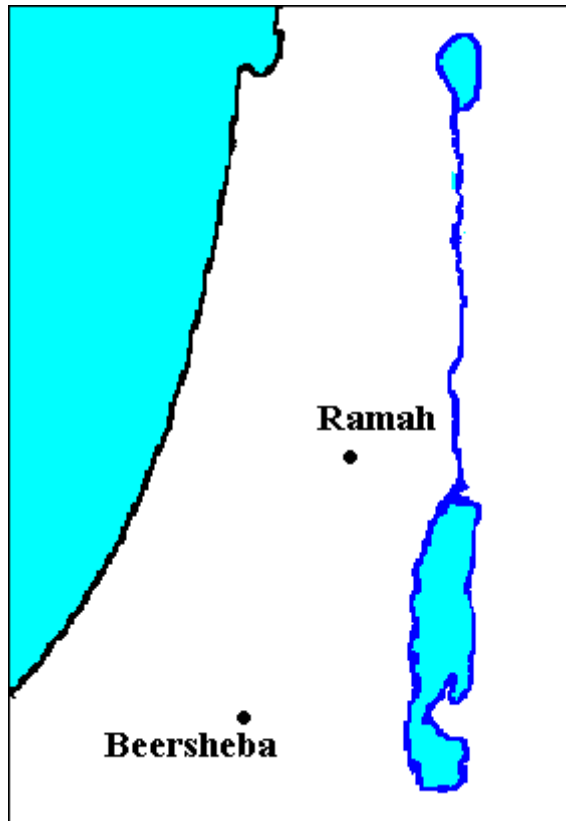
And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. I Samuel 8:1

Samuel had a double assignment. He was the judge over all Israel. Many people believe that he was the very last judge God anointed over His people. Though there was a whole tribe of eligible Levites, still Samuel, an Ephraimite, was also the high priest over all Israel. In his younger years, this would not be a problem for Samuel. As Samuel increased in age, the weight of these dual responsibilities became increasingly too difficult for him. In that day and culture, a son was expected to follow in his father's footsteps. Though God accepted Samuel, an Ephraimite, as a priest; He would not accept Samuel's sons as priests serving before the LORD. Samuel's sons could not become priests, but they could offer him some relief by becoming judges.

Now the name of his first-born was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba. I Samuel 8:2

The author paused in this story to remind us of the names Samuel had given his two sons. The first son was named "Joel" which means, "The LORD is God." The second son's name was Abijah. This name means "the LORD is my Father." Coincidentally, this is hardly the way we think of Samuel's sons.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



Observe that Samuel appointed his sons to be "judges" not "priests." They were assigned to be judges in Beersheba. As you can see on this map, this is in the southern most part of Israel. It was at least 50 miles from Samuel's home in Ramah.

His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice. I Samuel 8:3

"His sons, however, did not walk in his ways"

There is a stark contrast between Samuel and his sons. In this statement, the author gave us some clear information.

1. "Walk in his ways" – These words indicate that Samuel had a very observable way of life. This is the standard against which the way of life of others will be measured. The text implies that Samuel's way of life was positive and righteous.
2. It also indicates that his sons chose a way of life which was much different from Samuel's in a negative way.

The word "but" indicates that the author will describe a way of life that is vastly different from what one sees in the life of Samuel.

"But turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice"

The author made three accusations against Samuel's sons.

1. **"They "turned aside after dishonest gain"** – The word translated "turned aside" is "natah" (נָטָה) and means "to stretch out," "to reach out for something." It is a picture of someone doing everything possible to get something. This is an apt picture.

The word translated "dishonest gain" is "betsa" (בִּצְעָה) and describes "money" or "goods." The intent in most instances where this word was used was that this is dishonest. An illustration of this would be to take actions designed to benefit oneself rather than serve the benefit of the people whom one should be serving.

ISRAEL DEMANDED A KING

2. **"Took bribes"** – The word translated "took" is "laqach" (לָקַח) and means "to receive something." The special intent of this particular word, however, is a description of how it is received. One might characterize it as "to seize," "to take firmly." It is one thing to receive something. It is quite another to urge a person on to provide the bribe.

The word translated "bribes" is "shachad" (שָׁחַד) and represents gifts or presents, whether solicited or not. These gifts are intended to influence a person of power to do something favorable for the donor that he might not otherwise do.

3. **"Perverted justice"** – The word translated "perverted" is the same word the author used in the first accusation "turned aside" – natah" (נָטָה). It is "to stretch," "to wrest the law from its original intent in order to result in the benefit of a benefactor"

The word translated "justice" is mishpat (מִשְׁפָּט) and identifies "a decision," "a verdict." Samuel's sons were judges. They would be constantly rendering decisions regarding offenses. When justice is perverted, it is never an accident. It is always motivated by personal gain or ideological persuasion. That is exactly what they were doing. It would be hard to imagine two ways of living that are more divergent than those of Samuel and his sons.

I Samuel 8:4-9 – The Elders demanded a king

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; I Samuel 8:4

The elders of Israel were charged with the leadership of Israel under the guidance of Samuel. When people had problems or complaints, they took up these issues with the Elder in their area. It is apparent that there were a lot of people who had a complaint about Samuel's sons. This causes one to wonder why there was so much trouble and it either did not reach Samuel or he just did not do anything about it. The fact that all of the elders came indicates that this is an issue that must be dealt with firmly. It was the job of the elders to care for difficult problems such as this.

And they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." I Samuel 8:5

The mission of the elders had more in mind than to just complain about the conduct of Samuel's sons. It is clear that they had agreed on a strategy in advance. They began by reminding Samuel that he had grown very old. This, of course, was indisputable. Second, they reminded Samuel that his sons do not walk in his ways. This is a nice way to say that they were exceedingly corrupt. Third, they demanded that he appoint them a king. If you study this strategy, you will note that the first two follow each other naturally. The demand, however, does not necessarily follow. The desire to have a king was not new with the people of Israel. It would naturally follow that they insist that Samuel either force his sons to change or appoint different judges. The truth was that they wanted a king very badly and this appeared to be an opportune situation to facilitate their burning desire. There is no doubt that the actions of Samuel's sons were causing great difficulty for the people of Israel. There is also no doubt that it would only get much worse as time went on.

They finally got around to their real motive for coming to Samuel in the first place. They said, "Appoint a king to judge us LIKE ALL THE NATIONS." Their real motive was that they did not want a theocracy as God intended. They wanted a situation that would encourage their pride like the other nations had. They did not want to feel inferior to the other nations. The ceremony and grandeur of a king had great appeal for Israel. They wanted to trust in man rather than trust in God.

But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. I Samuel 8:6

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The use of the word "but" indicates that there is a contrast between what the elders wanted and what Samuel thought was in their best interest. We know Samuel's reaction to the request for a king, but we do not know the full reason behind his displeasure. First, Samuel would object to their demand because he knew that God wanted them to be under a theocracy, not a monarchy. There could also be the fact that it would mean the end of his rule over Israel. We cannot be sure that this was a consideration, but it could have been. There is also the possibility that Samuel would not want to see his sons fail and be removed from their position.

Notice what else Samuel did. "Samuel prayed to the LORD." He did not strategize. He did not mount a campaign to get common people to disagree with this move. He could have done so and perhaps successfully. He rather prayed to God about the dilemma. The situation was critical. It was as disobedient as the worship of Baal.

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. I Samuel 8:7

One suspects that this was a bit of a shock for Samuel. He certainly would have been prepared for God to take drastic action against the demands of the Elders. It was clear to Samuel that God wanted Israel to live under a theocracy. Now, Jehovah told him to listen to the voice of the people. One suspects that Samuel might wonder what was happening. Had God changed His mind? Why would God want them to have a king when He had repeatedly refused to grant this request.

The LORD cut right to the heart of the issue. It was not a rejection of the leadership of Samuel. It certainly grew out of the discontent over the actions of Samuel's sons, but at the root, it was a rejection of the rule of God and His determination that the people of Israel be a holy people unto Him. The people of Israel did not want to follow God. They wanted to follow the lead of the pagan nations.

Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day-- in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods-- so they are doing to you also. I Samuel 8:8

In this verse, the LORD put the issue into perspective. He pointed to the way the people had dealt with Him ever since they were delivered from Egypt. All during this time the people had been resisting and rejecting the leadership of God as well as the people God had placed over them.

In this verse, God also dealt with the fact that Samuel was feeling some of the rejection of his leadership and oversight of the nation. Interestingly, the LORD never mentioned the terrible things that Samuel's sons were doing. He only dealt with the misguided demands of the elders. All of the rejection of Israel grew out of and was part of their decision to reject God and worship Baal and Ashtaroah. The LORD was saying to Samuel, "you are just sharing the rejection I have experienced ever since I released them from Egypt."

Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them." I Samuel 8:9

Samuel had to be really shocked to hear the LORD say this. The LORD gave Samuel two instructions. First, he was to listen to the voices of the elders. This is more than just hearing what they said. He was to allow this to be done even though it was against his better judgment and he knew that God did not want it either. Second, he was to warn the people about what it would be like to have a king. From what they considered, having a king would be beautiful pomp and circumstance. They overlooked the ridiculous demands a king would make on behalf of his image and comfort.

I Samuel 8:10-18 – Samuel explained what a king would do

So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. I Samuel 8:10

ISRAEL DEMANDED A KING

Despite his own convictions, Samuel obeyed the instruction of the LORD. This had to be a very difficult thing for Samuel to do. Everyone knew that Samuel did not favor what he had to say on behalf of the LORD. They had heard Samuel's response to this request on repeated occasions. The elders had to be shocked to hear Samuel agree that they could have a king.

The part that Samuel did favor was that this was part of the rejection that they practiced against the LORD ever since He delivered them out of the land of Egypt.

And he said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. I Samuel 8:11

We must understand clearly the message that the LORD gave Samuel to convey to the elders. The Lord was not saying that a king would invent something new called "war" for Israel. Israel had experienced wars and battles repeatedly in recent months. If anything, a king, could organize such an endeavor with great efficiency.

The king will focus his attention around himself and not on the best interests of the people. Samuel reminded the people that the king would take their sons and place them over his chariots and their care. Their family members would be taking care of the grandeur of the king rather than looking after the best interests of the family. The whole focus of Israel will center around the king. If they thought for a minute, they would realize that this was a major problem that they would face if they had a king. They had seen it in the neighboring countries on all sides.

And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. I Samuel 8:12

The operative word in this verse is "for himself." His purpose was to establish his army, not the army of Israel. He would take their people to care for his farm and he would reap the benefits, not the workers. They would be busy making weapons for his army, not Israel's army. They would equip HIS army, not Israel's. The whole focus of his every decision would be, how will this benefit me?

Samuel chose some very effective illustrations to drive home his message. A king would invent new positions for which the people would pay. He would build up the army, not because they were threatened, but because it would make him look more powerful. Israel knew that this is exactly what the other kings did in every country. At the expense of the people, the king would instruct people to plow his fields and harvest his crops while the people had to pay for this and then do their own work as well. Ever since they came from Egypt, God protected them and they did not have to pay tax in any form to care for this problem. With a king, that certainly would change. The king would want his army to not only be well equipped, but would also want them to be the smartest in appearance of any military force.

And he will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. I Samuel 8:14

This was subtle, but quite accurate. We must keep in mind that Israel is a very small place. Most farmers had hardly enough land to get enough to feed and care for their families. If the king took land, it would be the very best land in the whole country. They knew that this is what Pharaoh did in Egypt. If the king took any land, it would make it just that much harder for them to survive. The message that Samuel relished was that the king would impoverish them and give them little or nothing in return.

He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants. I Samuel 8:15

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

Taxation was something that Israel knew a great deal about. Whenever they were defeated in battle, there would immediately be levied a heavy tribute to be paid to the conquering king. The tenth part of their seed was a form of taxation. The things that Samuel was saying were not exaggerations. If anything, he was understating the facts and they were keenly aware of it. Their taxation was always more than the ten percent. The tragedy was that the people did not have even the ten percent to give to the king and they knew it.

He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys, and use them for his work. I Samuel 8:16

Samuel had to be enjoying this part of his obedience to the instruction of the LORD. He continued to describe just what having a king would cost them. The message is simple. The government exists for the benefit of the king. This was a subtle statement. Though the elders probably had servants, they all knew that the bulk of the people they served did not have any servants that a king could take away from them. This should give the elders pause, but they did not want to listen.

He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants. I Samuel 8:17

Samuel has raised the intensity of his message. The people of Israel knew all about being servants. These people had not been servants in Egypt, but their ancestors had been and the word was passed down through the family. Servanthood is not nice. Again, this should have given the elders pause, but it did not.

Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day." I Samuel 8:18

Samuel has raised the warning another notch. This is a far more frightening statement than the previous ones. Their pain would increase until they cried to the LORD for deliverance from the very king that they had asked.

This is a proper warning. It is one thing to suffer so much that you cry out to God. It is quite another thing to know in advance that God would not hear their cry when He had thoroughly warned them well in advance and on repeated occasions. They rejected the LORD as their ruler and chose for themselves a king. God allows us freedom to obey or disobey. He also allows us the consequences of our choices and actions.

I Samuel 8:19-22 – The people insisted on a king: Samuel complied

Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us, I Samuel 8:19

This is a familiar situation. It is like saying, "my mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts." They were paying absolutely no attention to the warning that Samuel delivered to them. The benefit of this warning is that when they get into difficulty and come crying to the LORD to solve their problem, they cannot say they were not warned. They rejected God's warning as though it had never been given.

That we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles. " I Samuel 8:20

In this response, the elders clearly identified their own motivation. They wanted to be like all the other nations. This is a very human trait. They did not want to be different. There is an element of pride involved. There is also the feeling that they could not bear to stand alone because they did not have that much self confidence.

There is another element in their answer. They wanted a king who would fight their battles. Now the LORD had done an excellent job of fighting on their behalf, but there was no room in this for them to express their pride in themselves and their ruler. It was just something that God did, and did very well.

Now after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the Lord's hearing. I Samuel 8:21

ISRAEL DEMANDED A KING

Samuel could not hide his disappointment. There is a sense of defeat in the tone of this verse. It was apparently more than Samuel could handle without some evidence of his feelings. He had to tell God when he knew that God had heard it all. Somehow, saying the words; knowing that the LORD knows not only what we feel, but why we feel that way takes away some of the intense pain and anxiety that these experiences bring to us.

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice, and appoint them a king." So Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city." I Samuel 8:22

In verses 21 and 22, there is a sense of pain that cannot be hidden. It is the pain of rejection being shared. The LORD was rejected, but His mercy continued to reach out to try to protect the people from their own choices. Some would look at this and see that God was eager to punish their disobedience even though they were deserving of all that God allowed to come to them. When the LORD told Samuel to listen to the things the people had to say, He was not saying He agreed with their sentiment. He was saying that He protected their right to make that wrong choice if they felt they must.

There is a strong contrast here. The people are very confrontive in their disobedience and rejection. Samuel, on the other hand, does exactly as the LORD commanded, no matter how much it hurts.

Observe, that in this verse, the LORD instructed Samuel, "Appoint them a king." Later in the verse, Samuel said to the elders, "Go every man to his city." There is no statement that Samuel appointed a king for the people of Israel. The question surfaces, Did Samuel really obey the instructions of the LORD? The text is not clear. It appears that in telling the elders, "Go every man to his city," Samuel was in fact saying that a king would be appointed. This had to be one of the greatest disappointments of Samuel's entire ministry.

Conclusion

This chapter is a study in God's dealings with human sin. We talk a lot about God's patience and forgiveness. We do not talk as much about the effect our ongoing rebellion has upon God. In this chapter there is evidence of God's lonely pain at our rejection of His rule in our lives. As He comforts and counsels Samuel, you can feel the pain of rejection so lovingly endured.

God lovingly holds us to the consequences of our knowing choices as firmly as He lovingly forgives our sin and shows limitless mercy upon our failures.

It is surprising to see just how oblivious people can be to the warnings God gives them. It is most obvious in the actions of the elders. It is just as true in our lives, if we pause to think about it.

The opportunity to pause and reflect upon just how God manages the grief our sin causes Him fills one with great awe and gratitude that God can be so patient and long suffering.

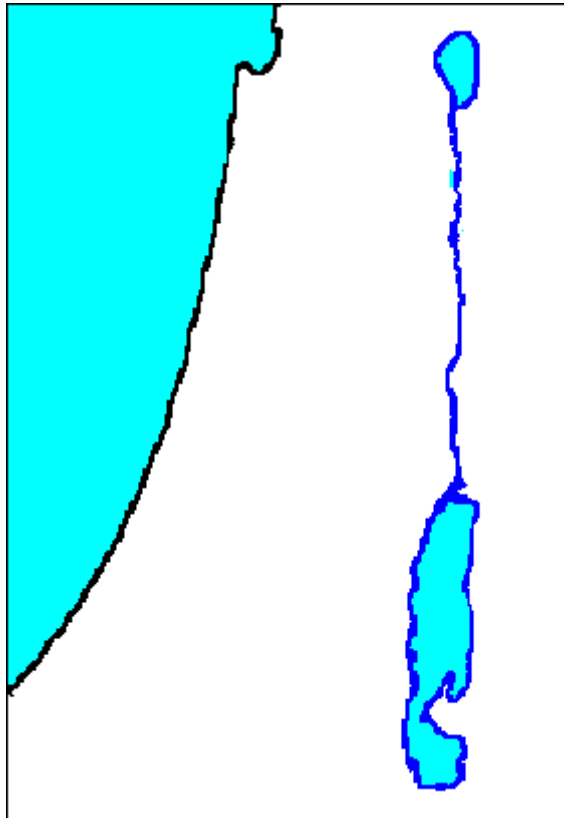
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9

SAUL MEETS SAMUEL – 1 Samuel 9:1 – 27

1. There are six paragraphs in 1 Samuel chapter nine. There is a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

9:1-4	
9:5-10	
9:11-14	
9:15-21	
9:22-24	
9:25-27	

2. In 1 Samuel 9:1-4, Saul was sent to find his father's asses.
- In 9:1, the author described Saul's lineage.
 - What information can we gain from this verse?
 - Was it Kish or Ephiah who was, "A mighty man of valor"?
 - Why would the designation of an ancestor as "a mighty man of valor" be important when writing about Saul?
 - What problem(s) do you see with Saul becoming king of Israel?
 - In 9:2, the author described Saul.
 - What did he say about Saul?
 - Why is this important?
 - In 9:3, there are two pieces of information that describe for us the economic condition of Kish.
 - What are these pieces of information?
 - What do they tell you?



THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

- d. In 9:4, the author described Saul's search for his father's donkeys. On this map. Trace Saul's search for the animals.
3. In I Samuel 9:5-10, Saul and his servant went to see the prophet.
 - a. In 9:5, The servant made a suggestion about their trip.
 - 1) What did he suggest?
 - 2) Why did he suggest this?
 - b. In 9:6, the servant suggested the possibility of visiting "the man of God" in Ramah.
 - 1) What did the servant say about this man?
 - 2) What did this mean?
 - c. In 9:7, Saul asked his servant two questions.
 - 1) What does Saul suggest by his first question?
 - 2) Think about the second question. What problem, if any, does it raise In your mind?
 - d. In 9:8, the servant made a shocking statement.
 - 1) What is that shocking statement?
 - 2) Why is it so shocking?
 - e. In 9:9, the author makes a parenthetic statement. Why would it be necessary to include this information?
 - f. Originally, it was the servant who informed Saul that the prophet lived near where they were. In 9:10, however, it was Saul who said, "Let us go." Why would this be?
4. In I Samuel 9:11-14, Saul got directions to find the prophet.
 - a. In 9:11, the author gave us a hint about the time of day when this took place. Study the text carefully and indicate when you feel this took place.
 - b. In 9:12, the young women responded to Saul's request for information. There is a serious question raised by the answer the young women gave. What is it?
 - c. In 9:13, the young women continued their response to Saul's request. In this verse the young women described what happens when a sacrifice is made. Since Saul is obviously a Jew, why would they bother to explain this?
5. In I Samuel 9:15-21, Saul met with Samuel
 - a. In 9:15-17, God told Samuel of Saul's coming the next day. In view of the fact that Samuel did not want Israel to have a king; the fact that God did not want Israel to have a king: how do you think Samuel would feel receiving these messages?
 - b. In 9:18, Saul approached Samuel. Study this meeting. What did you learn?
 - c. In 9:19, Samuel responded to Saul's inquiry.
 - 1) Think carefully about the things Samuel said. What do they tell you?
 - 2) What do these statements mean?
 - d. In 9:20, Samuel told Saul about the donkeys.
 - 1) When did Saul tell Samuel about the donkeys?
 - 2) If you were Saul, what would you be thinking?
 - 3) In the closing sentence of this verse, Samuel made an unusual statement. What did he mean?
 - e. In 9:21, Saul responded with two questions.
 - 1) What are the questions?
 - 2) What was Saul saying?
6. In I Samuel 9:22-24, Saul ate with Samuel.
 - a. In 9:22, Samuel brought Saul to the feast.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9

- 1) What symbolic thing did Samuel do?
 - 2) What did this symbolic act mean?
 - b. In 9:23, Samuel gave the cook some instructions.
 - 1) What were Samuel's instructions?
 - 2) What did these instructions mean?
 - 3) If you were the cook, what would you be thinking?
 - 4) If you were Saul, what would you be thinking?
 - c. In 9:24, Samuel addressed Saul in a special way.
 - 1) What did Samuel say?
 - 2) What did this mean?
7. In I Samuel 9:25-27, Samuel prepared to give Saul God's message.
- a. In 9:25, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof.
 - 1) What, if anything, does this signify?
 - 2) What would this fact say to Saul?
 - b. In 9:26, Samuel woke Saul up early.
 - 1) What does Samuel mean by, "That I may send you away"?
 - 2) Why did they have to go out into the street?
 - c. In 9:27, Samuel gave Saul some instructions.
 - 1) What was that?
 - 2) Why would this be necessary?
8. Review your study of chapter nine.
- a. What does this chapter have to say about the servant's spiritual life?
 - b. What does this chapter have to say about Saul's spiritual life?
 - c. What does the study of this chapter tell you about the nature of God?
 - c. How will this awareness affect your walk with God?

LESSON 9

SAUL MEETS SAMUEL – I SAMUEL 9:1 – 27

In the ninth chapter of I Samuel, there are six paragraphs. You will find a summary of each paragraph on the following table.

9:1-4	Saul Sent To Find Father's Donkeys
9:5-10	Saul and Servant Went To See The Prophet
9:11-14	Saul Received Directions To Find The Prophet
9:15-21	Saul Met Samuel
9:22-24	Saul Ate With Samuel
9:25-27	

I Samuel 9:1-4 – Saul Sent To Find Father's Asses

Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a Benjamite, a mighty man of valor. I Samuel 9:1

In this verse the author was establishing the lineage of the first king of Israel. There are some important pieces of information in this statement. First, Saul came from the tribe of Benjamin. This is interesting because the tribe of Benjamin was not the most highly respected of the 12 tribes. Among the children of Jacob, Benjamin, his youngest, was despised by most everyone in the family except his real brother Joseph.

When Jacob prophesied about his sons, there was no mention of the lineage of Benjamin being the king of Israel. Jacob did prophecy about the future of Judah.

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Genesis 49:10

Nevertheless, God instructed Samuel to anoint Saul to be the first king of Israel. God assured Samuel that David's line would be the lineage of the kings of Israel. That is what happened and is still Israel's understanding today. The meaning of the word "Shiloh" is a question over which interpreters differ. Some interpreters suggest that this is a specific historical event. Most, however, hold that it is a way of expressing eternity.

Observe, in verse one, the author spoke of either Kish or Aphiah as being "a mighty man of valor." The text is not clear concerning which one the author had in mind. You can find experts who will favor one or the other. The truth is that the text is not clear. The part that is clear is that someone in that family was noted for his valor and this would have a great impact on the whole family. This factor meant a great deal in that time and culture. People would expect this to be a family trait. It may or may not be, but that would be the expectation. There would necessarily be a level of respect and honor for the succeeding generations, especially if it was Kish of whom they were thinking. One can readily understand the confusion that Samuel would experience at hearing the instructions of the LORD.

And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people. I Samuel 9:2

One of the things that suggest that this was said of Kish is that immediately following the "mighty man of valor" statement, it speaks of Saul, the son of Kish. In this verse, the author made three statements about Saul.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

1. **Choice** – The word translated "choice" is batur (בָּחֹרֶת). It means "choice," "selected." It was used to describe a perfect physical specimen. We might say, the best of the best. It was the way people of that day identified a young man in the prime of his physical power.
2. **Handsome** – The word translated "handsome" is "tov" (טוֹב). The use of the word "handsome" is an interpretation more than a translation. It is the most common word to identify something or some one who is "good." It described something pleasant or excellent. This word was not often used in the feminine form to describe a woman, but was commonly used to describe outstanding masculine physical appearance.
3. **Tall** – Observe that it does not say that he was just taller than the other Jewish people. He was head and shoulders taller than other people in his country. This was a substantial advantage for Saul. The Jewish people were characteristically very short. They were, in fact, shorter than most of their neighbors. To speak of someone who was head and shoulders taller than the other people was very noteworthy. The people took special notice of anyone who was taller than those around him. That was the advantage that Saul had.

Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to his son Saul, "Take now with you one of the servants, and arise, go search for the donkeys." I Samuel 9:3

The author's mention of the donkeys is most significant. We must keep in mind that there was probably no national monetary system in Israel at that time. Then, as now, places that had no hard currency conducted business in one of three different ways.

1. They would use the currency of more substantial nations as their own. (there are many countries who now use American dollars as their currency.)
2. They often used precious metals (gold or silver) or items of great value as currency.
3. They would use animals as currency. They might use a combination of any of these possibilities. There is a strict process for these transactions.
 - a. Day laborers had no animals, but worked each day to buy food for that night.
 - b. When they had enough food, they would buy an animal- a lamb. This lamb would mature and give birth to another lamb.
 - c. As the herd grew, they would soon have too many sheep for the grazing land available to them.
 - d. They would then sell some of the sheep and buy a more expensive animal – a goat.
 - e. Eventually there would be too many goats and they would have to sell several goats and buy a calf.
 - f. As the cattle herd grew, they would sell several and buy a donkey.
 - g. As the donkey herd grew, they would sell several and buy a camel.

Saul's father, Kish, had several donkeys. This means that he was a very wealthy man. This image is further supported by the fact that there were several servants in this household. Only the very wealthy could afford to buy servants. Every part of this verse suggests unusual wealth in the family.

And he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them. I Samuel 9:4

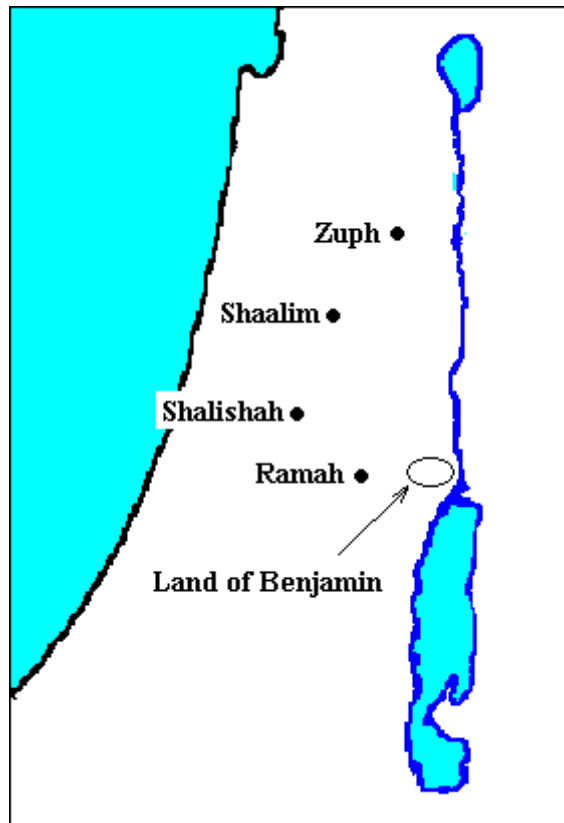
This was a trip that covered at least two days, if not more. It is quite surprising that they would allow such valuable animals to be out of sight for a time lengthy enough to travel this great distance. It would be a bit like leaving your wallet on a lunch counter and not going back to retrieve it for several days.

We should also keep in mind that this was an area that was more hilly and mountainous than most of Israel. This is another reason for greater concern.

SAUL MEETS SAMUEL

I Samuel 9:5-10 – Saul and Servant Went To See The Prophet

*When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, and let us return, lest my father cease to be concerned about the donkeys and become anxious for us."
I Samuel 9:5*



As you can see on this map, this was a very extensive search. It was also very unusual for the animals to be able to travel so far before they would go looking for them. The distance they traveled was probably about 50 miles altogether.

There had to be a weariness factor at work in Saul's thinking. They had walked at least 50 miles and had seen nothing of the animals. As previously indicated, this involved several days in a very hot climate. Saul was right. His father would expect him to look for the animals for a day perhaps part of a second day. He would not expect to discover that they had traveled all this distance. It is clear that Saul was ready to go home.

This is stated in a very matter-of-fact manner. That would not be a true evaluation. He was dealing with what the family would consider symbols of great wealth. Nevertheless, it did not appear that there was anything else Saul could do.

And he said to him, "Behold now, there is a man of God in this city, and the man is held in honor; all that he says surely comes true. Now let us go there, perhaps he can tell us about our journey on which we have set out." I Samuel 9:6

Though the text does not say so specifically, it is interesting that this is the servant who is speaking. It is apparent that Saul did not know about the "man of God" who is "held in honor." To this point in the story, there is no mention about Saul's relationship to the worship of God. We will pursue this question as we continue our study. The situation with the servant is much clearer. He was convinced that the "man of God" could help them in their search for the donkeys.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The servant said two things about this man who lived in Ramah. First, he said that this man was a "man of God." This man was known for his Godlike way of life. This label was also given to people whose purpose in life was to be a prophet, those who spoke on behalf of God to the people of Israel. Notice that he also said that this man "was held in honor." The word translated "honor" is "caved" (כָּבֵד). It can mean "rich." It is more often used to convey the idea of "heavy." It describes a person who deserves respect; one who is very important. Notice that the third thing the servant said was, "all that he says surely comes true." Whatever else, this servant was quite familiar with the worship of the Jews. It is a hint that perhaps Saul was not. After all, the servant had to explain this man to Saul. In the church in our time, we have a way to know if a person is a valid minister or not. It is called "ordination." In that day, they had no organized way to determine whether a prophet was legitimate or not. They found a way to deal with this problem. If the words of a prophet always came true, then they could be sure that he was a legitimate prophet. If his words did not come true, then they could be equally assured that he was a fake. The servant affirmed that this man's words always came true. He was a legitimate prophet and could tell the unknown; the future.

The servant truly believed that this man could help them find the donkeys. He urged his master's son to go to this man to find the help they obviously needed.

Then Saul said to his servant, "But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is gone from our sack and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?"
I Samuel 9:7

Saul may not have known the religious situation, but he knew the customs of Israel quite well. In some parts of the world, even today, you may not ask a favor of a person unless you first give the person a gift. While I was teaching in the Ukraine, a poor man from the city needed medicine and could not find any. He came to the husband of our nurse and gave him a small apple. The next day he could feel free to come and ask for the medication his family needed so badly. That is the custom with which Saul was dealing. We are not surprised that Saul did not have any money with him as they went on this search. There was little thought that they might need any.

Notice what Saul said to the servant. He said, "For the bread is gone from our sack." It would be acceptable to give the prophet a loaf of bread. Not having expected that they would be gone for a long period of time, they did not bring much food with them. Now it was used up and they had no gift, such as bread, to give to the prophet.

Notice, also, the question that Saul asked the servant, "What do we have?" Saul did not dispute the fact that this was in fact a man of God or that he might help them. His question was more practical. He asked, "What do we have?" If you stop to think about it, this was probably an unusual question. By definition, servants did not have possessions. They were possessions of their owners. If there was anything to be had, Saul would have it and not have to ask the servant about it.

And the servant answered Saul again and said, "Behold, I have in my hand a fourth of a shekel of silver; I will give it to the man of God and he will tell us our way." I Samuel 9:8

The text does not explain this unusual situation. This "fourth of a shekel of silver" would be enough to pay a worker for several days of work. Servants were not paid. Again, a servant had no possessions. The question naturally arises, how did he get this money? Why did he have this money when he had no means of earning money? The text does not deal with the source of this coin. Though we cannot figure out why or how he had this money, we should note that he was willing to give it to the prophet in order to get directions to find the donkeys. The servant had real confidence that the honorable man of God would guide them to the animals they had been seeking for several days.

(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, "Come, and let us go to the seer"; for he who is called a prophet now was formerly called a seer.) I Samuel 9:9

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Observe that this verse is in parentheses. It is not part of the story of Saul, but it helps our understanding of the story itself. One needs to ask, however, why this would be necessary to include. The author does not explain why his explanation was necessary. It is possible that it is included because there were other people, like Saul, who though they were Jews, were not practitioners of the Jewish faith. Such people might not be familiar with the word "seer" much less the label, "the man of God."

Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God was. I Samuel 9:10

It is clear that Saul was out of his element in this situation. The fact that he had been away from home so long was causing him to feel desperate. He obviously was open to the suggestion of his servant, but this may not have happened too often. Servants were careful not to make too many suggestions to their owners lest they be perceived as trying to control the owner.

I Samuel 9:11-14 – Saul Received Directions To Find The Prophet

As they went up the slope to the city, they found young women going out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?" I Samuel 9:11

This verse gives one an idea of the time of day when this took place. The women, particularly young women, were the ones who carried the water for the family's use. For the most part, they tried to go to the well either in the morning or the evening, when it was the coolest. Some women, like the Samaritan woman" in the Gospels, were not welcomed to come at either of these times and had to come for water during the hottest parts of the day. Our suspicion is that this was in the morning as we will see in the next verse.

The text gives us some surprising information. In that culture, it was not appropriate for a man to speak to a woman, in public, unless he was her husband. Indeed, to this day, in the desert south of Beer Sheba, if a man speaks to a woman who is not his wife, he risks being put to death. Saul and his servant, obviously travelers, did speak to these young women, asking concerning the presence of the "seer."

And they answered them and said, "He is; see, he is ahead of you. Hurry now, for he has come into the city today, for the people have a sacrifice on the high place today. I Samuel 9:12

The young women answered the question of Saul and his servant. Notice what the young women said to them. They said, "He is; see, he is ahead of you." It is apparent that Saul and his servant either did not see Samuel or did not recognize him. If they did not recognize him, which one suspects is true, then one must wonder if Saul had been a frequent worshipper to make sacrifices in this place. We will watch to see if there is further evidence for this idea as we continue the study. We must keep in mind that though Samuel was apparently not of the tribe of Levi, he was the priest who made the sacrifices in Ramah. If Saul was, indeed, a regular worshipper of the LORD, he would have recognized the man of God.

Samuel had three different ministries he performed on behalf of the LORD. He was the last of the judges, a prophet as well as a priest. This was a very busy day for Samuel. He was going to make a sacrifice on behalf of the people. This makes it clear that the people of this city were involved in the sacrifices to the LORD.

As soon as you enter the city you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat, for the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up for you will find him at once." I Samuel 9:13

The directions the young women gave Saul and his servant were simple, but sufficient. When the people made a sacrifice to the LORD, there were parts of the sacrifice that the people were expected to eat as part of that sacrifice.

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The place of sacrifice was traditionally held on the highest place in the area. This was the case in Ramah. This is what the young women meant by the words, "high place." One wonders why the young women would explain the process of the sacrifice to Saul, who was obviously a Jew. Could it be because they had not seen him there before?

Having said that the people would not eat until Samuel came, they described two things that would happen during that sacrifice. Samuel must bless the sacrifice before anything happens. After the blessing, then the people would be invited to eat together.,

So they went up to the city. As they came into the city, behold, Samuel was coming out toward them to go up to the high place. I Samuel 9:14

Samuel was on his way up to the place where the sacrifice and the meal were to be held. In effect, Saul and his servant were interrupting the preparations for the feast that the young women mentioned to them. This meeting between Saul and Samuel could not have been more timely.

I Samuel 9:15-21 – Saul Met Samuel

Now a day before Saul's coming, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel saying, I Samuel 9:15

This is a slight interruption to the story. The author takes the time to explain what had happened just the day before Samuel and Saul met. God told Samuel, years before, about the death of Eli's sons before it took place. Now the LORD is going to tell Samuel the day before this meeting with Saul.

"About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he shall deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me." I Samuel 9:16

God gave Samuel several pieces of information in this verse. This was going to take place on the following day. This meant that Samuel would be watching to see who was going to come to him. God told Samuel that a young man from the tribe of Benjamin would come to him. This had to be confusing for Samuel. Like everyone else, Samuel knew that when there would be a king in Israel, he would come from the tribe of Judah and that the royal family would be from that tribe. Now, the LORD is telling him that he is to anoint a man from the tribe of Benjamin to be the king of Israel.

The LORD not only told Samuel to anoint this young Benjamite to be the king of Israel, but predicted what life would be like during his reign. Saul, this coming king, would deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines. This had to be a shock because the Philistines had been a perennial problem for the people of Israel. To know that this would end would be great news, but hard to believe.

As the LORD explained this situation to Samuel, He also gave some information about His relationship with the people of Israel. The LORD said to Samuel "For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to me." It was because of the pain that God recognized in the lives of His people that He prepared to deliver them through the new king. God heard Israel's cry of distress.

The word translated "prince" is "nagid" (נָגִיד). It means "ruler," "leader." It was used to identify a military commander, but it is not the word for "king." The word for "king" is "melek" (מֶלֶךְ). The elders of Israel did not demand a "prince" or a "military leader." They specifically asked for a king. The author does not explain the difference. There is no way to confirm the idea, but it is possible that it is a hint that God is going to give Israel a ruler/commander, but as promised, the king would come from the tribe of Judah.

When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "Behold, the man of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people." I Samuel 9:17

It was clear that Samuel was expecting to see someone he was to anoint as king. It was, however, more than the fact that God had told him in advance. When Saul showed up in Ramah, the LORD spoke to Samuel

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again. The LORD confirmed that this was, indeed, the one of whom He had spoken on the previous day. There was no way to think that Samuel misunderstood the person that the LORD intended for him to anoint to be king. The LORD singled him out as he entered the city.

*Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate, and said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is."
I Samuel 9:18*

It is also clear that Saul still did not have a clue. He went to Samuel and asked him to point out the house of the "seer." There is no possible way that a person could claim that Saul recognized Samuel in any way whatsoever. He was seeking the prophet seriously to get some information about where the donkeys were, while he was already talking to the prophet he was seeking. He went to Samuel and asked him to point out the house of the "seer." There is no possible way that a person could claim that Saul recognized Samuel in any way whatsoever. If Saul had regularly offered sacrifices to the LORD, he would have known Samuel by sight.

Observe that Saul approached Samuel "in the gate." This is the place where leaders of Israel met and where people approached leaders to express needs or complaints. This is an affirmation that Samuel was, indeed, the leader of Israel at that time.

*And Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind."
I Samuel 9:19*

Saul had to be puzzled by this statement. First, he would be shocked to realize that he was talking to the man he was trying to find. Observe that Samuel promised to tell Saul everything that was on Saul's mind. That had to be a very confusing announcement for Saul.

There were three things about the statements in this verse that had significant cultural meaning. First, it says that Samuel was inviting the two of them to eat with him. You never eat with anyone, in that culture, unless you are at peace with them.

Again, the only time that a servant and master lie down together to eat a meal would be on the day of Passover. At all other times, the servant would be busy preparing and serving the meal and meeting the needs of his owner. Samuel was inviting them to eat with him and there is no mention of the fact that it was the Passover meal or that Saul's servant was doing the serving.

Samuel also said to them, "In the morning I will let you go." Again, you never invite anyone into your house unless you are at peace with them. According to the statement of Samuel, he was going to have these two travelers stay at his house for the night and he would send them on their way in the morning. If you invite someone to stay in your home over night, you must send them on their way unless there had been an unfortunate turn in your relationship with them and you were not parting friends. It was a way to say to the guest and to the people of the community that the two of you were friends to each other when the two came into Samuel's house. Now they were going to leave Samuel's home and that friendship had not been broken.

This particular ceremony took place at the city gate. The ceremony took place before the entire city. It was a way the guest acknowledged that his host had treated him well and he was happy to be the guest of this friend. It was also a time when the host would acknowledge that the guest had indeed been a good guest in his home. If this did not happen, the host and the guest would be shamed and embarrassed before the entire community. This was done despite the fact that Saul was going to be king and Samuel did not want Israel to have a king.

And as for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's household?" I Samuel 9:20

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

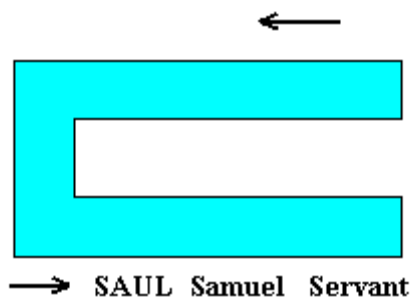
Samuel gave Saul some very good news. There is no mention of the fact that Saul had said a word about the loss of the donkeys. Yet, Samuel was able to tell him that the donkeys had been lost for three days. He encouraged Saul not to worry about these animals because they had already been found.

Samuel is opening the conversation to talk with Saul about his future. He said it in this way, "And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel?" This is a way of speaking about the highest official in the land. Samuel answered his own question. He said, "Is it not for you and for all your father's household?" Again, this is another way to speak of the person who is going to be the king. That is exactly what Samuel is going to announce to Saul.

And Saul answered and said, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?" I Samuel 9:21

Saul was both shocked and confused at this announcement. Saul was quite familiar with the standing of his tribe among the other tribes of Israel. The Benjamites got along reasonably well with each other, but among the other tribes, they were considered to be nobody. The tribe of Benjamin was the youngest of the tribes of Israel, but not always the smallest. That, however, is how Saul viewed his lineage. He knew his family very well. He spoke of his father's household as the least of the families of the tribe of Benjamin. This was a way to double the emphasis on how insignificant his family was. This was an appropriate remark because the unlikely background of Saul to be a king would stand out in the minds of everyone in the country. Having expressed his confusion, Saul asked Samuel why he would speak to Saul in this manner. It just did not make sense to Saul and he knew it.

I Samuel 9:22-24 – Saul Ate With Samuel



(This diagram indicates the way people would be placed at the table. The arrows indicate the direction in which the people would be facing. Samuel would be in the place of the host. Saul is in the place of honor and the servant is in the second place of honor. Interestingly, the text describes this situation with a slave placed at the table. In that culture, slaves were placed at the table only at Passover. At all other times they would eat after their owners had finished eating)

Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and gave them a place at the head of those who were invited, who were about thirty men. I Samuel 9:22

It appears that there was a special place where Samuel and his guests would partake of the sacrificial meal. The word translated "hall" is "liska" (לִשְׁכָּה). This was a room or chamber that was associated with the high place where Samuel and his guests took part in the prescribed sacrificial meal. This would be a rather large room where at least 30 guests could lie down to eat beside the "U" shaped table.

The other guests at this sacrificial meal would be certain that Saul and his servant were the honored guests at this meal. They may or may not know why they were so honored. In this instance, they certainly would

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not know unless Samuel disclosed it to them and this is highly doubtful. Our reason for this assertion is that Samuel has taken careful precautions to keep the purpose of this honor a close secret. He did not even allow the servant to hear what he said to Saul.

The Hebrew text reads a bit differently. Instead of "at the head of those who were invited," the Hebrew text speaks of "the chiefest". The word translated "chiefest" is "rosh" (רֹאשׁ). This word literally means "to shake the head." It was often used to identify the chief or first or most important person. It pointed to the one who was most excellent. It was used to identify the ruler or the place of the ruler or a person who was in complete control. The other guests may or may not have understood the seating arrangement that evening, but by the placement of Saul, Samuel gave them a hint as to the identity of the first king of Israel.

And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion that I gave you, concerning which I said to you, 'Set it aside.'" I Samuel 9:23

There was a second indication that Saul and his servant were the honored guests at this table. The honored guest always was to receive a very special portion of the meal. You may remember that at the Passover meal, Jesus was in the host position, as Samuel was here. During that meal, Jesus gave the "sop," the very best piece of meat on the table to the honored guest, Judas. Samuel did even more. He had asked the cook to set a certain portion of the meat aside for a special guest. This "sop" was usually just a small piece of meat. On this occasion it was far more than that. This gave the other guests a hint about just how important Saul was.

This indicates that Samuel knew, at least a day in advance, that Saul would be coming. Again, we must keep in mind that the proof of a prophet's legitimacy was the fact that what he said would come true. Samuel asked the cook to set aside a special piece of meat for an honored guest who would join them for this meal. Saul and his servant came.

Think about this picture a minute. This is a very special occasion. Everyone who attended – about 30 guests – would be dressed in their very best to dine with their prophet and priest. Remember also that Saul and his servant had been traveling for several days and they would hardly be dressed for the occasion, to say the least. Nevertheless, they were the honored guests. Certainly, some of the less honored guests would be wondering why these two not properly dressed men were the guests of honor.

Think about the scene again. The man with Saul was his "servant." The word translated "servant" is "nahr" (נֶאֱרָר). This word usually identified a young boy up to the age of adolescence. It also identified a slave. In fact, in 9:3, Kish spoke of this person as a slave. This presents a problem. A slave would never lie down to eat at the table with his master except on the night of Passover. On all other occasions, he would stand to serve his owner and when the owner and family had all dined, he then could eat, but standing up, not lying down. Nevertheless, here is a slave in the second place of honor at this festive banquet. The people at the table with Samuel and Saul would not be fooled about this slave. Slaves had identifiable dress and they were always without shoes when they came into the house. Inside the house, everyone was without shoes. This fact would cause the other guests to wonder even more about just whom these two people might be.

Then the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, "Here is what has been reserved! Set it before you and eat, because it has been kept for you until the appointed time, since I said I have invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day. I Samuel 9:24

In our thinking, there is nothing about this verse that would be shocking. The other guests at that table would be lying there with their mouths open to see the food that the cook brought and placed before Saul. It was the leg of the sacrifice. There were a couple of possibilities as to why this honored guest would receive the leg of the sacrifice. First, this was the portion that the priest was to retrieve for himself and his family. The other guests would wonder if Saul was really a priest and was he really going to eat that special piece of

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meat. This was also to be shared with Saul's partner, whom everyone at the table would know was a slave. They could hardly imagine seeing a slave in a place of honor at such a special feast.

My father-in-law was a missionary in China. When he visited the churches in the area over which he was the overseer, often he would eat with Christian families. In that culture, if a guest was coming, the best part of the meal was given to them to show them honor. On a number of occasions they would have roast sheep and the part that was considered the delicacy was the fatty tail. My father-in-law could hardly swallow this. On one occasion he knew that he would never be able to get it down without getting sick so he turned to his host and said, "I thought that as many times as I have been here, I would be more like family than a guest." The host quickly removed the delicacy from my father-in-law's plate and placed it on his own.

The second possibility is that the person eating the leg of the sacrifice would be participating in a covenant with the LORD. We should keep in mind that this is not just a feast. It was a vital part of their worship. Indeed, the sacrifice was not complete unless the group ate some of the sacrifice. The other guests who were lying at this table probably did not realize that Samuel was giving them a hint concerning why the honored guest at this table was there and why he was eating this very special delicacy. Very shortly, Samuel would be sealing that covenant with God by anointing Saul to be the king of Israel. Did Saul know what this was all about? I doubt it. It appears that Saul was not too familiar with the procedures of worship at the temple and would not be thinking that this was, indeed, a covenant that he was entering into with the creator of the universe.

Reflect on the position of Samuel for a moment. In that culture you only eat with persons with whom you are at peace; persons with whom there is no disagreement or separation. Samuel knew that God did not want Israel to have a king. Samuel did not want Israel to have a king. Samuel argued with the elders of Israel when they demanded a king. There is ample evidence of division between Samuel and Saul. He had nothing against Saul per se, but he had everything against what he knew Saul was going to be. Nevertheless, Samuel stressed the fact that he had not only invited Saul to be his guest at this important feast, but had made ample preparation in advance for the occasion. This took real grace. Samuel did it without giving the slightest hint that he had strong feelings about the situation.

I Samuel 9:25-27 – Samuel Prepared to Give Saul God's Message

When they came down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof.

I Samuel 9:25

There is a hint of information in this verse. Ramah, like the other places in this area, was very hot in the summer time. In July and August, it will be between 110 and 120 degrees Fahrenheit. To be inside the small dwellings of that day would be unbearable. This is an area where there is very little rain. In that day, the roof on every house was flat. In the evening, everyone would go to the roof in search of a bit of breeze. The fact that Samuel took Saul to the roof of his house suggests that this is a very hot day. We should also keep in mind that because the houses were so small, this would be the only place in the house where the two could talk privately. By the way, in that day, this is where guests were placed to spend the night. It is the same word that Luke used in the second chapter where he said, "there was no room for them in the INN." The place called the "inn" in our texts is also the same place where the disciples prepared for the Passover meal Jesus shared with His disciples – the upper room.

The author tells us nothing about the topic of conversation between Samuel and Saul. They would be on the roof alone. The servant would not be with them there. We can only guess concerning the topic of conversation that Samuel and Saul shared that evening on the roof of Samuel's house. A personal inclination is that it seems appropriate that Samuel might well have given Saul some indication of what was about to happen. The truth is that we do not know.

SAUL MEETS SAMUEL

And they arose early; and it came about at daybreak that Samuel called to Saul on the roof, saying, "Get up, that I may send you away." So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street. I Samuel 9:26

As indicated in the previous verse, this place on the roof was where guests were placed to sleep in what little respite from the heat that was possible in that area. In parts of the world where it is very hot, it is not unusual for the people to rise very early. When I am in Haiti, it is not uncommon to be wakened at about 4:00 A.M. by the sound of two women screaming at each other at the top of their voices. This is not considered to be too early to make noise. They make up for it during the hottest time of the day and then retire early at night. In the time of Samuel, people traveled on foot and they began their journey as early as possible to cover as much ground as possible before it got too hot to travel. This is the background of Samuel calling to Saul and his servant that it was time for them to be on their way.

Notice that Samuel said, "That I may send you away." This was a custom that was practiced all over that part of the world. It is still practiced in the desert areas. It was a symbolic act. The host would walk his guest to the gate of the city or to the edge of his property so that everyone in the community would see that the guest was leaving in peace. It would be a shame for the host if the guest left without "being sent on his way." If the guest and his host had had harsh words during the stay, the guest would shame his host by leaving without "being sent on his way."

Observe, that the text says that Saul and Samuel "went out into the street." This is the symbol of being "sent on their way."

As they were going down to the edge of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Say to the servant that he might go ahead of us and pass on, but you remain standing now, that I may proclaim the word of God to you." I Samuel 9:27

The author spoke of "going down to the edge of the city." This is the final piece of the custom of ending a visit. When the host walked the guest to the edge of the city, the entire city or village would show up to take part in this celebration. You may remember in the book of Judges, the Levite wanted to leave to go home, but the father-in-law would not let him go. He persuaded him to wait until afternoon. No one would begin a journey in the middle of the afternoon. The Levite postponed his journey for a few days because he could not leave without being sent on his way without shaming his host and causing himself grave danger.

In this verse, the author is saying that the visit of Saul and his servant to the home of Samuel was a cordial one and they parted on friendly terms. We are mindful of the fact that in spite of this friendly dismissal, Samuel had to entertain the future king of Israel when he was dead-set against Israel having a king in the first place.

Samuel is walking Saul and the servant to the city gate, but on the way he wanted to tell Saul what the LORD would have him say to the future king. It would not be thought inappropriate for a person to tell his servant to go ahead of them so that they could talk confidentially. People in that day were very careful what they allowed their servants to hear. The grapevine was alive and well. If a slave owner had something he did not want anyone else to hear, the servant would be the last person on earth he would allow to hear of it. When they arrived home, every slave in the city would know the secret before nightfall.

Samuel made it very clear that it was not gossip that he wanted to convey to Saul. It was the word of God that he wanted to convey to his guest.

Conclusion

In this chapter, it becomes clear that Saul and his family had no spiritual background whatsoever. In contrast to this, the servant had a very personal spiritual life. In spite of this, the LORD informed Samuel that Saul was the one he had chosen to be the "Prince," the King of Israel. This gives one a very clear view of the mercy and patience of God.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

In this and every other chapter in this book, one cannot overemphasize the importance of obedience. Time after time, God spoke through Samuel, even when what the LORD said did not really make sense to Samuel. That did not deter Samuel from doing exactly what the LORD told him to do. This is the picture of obedience that permeates the Old and New Testament. This is an example for us.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 10

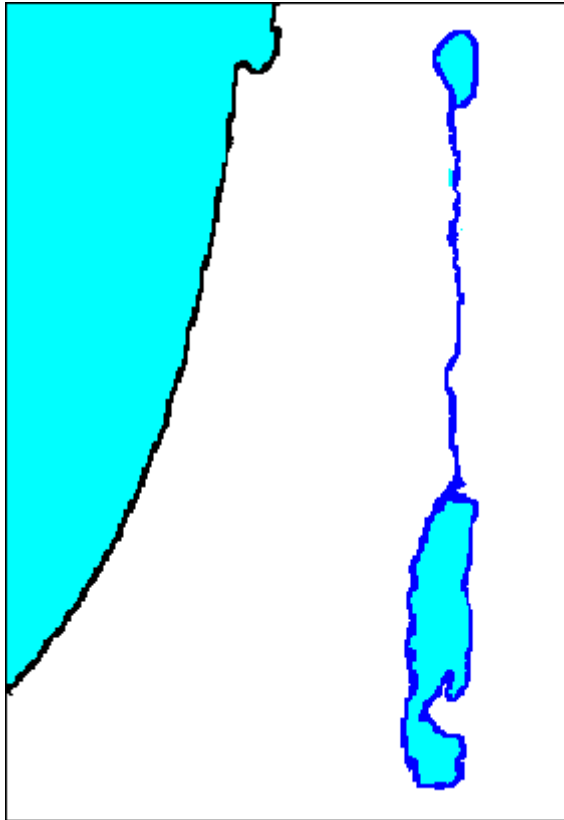
SAMUEL PRESENTED SAUL TO ISRAEL – I SAMUEL 10:1 - 27

1. There are five paragraphs in the tenth chapter of I Samuel. Write a brief summary of each of these chapters on the following table.

10:1-8	
10:9-13	
10:14-16	
10:17-24	
10:25-27	

2. In I Samuel 10:1-8, the author describes Samuel's anointing of Saul as king.
- In 10:1, the author described the anointing of Saul.
 - In the anointing of Saul, Samuel did three things:
 - What were the three things Samuel did?
 - What significance do you attach to each one?
 - Observe that the author concluded the verse with a question.
 - Why would he do that?
 - In what way would it be different if it were just a simple statement?
 - What is the significance of the question he asked?
 - In 10:2, Samuel began his prophesies concerning Saul.
 - What did Samuel prophesy?
 - What difference would this make?
 - In 10:3, Samuel continued his prophesy concerning Saul.
 - What advance information did Samuel provide?
 - Why would this information be important?

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



- 3) In a Bible Atlas, trace the directions Samuel reported and record them on this map.
 - d. In 10:4, Samuel gave additional information for Saul's journey.
 - 1) Reread this verse. What characteristic stands out as you read this prophecy?
 - 2) Aside from being interesting, of what possible value could this prophecy be?
 - e. In 10:5, the prophecy changes in both content and direction.
 - 1) "The hill of God" is the city of Gibeah.
 - a) Locate the city on this map.
 - b) What does Samuel say about the city?
 - 2) Read the verse again. Is there anything in it that seems strange to you?
 - f. In 10:6, Samuel prophesied that three would happen to Saul:
 - 1) What were the three things?
 - 2) What does this tell you about the ministry of the Holy Spirit?
 - 3) In what way will Saul be "changed into another man"?
 - g. In 10:7, Samuel concluded his prophecies. How would you describe the instructions in this verse for a new believer?
 - h. In 10:8, Samuel gave Saul some explicit instructions.
 - 1) What are these instructions?
 - 2) What is a burnt offering?
 - 3) What is a peace offering?
 - 4) Why would it be so important to wait?
3. In I Samuel 10:9-13, Saul prophesied with the prophets.
- a. In 10:9, something very special happened to Saul.
 - 1) What happened to Saul?
 - 2) What is the relationship between the change and the signs Samuel described?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 10

- b. In 10:10, Saul prophesied with the prophets. What is the relationship between God changing Saul's heart in verse nine and the Spirit enabling Saul to prophesy in verse 10?
 - c. In 10:11, the author described the local reaction to seeing Saul prophesying.
 - 1) How would you describe their reaction?
 - 2) The crowd asked a question – "is Saul also among the prophets?" Is this a positive or negative reaction?
 - d. In 10:12, This verse continues with the crowd reaction to seeing Saul prophesying.
 - 1) What is a proverb?
 - 2) How would you explain this proverb?
 - e. In 10:13, the author described the conclusion of the prophecy session. If your name was Saul, how would you feel about now?
4. In I Samuel 10:14 – 16, Saul was interrogated by his uncle.
- a. In 10:14, Saul's uncle asked him a question.
 - 1) How would you describe the tone of that question?
 - 2) How would you describe Saul's answer?
 - b. In 10:15, Saul's uncle continued his questioning.
 - 1) Why do you think Saul's uncle was interrogating him?
 - 2) Why wasn't Kish doing the interrogating?
 - 3) Compare the uncle's apparent attitude in verse 15 with his attitude in verse 14.
 - c. In 10:16, Saul explained his conversation with Samuel.
 - 1) Saul made two statements in this verse:
 - a) What were the statements?
 - b) Compare/contrast the two statements.
 - 2) Why would Saul withhold the information about being made king?
5. In I Samuel 10:17 – 24, Samuel introduced Saul to Israel as their king.
- a. In 10:17, Samuel brought the people of Israel to Mizpah for this surprise celebration. Why this city?
 - b. In 10:18, Samuel rehearsed for the people of Israel what God had done for their forefathers as He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt.
 - 1) As you review what has happened in this chapter, what would be Samuel's reason for going over what God had done in the lives of their ancestors?
 - 2. Is there some quality of the character of God that Samuel might be focusing their attention upon? Why?
 - c. In 10:19, Samuel continued his message to the people of Israel. Having described the faithfulness of God in the previous verse, Samuel now turned his attention to the way these people respond to God.
 - 1) How did Samuel describe that relationship in terms of how God treated them?
 - 2) How did Samuel describe that relationship in terms of how they treated God?
 - 3) What does this tell you?
 - 4) How would you describe Samuel's attitude and heart condition at this point?
 - d. In 10:20, Samuel brought all of the tribes near to participate in the decision.
 - 1) How was this decision made?
 - 2) How can we explain this in terms of the way God leads people?
 - 3) Describe the process by which this decision was concluded?
 - e. In 10:21, there is a surprising fact presented.
 - 1) What is it?
 - 2) If you were in that crowd, how would you feel when this was discovered?
 - f. In 10:22, the crowd tried to deal with what they had just discovered.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

- 1) What had they discovered in 10:21?
- 2) How did this affect the crowd?
- 3) What did they do?
- 4) What was the result of this action?
- g. In 10:23, they found the man God had chosen to be Israel's king.
 - 1) Read the verse again. How would you describe Saul's actions when he was found?
 - 2) Compare Saul's actions in this verse, with what the text says about Saul's size.
 - 3) What did you discover?
- h. In 10:24, Samuel presented Saul before the people of Israel.
 - 1) Review I Samuel 8:10-18 with this verse again. Then read I Samuel 10:24 again
 - a) What did you find?
 - b) What does this comparison tell you?
 - 2) Examine the integrity with which Samuel spoke in this verse. What did you find?
 - 3) How did the people respond?
6. In I Samuel 10:25-27 the author described how envious men refused to have Saul as their king.
 - a. In 10:25, Samuel prepared the ordinances of the kingdom.
 - 1) Why would he do this in view of I Samuel 8:10-18?
 - 2) Why would Samuel place this book before the Lord?
 - 3) The closing statement in this verse has some cultural significance. What could this mean?
 - b. In 10:26, everyone went home.
 - 1) What does the text say about the king's royal residence?
 - 2) God blessed Saul in a very special way in this verse.
 - a) What did God do?
 - b) What does this mean?
 - c. In 10:27, the author draws a contrast with verse 26.
 - 1) How would you describe this contrast?
 - 2) The author concludes the chapter with these haunting words, "but he kept silent".
 - a) Who is "he"?
 - b) How would you explain what this means?
7. Review the chapter again. Focus your attention on the relationship with God that both Samuel and Saul had.
 - a. What did you find?
 - b. Make the same kind of comparison between yourself and Samuel. What did you discover?

LESSON 10

SAMUEL PRESENTED SAUL TO ISRAEL – I SAMUEL 10:1 – 27

I Samuel chapter 10 contains five paragraphs. You will find a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

10:1-8	Samuel Anointed Saul As King
10:9-13	Saul Prophesied With The Prophets
10:14-16	Saul's Uncle Questioned Him
10:17-24	Samuel Introduced Saul to Israel as King
10:25-27	Envious Men Refused Saul as King

I Samuel 10:1- 8 – Samuel Anointed Saul As King

Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?" I Samuel 10:1

The use of oil had always been the way Jews set someone apart (sanctified) to a specific ministry on behalf of God. We should be clear that they did not simply place a drop of oil on the forehead of the person. They did it right. They poured oil on the person's head and it ran down all over their beard and clothing. It would be very clear to everyone that this person had been set apart for the service of God.

Observe that Samuel did **not** say, "Jehovah has anointed you to be ruler over His inheritance." That would not be the Jewish way. Samuel asked a question. He said, "Has not the Lord anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?" To this day, Jewish Rabbi's teach by asking questions rather than by making statements.

Having poured the oil on Saul's head, Samuel kissed him. Among the Jews, there are four signs of forgiveness. These would not be shared in private, but before the entire community. If I wanted the entire community to know that I forgave a person, I would do the following:

- I would invite the person into my house. You may remember that Jesus invited Himself into the home of Zacchaeus for this very reason. He wanted everyone to know that though others would never forgive the man for his cooperation with the Roman rulers, Jesus forgave him and wanted everyone to know it.
- I would invite the person to share a meal with me in my home. Again, you may remember the father of the Prodigal proclaimed a feast in honor of his returned son.
- I would share salt with him. Salt was one of their most prized possessions. On one occasion salt was purchased with an equal weight of silver.
- I would kiss the person.

If there has been any trouble between us, each of these four symbolic actions says, "I forgive you." Do you remember the story of Joseph and his brothers? Joseph performed each of these symbolic actions with his brothers. When Joseph kissed his brothers, the text says, "and then they talked with him."

"When you go from me today, then you will find two men close to Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, 'The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. Now behold, your father has ceased to be concerned about the donkeys and is anxious for you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?" "' I Samuel 10:2

This is the announcement of a prophet. God gave Samuel the ability to comprehend future situations and events without other information or prior knowledge. As these prophesied events took place, it lent credence to the prophets' announcement of judgment, when that was necessary. This verse is one of those occasions. Samuel announced, in careful detail, what Saul would encounter on his way home.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

We must keep in mind that Saul was really confused by Samuel's announcement that Saul, an Ephraimite, would be the king of Israel. As Samuel's pronouncements about the trip prove to be true, Saul will find it easier to believe the more difficult announcements about his becoming king.

Samuel told Saul whom he would meet on the road. He told Saul what these men would say to him when they met. He even told Saul where this meeting would take place. Samuel gave Saul a message about the return of the donkeys to his father's home. All of this information was very exact and verifiable. As these prophecies proved to be exactly as Samuel announced, the announcement of Saul becoming king became easier to accept. This was very important because Saul had some very serious reservations about the possibility of this being true.

"Then you will go on further from there, and you will come as far as the oak of Tabor, and there three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three kids, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a jug of wine; I Samuel 10:3

In this verse, Samuel continued his prophetic announcement about situations Saul would encounter on his way home. These pieces of advance information serve no necessary purpose so far as the return trip is concerned. Saul could find his way home quite well without knowing these details. The whole purpose of these detailed prophecies is to help Saul realize that what Samuel said about his future was absolutely true.

Samuel continued his announcements. He told Saul he would meet three men at the Oak of Tabor. There are a number of places in the Scriptures where a specific tree is identified as a landmark. This gives us some helpful information. If there were an oak forest in the area, then to speak of the Oak tree of Tabor would not be helpful. If, however, there were very few trees in the area, then one could helpfully use such a tree as a valid landmark. That is precisely the situation. There were very few real trees in the area. It was very easy to find these landmarks.

Samuel also told Saul the destination of the three men he would meet. This would be very easy to verify. Notice what Samuel said about this destination. They are "going up to God at Bethel." Though worship was not a part of Saul's daily life, he finds himself increasingly in the presence of those for whom the worship of God is of vital importance. This says something about the way God works and reaches out to people who are not actively seeking Him.

And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from their hand. I Samuel 10:4

Samuel has continued to prophesy to Saul concerning what he will encounter on his way home. Observe how very specific Samuel is in his prophecy. It is not just that they will meet men, but he will meet three men. It is not just that he will meet three men, but he will meet them at the Oak of Tabor. It is not just that he will meet three men, but one man will be carrying three kids, another three loaves of bread and the third will carry a jug of wine. Samuel is very certain that this unusual direction is a direction God has chosen.

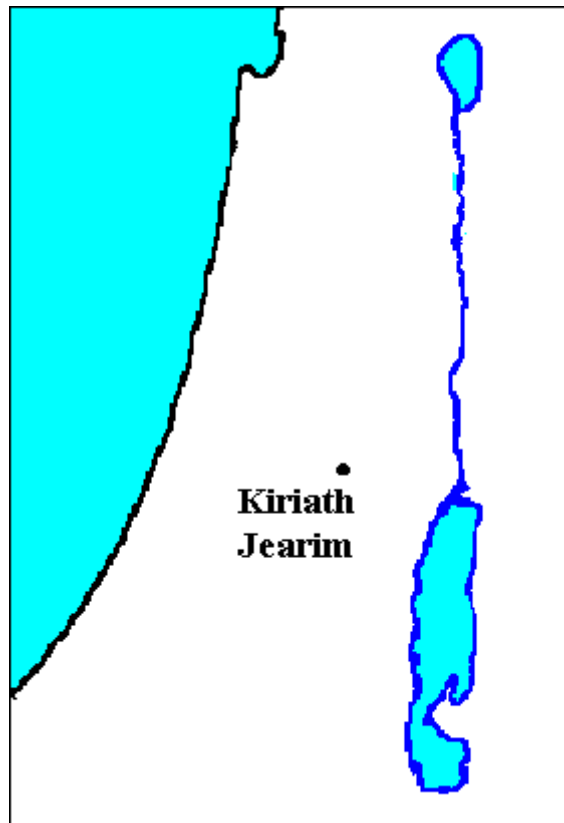
The meeting between Saul and his servant with the three men is more than a simple 'hello.' This encounter might take an hour or more depending upon the situation. This, however, would not be unusual. In the desert or wilderness, one does not see a lot of people. Being gregarious individuals, they would enjoy sharing news and just conversation with anyone they might meet on the way.

Samuel said these three men would give Saul two of the three loaves of bread that they had. Again, this would not be unusual. In the desert and wilderness areas, everyone would try to share the food they had, particularly if they observed that the person had no food. The need for survival is ever present in such places.

"Afterward you will come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is; and it shall be as soon as you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and a lyre before them, and they will be prophesying. I Samuel 10:5

SAMUEL PRESENTED SAUL TO ISRAEL

Samuel continued his prophecy. He reminded Saul that on his way home he would come to what was called the "hill of God." This is a reference to the "city of God." That is what the city of Gibeah is sometimes called. This city has not yet been discovered. Our best information indicates that it is in the vicinity of Kiriath Jearim.



As you can see on the map, this city is on top of the mountain range that runs north to south in Israel.

Notice that Samuel mentions the fact that there is a Philistine garrison lodged at this city. This was not necessarily a threatening situation, but it was a definite possibility and everyone knew it. The fact that the Philistine garrison was there indicates that this was a very strategic location. Add to this the warlike nature of the Philistines and you have a potentially volatile situation to say the least.

The danger of being attacked or misused by the Philistines was a definite possibility. If that garrison discovered that Saul was to be the king of Israel, there would be no way that Saul would get past that outpost alive.

Samuel told Saul that at the "hill of God" he would meet a group of prophets coming down the mountain-side. There were a number of places in Israel where prophets congregated and remained year-around. The major prophets in the scriptures do not seem to be affiliated with these groups. We might call them "schools of the prophets." That was not their only function, but they did train young prophets who were there with them. We have no reason to think that these prophets were anything but godly men. It was not unusual for these prophets to move from one place to another with singing and the playing of musical instruments. It was, however, quite unusual for prophets or anyone else to be so close to the enemy camp if it was not absolutely necessary. To make matters worse, these prophets were both close to the enemy and making a lot of noise by their instrumental and vocal music. Samuel told Saul this is what he would find.

"Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. I Samuel 10:6

To the surprise of Saul, Samuel told him that the Spirit of the LORD would come upon him. This was their way of indicating that God would take control of their lives. The surprise, for Saul, was that he would

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

join in the singing and prophesying; something he had never done in his entire life. This was the first and probably the last time Saul would be involved in such a ministry of privilege. You may remember that toward the end of his life, Saul sought a medium because he wanted to talk with Samuel – Saul needed a prophet.

Notice the way Samuel spoke, "you will be changed into another man." He was not saying that Saul would no longer be Saul. He was saying that this experience would be such that he would be doing things he would never have thought possible for him in the past.

"And it shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what the occasion requires; for God is with you. I Samuel 10:7

This may seem like a casual statement, but it is not. Nothing of this nature had ever happened to Saul before. Up until this point, Samuel has been very specific. In this verse, Samuel changes. His words are noticeably general. There is a reason for this. The very specific statements were intended to convince Saul that indeed God had chosen him to be king, as unlikely as that may seem. The suddenly non-specific statements were to let him know that there was no limit to what God would do on his behalf. To say, "God is with you" is to describe not so much presence as power. God will do or enable you to do whatever is necessary for you to do. The miraculous is not too much to expect at this time.

"And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do." I Samuel 10:8

This verse is interesting because it is both very specific and yet not specific at all; at the same time. It is specific in that Samuel told Saul to go to Gilgal and wait seven days. Both the place and the time are precise. However, Samuel does not say when Saul is to do this. Saul is certainly going home before he goes anywhere else.

Samuel's first instruction to Saul was very clear. He was to go down to Gilgal before Samuel goes there. Samuel does not explain why Saul is to go there seven days before Samuel does. Before finishing with the instructions, Samuel explained what was going to happen when he arrived. Samuel promised to make burnt offering and a peace offering.

1. BURNED OFFERING – This sacrifice was so named because the sacrifice was placed upon the altar and burnt until it was totally consumed. The burnt offering was presented to the LORD to purge away the sins of those involved.
2. PEACE OFFERING – The peace offering is mentioned in Leviticus where it is recorded,

"Now this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which shall be presented to the LORD. 'If he offers it by way of thanksgiving, then along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he shall offer unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of well stirred fine flour mixed with oil. 'With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving, he shall present his offering with cakes of leavened bread. 'And of this he shall present one of every offering as a contribution to the LORD; it shall belong to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings. Leviticus 7:11-14

This offering was to be burned, but another portion was to be eaten by both the priests and the people who were making the offering. This was accomplished in a common meal.

It was a celebration of the joy of fellowship shared among the people of God as they worshipped God and shared with each other.

Samuel also gave Saul two more instructions:

1. He was to wait in Gilgal for seven days.

SAMUEL PRESENTED SAUL TO ISRAEL

2. Samuel also added that Saul was to wait until Samuel arrived. The first instruction would have been enough. Saul would have known to do nothing until Samuel arrived. Granted, Saul was not accustomed to religious observances. He did not even recognize Samuel when he saw him. Still, every Jew would know that no one but the priest/prophet was allowed to perform the sacrifice, even if he was the king.

I Samuel 10:9-13 – Saul Prophesied With The Prophets

Then it happened when he turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart; and all those signs came about on that day. I Samuel 10:9

What a beautiful statement! Not only did God give Saul a changed heart; He did it instantaneously. Observe that up to this point Deity has been identified by the word "LORD." In this verse, however, it is changed to "God." The very next time Deity is identified, 10:17, the name is again "LORD." This is interesting because the name "LORD" is a translation of "YHWH" which throughout the Old Testament was used in situations depicting judgment. It is like the opening chapters of the prophets. On the other hand, the word "God" is a translation of the word "Elohim" which through the Old Testament was used in situations depicting mercy. It is like the closing chapters of the Prophets. Certainly this is an expression of divine mercy.

Look at this verse again. First, God changed the heart of Saul. Then all of these prophecies came to pass exactly as they were prophesied. This is quite significant. It is possible to see every fulfilled prophecy and conclude that it is a grand coincidence. When God changed Saul's heart, he was able to realize that this was, indeed, something that God had done.

When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them. I Samuel 10:10

The veracity of a prophet was identified by whether or not his prophecies came true or not. At this point, Samuel's status as a prophet of God was flawless. Everything was coming to pass when and exactly as he had announced. Again, at this time, the Spirit of God came upon Saul in a mighty way. This religious stranger, the one who didn't recognize the most prominent prophet/priest in Israel suddenly became the vehicle through whom the Spirit acted to enable the benefit of Saul and all those with whom he came in contact.

Even though the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, Saul knew exactly what was happening in his life. Put yourself in Saul's position for a moment. You are one of the least religious people in all Israel, you know what the prophet prophesied, but what does he know? Suddenly the things he prophesied began to come true. You are not religious, but suddenly you start prophesying with the other prophets and you know it. This is a design for confusion that would be devastating to say the least.

It is interesting that the text gives no hint whatsoever about what Saul prophesied along with the real prophets. This is probably because the important fact is that he was, indeed, prophesying and not what he said when he prophesied.

And it came about, when all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" I Samuel 10:11

Saul has come to Gibeah, the "hill of God." This is where his father and all his family reside. Saul is still prophesying. The consternation of the people is hinted at in their question, "what has happened to the son of Kish?" There is a high level of shock and disbelief in the tone of their question.

By our standards, their identification of Saul seems a bit unusual. No one would ever refer to me as "the son of Oscar Cooper," though I am. People would refer to me by the name given me by my parents- William – or the nickname - Bill. That was not the case in Israel. The identification that would be most acceptable would be "the son of Kish." You may remember that Jesus, in John chapter 21, Jesus spoke to Peter. Jesus said, "Simon, son of Jonah."

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The next question that the neighbors of Saul asked naturally follows the first. They asked, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" This is not surprising since he was in the midst of the group of prophets and prophesying as they were. On the other hand, it was absolutely astonishing because it was so out of character for him. Some people who observed the feasts and sacrifices might be expected to do a thing like this. For Saul, however, this was unthinkable. Their questions pinpointed the depth of their shock and consternation.

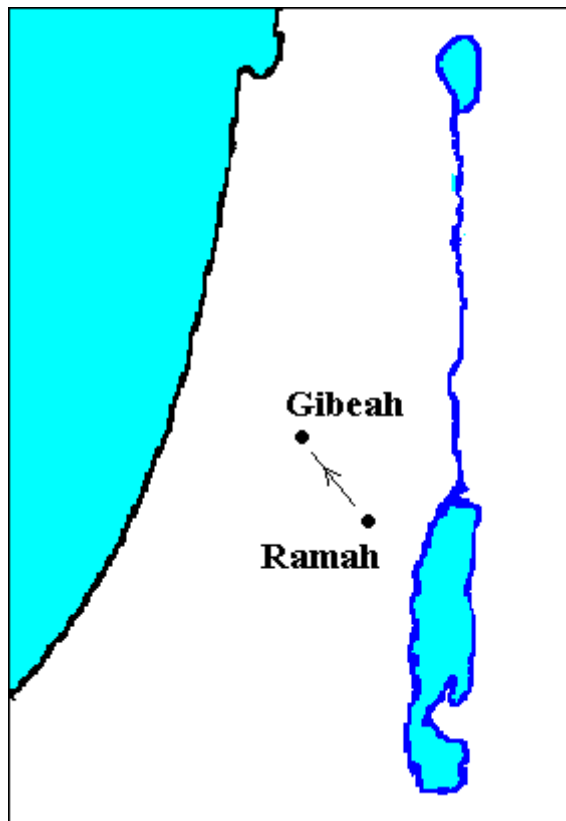
And a man there answered and said, "Now, who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" I Samuel 10:12

This verse tends to raise a lot of questions for some people. If we take it apart, this seems to help with our understanding. The speaker is only identified as, "a man there." It could be a member of Saul's family. It also could be just one of the people of the community.

It is this man's comment that confuses some readers, "now who is their father?" In our culture this would be a meaningless statement. The identity of a man's father has nothing to do with the decision of his vocation or avocation. In Israel, however, it was completely appropriate. No one became a Levitical priest by choice. If his father was a priest, he must become one also. Eli's sons, though not godly men, were still expected to be priests. If the father was a prophet then the sons would be also. The question was quite valid, but put in an unusual way. It was like saying, "Has Kish suddenly become a prophet so that Saul would be also?"

The balance of the verse also causes questions. A proverb is a verbal way to summarize actions in such a way that experience is clarified. Repetition is the way these summaries become imbedded in the minds of the people. Whenever someone did something really strange and out of character for them, this would come to the minds of observers and they would say to each other, "Is Saul also among the prophets." We must keep in mind that this was not necessarily a complimentary statement.

When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place. I Samuel 10:13



Saul was on his way home. As you can see on the map, Saul left Samuel in Ramah and traveled to Gibeah, "the hill of God" where his father and family lived. As Samuel prophesied, Saul encountered a group of

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prophets as he approached his home town and joined in their prophesying. When Saul concluded his prophesying, he continued the rest of his journey into the city of Gibeah where he lived. One can only imagine how excited Saul would be to be home and to put an end to the worry of his father and family.

I Samuel 10:14-16 – Saul's Uncle Questioned Him

Now Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, "Where did you go?" And he said, "To look for the donkeys. When we saw that they could not be found, we went to Samuel." I Samuel 10:14

Read this verse through a few times. There is some degree of exasperation in the question of Saul's uncle. One might wonder, Why is Saul's uncle challenging Saul? Why isn't Kish doing the interrogation? We need to be reminded of the way families function. In our culture, when a person reaches maturity they usually go on their own. In Israel, in that day, when a man reached maturity they just added another room to the house or tent and life went on at that level. If this is the situation here, and it appears that it is, then one would surmise that Kish is the eldest son and was in control of the extended family. Again, in that culture, every adult male would be involved, to some degree in the conduct of family affairs. It would not be seen as inappropriate for the uncle to ask such a question and insist on a decent answer. Again, he may have been the one in charge of the extended family.

Saul's answer was honest, as far as it went. That is exactly what they did. It is not, however, all that they did and both Saul and his servant knew it.

And Saul's uncle said, "Please tell me what Samuel said to you." I Samuel 10:15

This verse is a bit unusual. The fact that Saul did not participate in the worship of the LORD does not mean that the rest of the family did the same thing. On the other hand, in almost every family, the individual members followed the lead of the head of the family, whether he was the father or the appointed heir. In view of this, one wonders at the questions asked by Saul's uncle. The text is not helpful here. Observe that the uncle was very courteous with Saul. He may have simply been curious. Again, his interest may have been aroused to see what prophecy this prophet might proclaim. One can only conjecture.

So Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But he did not tell him about the matter of the kingdom which Samuel had mentioned. I Samuel 10:16

Saul is about to tell his uncle at least some of the things Samuel told him. His first statement is truthful. Samuel told them the donkeys had been found. The text mentions that Saul did not tell his uncle what Samuel said about Saul becoming king. That also is truthful. However, Saul did not tell his uncle about the three men Samuel mentioned in his prophecy. The text also does not mention the prophecy that Saul and his servant would meet the prophets and join with them along the way. One can see more than one possible reason that Saul might not mention the information about becoming king of Israel. It is entirely possible that Saul was having difficulty believing this could be possible given his heritage. The text does not indicate whether or not Samuel shared his personal displeasure about Israel having a king when he told Saul that God had selected him to be the ruler in Israel rather than have God rule over them through a theocracy. The people would see this as a great moment in Israel's history. Samuel knew it was a tragedy.

It is much less obvious why Saul might not tell his uncle about these other fulfilled prophesies. One must repeatedly remind oneself that this family is not Elkanah and Hannah. These folks are not deeply involved in the worship of the LORD. Curiosity is a possibility, but serious interest is not.

I Samuel 10:17-24 – Samuel Introduced Saul to Israel as King

At this point, there is an abrupt change in the direction of the story. Saul and his uncle had been talking in Gibeah. Now Samuel is talking in Mizpah. Saul and his uncle talked about curious things. Samuel gathered Israel to talk about things of dire importance.

Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah; I Samuel 10:17

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We do not know the exact location of Mizpah. One would think Samuel might call for the gathering at Ramah or Shiloh. We know from Joshua 18:26, that Mizpah was located in the tribal territory of Benjamin. One problem is that there is more than one place in Israel by that name. Mizpah is located not far from both Gibeon and Ramah. You may remember in I Samuel 7:6, this is the place where Samuel gathered Israel to pray when the Ark of the Covenant was restored at Kiriath Jaerim. Again, it is not too far from Ebenezer where Samuel erected a stone of remembrance. In I Samuel 7:16, the author informed us that Mizpah was one of the places Samuel visited annually in his circle of judgment. Indeed, these facts may be, at least in part, why Samuel gathered Israel in Mizpah for this momentous occasion.

And he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' I Samuel 10:18

Samuel began his presentation by reminding Israel of what the LORD had done on their behalf. He was rehearsing the miraculous way God had led, defended and provided for them. The LORD had delivered them from Egypt, the most formidable foe in the whole world. All the nations and areas through which they passed had formidable, well-trained armies. Israel, by contrast, had only a collection of ill-trained, poorly equipped men. Nevertheless, the LORD delivered them from every foe who would have destroyed them easily had not the LORD fought for them. There could be no doubt of God's faithfulness. In deliberate detail, Samuel turned his attention to the way Israel responded to the LORD'S faithfulness.

"But you today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses; yet you have said, 'No, but set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans." I Samuel 10:19

Samuel began his evaluation of their response to the faithfulness of God with the word "but." This tells us immediately that we are in the midst of a serious contrast. This is a scathing denunciation of the people of Israel for demanding a king. This probably came as a shocking surprise to the people. They would see their demand as simply asking for what all the other nations already had. It would seem, to them, as a reasonable, overdue requirement that they deserved. Samuel, on the other hand, branded it as outright rejection of Jehovah as their God. Little by little, Samuel gives us insights into what else this really represents. It is outright ingratitude for what God had done on their behalf. After all God had done for them over more than four decades, they rejected Him as their ruler. Notice how Samuel described it, "yet you have said, "NO, but set a king over us." This is a picture of intense rebellion. Samuel's wording now lacks the calm and gentleness his previous conversations contained. These words are a picture of sharp contrast. He used words like, "but," "yet," and "NO." It is like he is saying to them, "You want a king, I will give you a king!"

Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. I Samuel 10:20

Look at the way Samuel conducted this gathering. He could have simply made an appropriate announcement. After all, he was doing something he desperately did not want to do. He knew that God did not want it. It was not in Israel's best interest to have this. Nevertheless, in good Jewish style, he dramatized this event as though it was the best thing he had ever done. All of the tribes of Israel were present. The Jews thought that they could find God's will by casting lots. You may remember that when Judas died, the apostles identified his successor by casting lots. You would also remember that after Matthias was chosen in this way, you never hear of him again. Of course, Samuel knew before this started that the person chosen would be Saul. Nevertheless, he followed through with the process. Naturally, the lot fell to the tribe of Benjamin. This should have caused every person in Israel to wonder. They all knew that their king would come from the tribe of Judah. This gives us an idea of just how certain Samuel was concerning the outcome of this entire event.

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Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they looked for him, he could not be found. I Samuel 10:21

The text does not fully describe the process. Eventually the lot was cast and the family of Matrite was selected. Now, Kish was a part of this family.

Strangely enough, when the lot fell to Saul, he was nowhere to be found. Saul knew well in advance how this was going to turn out. One must ask why he was hiding. It could be that he was shy. It could be that he could not be convinced that he was to be the king of Israel. Perhaps he was simply frightened. Whatever the reason, the family had to go looking for Saul because they could not find him. This was not a strong recommendation for a man who would shortly be proclaimed king of Israel.

Therefore they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" So the LORD said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage." I Samuel 10:22

Imagine how high the anticipation had become among the family and the people of Israel. Imagine, also, what confusion grew when the selected person could not be found. Indeed, their consternation was so great that they "inquired further of the LORD, "has the man come here yet?" Finally the sad truth was given to them by the LORD. He said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage." What a shocking turn of events! Put yourself in the place of the people. You claim you need a brave king to lead you and protect you in these dangerous times and circumstances. Now when your brave king is chosen, you discover he is hiding himself among the baggage. The level of embarrassment had to be very high.

So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. I Samuel 10:23

The text does not tell us who "they" were. Notice that it says, "They ran and TOOK HIM from there." The word translated "took him" is "laqach" (לָקַח). This word literally means "to carry something/someone away." Saul was not just hiding. He dug in his heels and did not want to be taken back to the place where Samuel was conducting the ceremony.

There is a bit of irony in the last part of this sentence. Saul did everything humanly possible to resist being made king. When they finally dragged him before the assembly of Israel, they discovered that he was head and shoulders taller than anyone else in Israel. The people of Israel are not known for their great height. Anyone who was this much taller than everyone else held a distinct advantage. His demeanor may not have recommended him, but his size certainly did.

And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people." So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!" I Samuel 10:24

The fairness of Samuel, at this point, is astounding. As we have repeatedly reported, Samuel knew that God did not want Israel to have a king. Samuel knew that if Israel had a king it would devastate the country. Nevertheless, he carried the ceremony through in such a way that his personal feelings would not make a terrible situation disastrous. Read this verse again. Everything that Samuel said was absolutely true. There was no one in all Israel like Saul. Observe, again, how Samuel spoke. He said, "Do you see whom the LORD has chosen?" He gave Saul every benefit of the doubt. However, if the people had been listening carefully, they would have taken pause. Samuel said, "whom the LORD has chosen." Samuel, throughout this entire experience has spoken very carefully as we indicated earlier. When Samuel spoke of the "LORD," he used the name associated with justice and judgment. There is the slightest of warnings in his choice and they should have known it. Samuel had repeatedly told them that they should not demand a king.

The people responded to Samuel's introduction of their king with great joy, "Long live the king!" There was something about the LORD'S dealings with the disobedient that they had overlooked in the emotion of Not for sale or resale

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this celebration. There are times when the punishment for our rebellion against the LORD is that we get what we want. Israel is not alert to that devastating discovery, but it is lurking in the near distance.

I Samuel 10:25-27 – Envious Men Refused Saul as King

Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house. I Samuel 10:25

Israel had lived for hundreds of years under a theocracy. They had never had a king. They had rules for the governing by a theocracy, but not a single rule for being governed by a king.

Samuel could have allowed Israel to discover the need for laws by the tragedies that occur when you have no such rules. Samuel was much more gracious than that. Indeed in the process of hammering out the balance of power in a king's rule is where many kingdoms have collapsed down through history. Samuel saved Israel from this by establishing the framework for kingdom law before Saul did a single thing as the king. This was a great gift, but Saul may not have recognized it.

The people may not have been willing to live under the control of God, but Samuel was determined to be under divine control. When he finished writing the ordinances in a book, Samuel placed the book before the LORD. This whole process of allowing Israel to have the king they unfortunately demanded was under the direction of the LORD. It is as though Samuel was placing his completed task before the LORD, and he was. We should not forget that the ordinances Samuel wrote became the foundation of the law of the land for both the divided and united kingdoms far in the future.

When this was accomplished, Samuel sent all Israel to their homes. They were now to live with the king they demanded from the LORD.

And Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him. I Samuel 10:26

The festivities were over. Now life must settle down to the hum-drum of daily life and real-world problems. Because Saul was the first king, there was no grand palace for him to live in as the people wanted. There would be a lavish palace, but it would be extracted from the poverty of the people of Israel, as Samuel had warned.

For the present, Saul would have to live in his own home. This would not last and thinking people would know it. Part and parcel of having a king was the extravagance of their lifestyle. It did something to the pride of the people, but it was purchased with the coinage of Israel's grinding poverty. They had been involved in devastating wars with the Philistines and other enemy neighbors for a long time. Burned fields, cities and homes made it difficult for Israel to afford a lavish palace and regal lifestyle. They couldn't say Samuel had not warned them.

The author concluded the verse with a hint of the inevitable. In every form of human government there is always the insatiable grasping for power. This power is necessary and inevitable in government. The problem comes when this lust for power overtakes the concern for the governed, and it always does. God gave Saul an initial blessing. There were a band of valiant men whom God had moved to stand with Saul. These men could be counted upon to be dependable no matter what problems may emerge; no matter how desperate the situation may become. Every ruler needs a host of such men of valor.

But certain worthless men said, "How can this one deliver us?" And they despised him and did not bring him any present. But he kept silent. I Samuel 10:27

The presence of the word "but" immediately indicates that a very serious contrast is in progress. The previous sentence deals with the valiant band of men who went with Saul and supported him. The word "but" indicates that the exact opposite is about to be introduced. The author gave us a hint concerning what Saul would be dealing. The author called them "worthless men." This, unfortunately, was an understatement.

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Every government has what is gratuitously called "the loyal opposition." In this case, however, they are just the opposition. Observe what they said about Saul immediately. They said, "How can this one deliver us?" Now, the expressed motive behind their opposition dealt with what he could do or not do for them. On two accounts, one can understand their serious concern:

1. Hiding among the baggage and resisting being brought before the people he was to lead was no recommendation for his leadership. He did nothing to inspire confidence in his bravery and ability as a leader.
2. When Saul came to power, Israel had been repeatedly devastated by the powerful, warlike Philistines. They needed a man of courage and decision who could inspire them to be victorious over the enemies they faced on all sides. Israel's sense of safety and security was at an all time low.

The author commented, "They despised him." The word translated "despised" is "bazah" (בָּזָה). It means "to hold in contempt." It is "to scorn such a person." It is more than a serious dislike. It is the opposite of esteem. It is to have so little respect for a person that you see them as worthless and vile. It is to be nauseous at the thought of their presence or actions. It is the word one uses when you can think of nothing worse to say about the person.

These men thought so little of Saul that they decided to make their contempt visual. There are always people who do not like a leader. People carefully disguise this contempt because if it is known, their life would be in jeopardy. These men had no fear of reprisal from Saul.

When a king comes to power, it was customary for the political entities under his rule to bring a congratulatory gift. This served two purposes. It honored the king and that was important for their future relationships with him. Second, it was a pledge of their loyalty; a way of saying you can depend on us to stand with you in your reign. This group became obvious by their absence.

This information was not wasted on Saul. The text says, "but he kept silent." This whole verse may suggest that these men were lower level political figures from some part of Israel. Saul's decision to say or do nothing would be widely known all over Israel. It produced two responses among two groups of people. The men who despised Saul would be saying, "We knew he had no courage or ability to protect his power." These men would be encouraged to do things that were even more damaging and rebellious. The rest of the people would hope that Saul had the strength to deal with rebels and send a message to others who might be tempted to follow their example. It did not happen.

Conclusion

If you review this chapter very carefully, you may see a contrast you might not otherwise have noticed. There is a very strong contrast between Samuel and Saul. God worked through both of them, but they differ in their relationship to God. Samuel was very obedient, eager to worship; eager to do what God commanded.

Saul, on the other hand, did not have an active, positive relationship with God. It wasn't just that he disobeyed. He had no active relationship with God at all.

The second part of this contrast is like the first. Obedient Samuel was used by God to bless His people, Israel. Saul, who had no active, positive relationship with God, was used of God, but only in a situation where God had to judge His people.

God can and will use our lives. The question is, will He use our lives as He used Samuel, to accomplish His perfect will or will He use our lives as He used Saul to bring the punishment they insisted upon bringing into their lives? Obviously, the choice is ours. God longs to have a positive, meaningful relationship with every one of us. He chooses to accomplish His purposes through people. We have the opportunity to choose the way in which God will work through our lives.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

SAUL ROUTED THE AMMONITES AT JABESH-GILEAD – I SAMUEL 11:1 - 15

1. There are four paragraphs in this brief chapter. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each of these paragraphs.

11:1-5	
11:6-11	
11:12-13	
11:14-15	

2. In I Samuel 11:1-5, the author describes the threat of Nahash to overtake and destroy the city of Jabesh Gilead.
- In 11:1, Nahash, king of the Ammonites, laid siege to the city of Jabesh Gilead.
 - If you were Nahash, the Ammonite, why would you attack Jabesh Gilead when Jericho was much closer?
 - Think carefully about the request made by the men of the city. If you were one of these men, why would you make such a request?
 - In 11:2, Nahash responded to the request of the trapped men of the city. Think carefully about the counter-offer that Nahash made.
 - If you were Nahash, would you make such an offer? Why? Why not?
 - What would the people of Jabesh Gilead gain from such an agreement?
 - What would Nahash gain?
 - Think carefully about the condition Nahash added to the agreement.
 - Can you think of anything Nahash would gain from such a condition?
 - Aside from the loss of their right eye, is there any particular loss the men of Jabesh Gilead would sustain?
 - In 11:3, the men of Jabesh Gilead made a counter offer. Think carefully about this offer.
 - What were the men of Jabesh Gilead really requesting?
 - What possible benefit could the Jews realize from this position?
 - What possible benefit were they offering Nahash in order to win his agreement to this request?
 - In 11:4, the text assumes that Nahash had agreed to these terms.
 - What could have possibly have prompted Nahash to accept such an agreement?
 - In this verse, the messengers from Jabesh Gilead came to Gibeah where Saul lived, but they spoke to the people rather than to King Saul. Why?
 - In 11:5, Saul enters the picture.
 - How does the author picture Saul in this verse?
 - Put yourself in Saul's position. You are a new king. You started your reign with a sizeable group dedicated to ending your reign. How would you feel at this point?
3. In I Samuel 11:6-11, Saul led the forces of Israel against the Ammonite army.
- In 11:6, there is a drastic change in Saul.
 - How does the author account for this change?
 - What change does the author report?
 - In 11:7, Saul took drastic action.
 - Oxen were very valuable animals. Why would he take this drastic action?
 - What does this action gain for Saul that a simple command with accompanying promise of punishment would not also accomplish?

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- 3) Notice that Saul said, "Whoever does not come out after Saul, and after Samuel."
 - a) Why would he add the words, " and after Samuel"?
 - b) What does this inclusion tell us about what Saul had in mind?
 - c) It says, "They came out as one man." To what does the author credit this response?
- c. In 11:8, Saul and the Israelite forces are numbered in the city of Bezek. This is more than 40 miles north of Gibeah, Saul's home.
 - 1) Is there any indication of how they got there or why they chose to meet at Bezek? (A Bible map may be helpful at this point.)
 - 2) The reports of the numbers of two groups of men – 300,000 from all Israel; 30,000 from Judah. What do these pieces of information tell us?
- d. In 11:9, the messengers from Jabesh Gilead were sent back to the city with a message.
 - 1) What was the message?
 - 2) The author recorded the response of the men of Jabesh Gilead.
 - a) In view of the message that was sent to Jabesh Gilead, how would you have recorded their response?
 - b) We must assume that the Jabesh response was properly recorded. Is there any reason why the people would have to react in this manner?
- e. In view of the message the men of Jabesh Gilead received in 11:9,
 - 1) Was the message in 11:10 an honest message?
 - 2) Why would they have to say this?
 - 3) Would it have been more honest to say nothing?
- f. In 11:11, the author described the battle plan and the way it was carried out.
 - 1) The author mentioned that the Israelite forces were divided into three companies. What advantage would this produce for them?
 - 2) They came into the camp "in the morning watch." What are the advantages of this move?
4. In 11:12-13, Saul refused to allow anyone to kill his opponents.
 - a. In I Samuel 11:12, the scene changes.
 - 1) Though the text does not tell us, where does it appear that this takes place?
 - 2) If you were writing a chronology for this chapter. What time span would you attach to 11:11-13?
 - 3) Which group is speaking to Samuel in this verse.
 - a) What are they preparing to do?
 - b) To whom are they preparing to do this?
 - b. In 11:13, Saul took a very strong stand.
 - 1) What was his stand?
 - 2) On what basis did Saul take this stand?
 - 3) On the basis of his previous conduct, would you suggest that this was his usual stance or was it unusual?
5. In I Samuel 11:14, 15, Samuel gathered all Israel to the city of Gilgal to make sacrifices.
 - a. In 11:14, Samuel issued a command/invitation to all Israel to "go to Gilgal to renew the kingdom there." What does this mean?
 - b. In 11:15, the people of Israel went to Gilgal as Samuel commanded.
 - 1) What did they do?
 - 2) Look at the list you just put together. How do these activities relate to each other?
 - 3) The chapter concludes with the statement, "And there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly." How would you associate this statement with the rest of the verse? With the rest of the chapter?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

6. Reflect upon the teachings of this chapter.
 - a. What have you learned?
 - b. In what possible ways can this relate to your life? To your circumstances?

LESSON 11

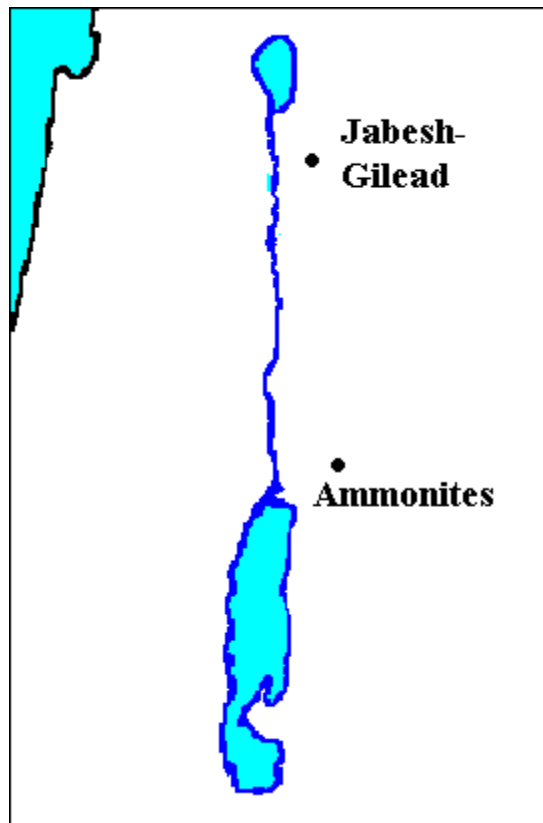
SAUL ROUTED THE AMMONITES AT JABESH GILEAD – I SAMUEL 11:1 – 15

I Samuel chapter eleven contains four brief paragraphs. They are summarized on the following table.

11:1-5	Nahash Threatened Jabesh-gilead
11:6-11	Saul Led Victory Over Ammonites
11:12, 13	Saul Refused To Allow Anyone To Kill His Opponents
11:14, 15	Samuel Called Israel to Gilgal To Sacrifice.

I Samuel 11:1-5 -Nahash Threatened Jabesh-Gilead

Now Nahash the Ammonite came up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us and we will serve you." I Samuel 11:1



As you can see on this map, Ammon is approximately 40 miles south of Jabesh Gilead. It is not difficult to understand why an Ammonite king would attack any Jewish city. They were distant relatives, but that did not keep them from being the bitterest of enemies. It is a bit more demanding to discover why Nahash would choose to attack Jabesh Gilead. Jericho was much closer to his own land than Jabesh Gilead. Even Jerusalem was closer than Jabesh Gilead. The topography of the land provides some insights. If you study a good Bible Atlas, you will note that the western part of what we call "Ammon," is almost completely rocky type mountain ranges or wilderness that would support almost no crops and very little in the way of providing grazing land for herds of sheep. The eastern part of the country, however, is almost all sand desert. Ammon grew some crops, but not nearly as much as they wanted and needed. The land to the west of Ammon, across the Jordan River had an occasional oasis, as in Jericho, but much of this land was wasteland and wilderness. To attack Jericho or even half way to Jerusalem would give them some emotional satisfaction, because they were bitterest enemies. It did not improve the possibilities of their food supply very much. Having crossed to

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the west side of the Jordan, they were quite exposed to whatever army the Jews could put together. At the time, this did not seem to be a serious threat, but it involved a tactical concern that seemed unnecessary. The Ammonites had many traders in their population. They were well aware of the fact that immediately north of their border, the land was no better than their own. They were also aware that the further north they went, the more useful farmland they would find until they were almost to Mount Hermon. This was a definite plus for their needs.

There was also a tactical benefit in attacking Jabesh Gilead. As you look at the map you can see that the city is to the east of the Jordan River. This is a natural barrier to military positioning. An army is most vulnerable when attempting to ford a river just prior to engaging their enemy. All of this made Jabesh Gilead an appealing target. We should never forget, however, that the fall of Jabesh Gilead would only be the first step in their military plan. The Ammonites, having taken Jabesh Gilead, would be drawn to take one town after another until they controlled all Israel.

Jabesh Gilead was a walled city. A city wall was a deceptive weapon. It was considered an ultimate weapon to protect the inhabitants from all armies who might attack. Reality was a bit different. A wall was just as effective as a way to keep the inhabitants inside as it was to keep the invaders outside. A siege was the greatest fear for people living in a walled city. In 68 A.D., the Roman army laid siege to the city of Jerusalem and had almost starved the people to death when word came that Caesar had died and the army was called back to defend Rome against a possible invasion by German forces. In most instances, a small force could place a city under siege for months until the food and water were exhausted. By this time, the people trapped within the walls could become cannibals; the forces of human decency would suffer severely. An army holding a city under siege need only wait. Unless the people came out to fight, they would eventually starve.

The siege against Jabesh Gilead had apparently been in place for some time. The future looked ever gloomier for the inhabitants. The men of the city, for some reason, asked Nahash to make a covenant with them. In almost every instance, the army enforcing the siege would only laugh at the possibility of making an agreement with a city under siege. Those making the siege would gain nothing by such a covenant. Their best interest would be served by starving the people as quickly as possible.

But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "I will make it with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on all Israel." I Samuel 11:2

As you read this verse, you gain an appreciation for the depth of brutality of which these people are capable. We are devastated to even think about it. They thought of this as normal.

This appears to be a case of classic overconfidence. The men of Jabesh admitted that they were going to see if they could get other Jews to come to fight to deliver them from the Ammonites. Again, it does not make sense to let even one man from Jabesh go out of the city to seek support from the other tribes.

Overconfidence is a serious part of their disdain for every living Jew. Nahash had to be unreasonably secure in the power of his army to defeat whatever army the Jews could put together in seven days.

One must keep in mind that these people were distant relatives. They were severely despised, but distant relatives just the same.

Nahash promised to make covenant with them, but added a condition to it. He agreed to let them send emissaries all over Israel. He also demanded that when the seven days were up he would be able to put out the right eye of every man in Jabesh. Nahash identified his purpose in this additional condition. "I will make it a reproach on all Israel." This was not just a general statement. There were at least two specific ways in which this would be a reproach in Israel. If a person was maimed or disfigured in some unfortunate way, that individual would not be able to enter the temple area, even on the Day of Atonement. To make matters worse, the religious responsibility for the family was the place of the father of the family, not the mother or children. If all the men were disfigured by having their eye gouged out, then none of them would be able to attend worship, even on the day of atonement and the worship of the LORD would for all intents be done away. This would be a serious reproach. A second reproach would be that if all the men of Jabesh had their right eye

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gougued out because their fellow Jews failed to come to their rescue, then they would be betraying their family members by not coming to their aid in a time of great distress. Add to this, that it was not accidental that Nahash chose the right eye. All warriors used their right hand to lash with their sword. This placed the shield in the left hand. If the right eye was gougued out, it would place them at an impossible disadvantage in trying to defend themselves against a right-handed warrior. They would always be on the defensive and never be able to attack. They would have no chance for anything but death.

And the elders of Jabesh said to him, "Let us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you." I Samuel 11:3

Nahash made a terrible tactical error by considering any kind of negotiations with people who openly admitted that they could not defend themselves against him and his strong army.

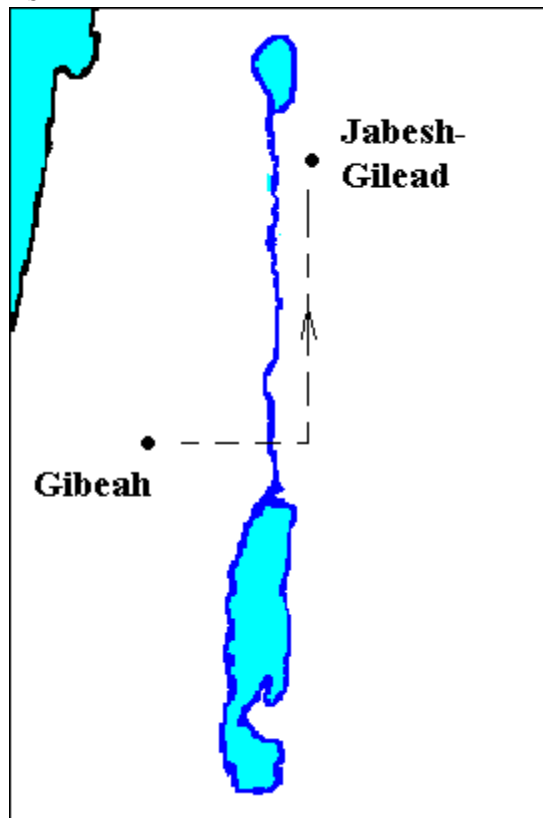
Having allowed for negotiations, then any possible negotiating position could be placed on the table.

For the chief elder of Jabesh Gilead to place this issue on the table for discussion was sheer brilliance if it worked, but indescribable stupidity that would most likely cost him his life. For whatever reason, Nahash not only allowed the discussion; he bought the idea that he would be very sorry for allowing in a few short days.

Then the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and spoke these words in the hearing of the people, and all the people lifted up their voices and wept. I Samuel 11:4

Observe that this verse does not say that the messenger brought the message to Saul. There are at least two possible reasons for this:

1. We will see in verse five, that Saul was not present in the city at this time.
2. This was not a message sent exclusively to the king. They wanted everyone and anyone who would come to rescue them. Besides, they might not have been that confident that Saul would be of any real help to them in this crucial situation.



THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

There have been times in Israel's history, particularly in the Judges, when some of the people did not come to the aid of their fellow countrymen in distress. Here is going to be one great exception to this rule. When the people heard of the distress and pending doom, the people of Jabesh Gilead were about to endure, they ALL lifted up their voices and wept. It was as though every person in Israel was part of that city.

Now behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen; and he said, "What is the matter with the people that they weep?" So they related to him the words of the men of Jabesh. I Samuel 11:5

The first question one must ask about this verse is why would the king of Israel be following a pair of oxen coming from the field? Observe, the people of Israel were getting used to the idea of Saul being their king. They even referred to his city as "Gibeah of Saul". Did Saul not know how to conduct himself as a king? Did Saul not know what a king was to do so he went about his farm work as he had done all his life? We do not know. We only know that his royal behavior was "unusual" to say the least!

Saul observed that the people were all weeping, but at this point he had no way to know what this was all about. It was only at this point that he discovered the dilemma his reign faced on the east side of the Jordan River.

I Samuel 11:6-11 – Saul Led Victory Over Ammonites

Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry. I Samuel 11:6

Again, this was a landmark decision for Saul. His reputation as Israel's first king hinged completely on not only what he did, but also how he did it. We must keep in mind that there were many who thought that Saul did not have the courage or ability to rule. This was his only chance to establish his place in the minds of all the people.

As we can see in this verse, the Spirit of God came mightily upon Saul to guide and direct his choices and actions. Though Saul's enemies would not be aware of it, what we see here is not Saul in action, but the Spirit of God moving him, guiding him, stirring his emotions and anger. It is clear that the LORD is angry at what Nahash and his army are preparing to do to the people of Jabesh Gilead.

And he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then the dread of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out as one man. I Samuel 11:7

The people of Israel had seen Saul as so self-conscious that he strongly resisted even being presented as Israel's king. The people had to be indescribably shocked at the strong, direct action he took at this crucial time. The visual and verbal message Saul sent to all Israel was hard to ignore. This was an "obey my command or else..." type of communication.

There is a hint of Saul's thinking hidden in this verse. We need to ask, with a strong message inspired by the Spirit of God, why would Saul include the words, "and after Samuel"? in his very direct instruction to all Israel. The text is not too helpful here. We know that the Spirit of God came upon him and it is appropriate to think this addition involves the action of the Spirit as well. Also, it seems appropriate to feel that through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, Saul could see that this was a spiritual encounter as well as a military exercise.

And he numbered them in Bezek; and the sons of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000. I Samuel 11:8

It is interesting that there were ten times as many from the rest of Israel as there were from Judah. The report in this verse is very important. The men of Judah were the best soldiers in all Israel. They were also

SAUL ROUTED THE AMMONITES AT JABESH GILEAD

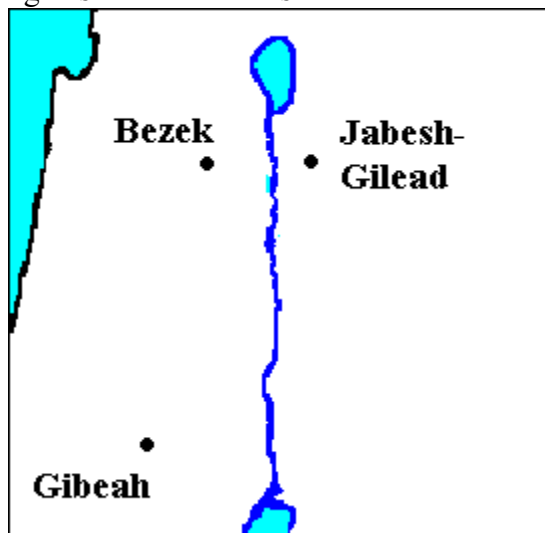
the ones most likely to volunteer to fight to deliver their countrymen. This verse tells us that the backbone of the Israelite response force is already in place – 30,000 are coming from Judah.

The fact that 300,000 are coming from the other ten tribes is also good news. This is a far better response than the men of Jabesh Gilead could have hoped for. It is certainly a far greater response than Nahash and his army could have anticipated. The Ammonites were going to be severely outnumbered. The fact that they did not know it would only increase the shock and surprise.

There is a question that arises. Saul was working under severe time restraints. How could he know that there were 330,000 men who would come to the aid of the people of Manasseh. The honest answer is that we do not know. One wonders, though, if Saul did not indicate, in his strong message to the tribes of Israel that each tribe should produce so many soldiers immediately. I, for one, would not be surprised. Whatever the reason, this is decisive action that would certainly surprise and embarrass his enemies.

And they said to the messengers who had come, "Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh-gilead, 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance.'" So the messengers went and told the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. I Samuel 11:9

Saul and his army have come to Bezek. Here they will form into battle groups in preparation for crossing the Jordan River and waging war against the ammonites.



Saul's men told the Jabesh Gilead messengers what they were to report to the men of the city. This is a very delicate situation. They must take great care not to rouse the suspicions of the Ammonites. The element of surprise must be protected. The very fact that the messengers returned could indicate to the Ammonites that something was in progress. One wonders how the messengers got back into the city. If the city was under siege, then it would be surrounded by enemy troops. We know that many walled cities had escape passages so that messengers could go in and out without being detected by the troops surrounding the city. It seems certain that Nahash knew there were messengers sent out, but he would not expect them to return. To see returning messengers would be a signal to him to be on the alert. Only extreme overconfidence could keep Nahash from taking extra precautions at this point.

Saul's men told the messengers, "by the time the sun is hot." This, of course, is a reference to mid-afternoon. They promised the men of Jabesh Gilead that by mid-afternoon they would have their freedom; release from their cage, the walled city.

Now, it seems impossible to be able to have the messengers share this information with the people of the city without shouts of joy from everyone. That, however, would tell the Ammonites that there was an army coming. Though the text is silent, it seems certain that the messengers had to warn the men of the city not to celebrate in any way. For the author to say, "they were glad," had to be the understatement of the century.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

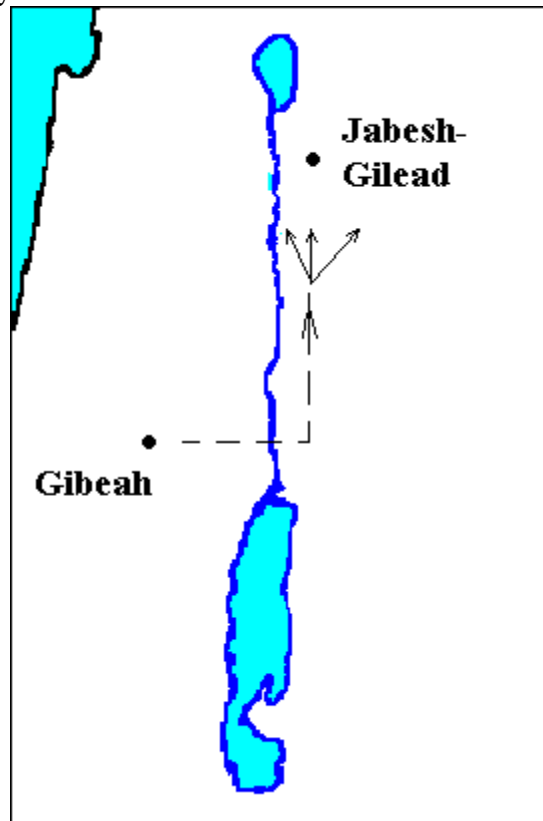
Then the men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." I Samuel 11:10

It was absolutely essential that the men of Jabesh Gilead keep up the appearance of sorrowful defeat. This was really necessary if they were to be able to sustain the Ammonite sense of great overconfidence. It was working so far. They sent word to the Ammonites that they would come out to them the next day as promised. They also strengthened the sense of overconfidence by also suggesting that the Ammonites could put out the right eye of every man in the city as earlier agreed.

All the time this ruse was being carried out, the people in the city were preparing for the great surprise that would take place in the morning. There is an indication of just how overconfident the Ammonite army had become. No army in the field would be without a very vigilant team of scouts to keep them posted about possible enemy surprises. The fact that the Ammonites were taken by surprise is evidence that this cardinal military rule was violated. The Ammonites had no idea this was happening.

And it happened the next morning that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp at the morning watch, and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. And it came about that those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. I Samuel 11:11

Saul resorted to an old Israelite military tactic that had been used as long as there was an Israelite army. In the three hours before dawn, "the morning watch," the darkest time of the night, Saul had divided his forces into three attack groups. They moved against the Ammonite forces from three sides. Meanwhile the Ammonite forces were not even awake yet.



The Israelites killed Ammonites until after the noon hour, "the heat of the day." There is no record of the size of the Ammonite force against which the 330,000 Israelites fought. The text is clear, however, they fought until there were no two Ammonites standing together to defend each other. This indicates that the

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Ammonites were not only defeated, they were all killed. In about eight hours, the overconfidence of the Ammonite forces turned to total devastation and utter defeat.

I Samuel 11:12-13 – Saul Refused To Kill His Opponents

Then the people said to Samuel, "Who is he that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." I Samuel 11:12

Though the text does not indicate it, there is a time lapse between 11:11 and 11:12. Also, there is a change of location and situation. 11:11 describes the massacre of the Ammonite forces in Jabesh Gilead. 11:12, takes place after the battle is over and King Saul has returned home in victory. Saul is not the person in the spotlight, but Samuel is.

It was a poorly kept secret that some people were most unhappy that Saul had been anointed king. By the way, this tells us something specific about the spiritual condition of these enemies of Saul. Whether Saul was a good or poor choice as king, they knew he had been chosen by God. To stand against his reign was to stand against the will of God for Israel – a very foolish thing to do.

When those who supported Saul's reign learned of the brilliant campaign, they remembered the words of Saul's detractors. These friends of Saul immediately did exactly what almost every king of that day would do.

In this verse, however, it does not mention just the ones who had been supporters of Saul at the time of his anointing. It specifically states, "then the people said to Samuel." The only way a king could be sure his detractors could cause him no more trouble was to put them to death. That is exactly what they determined to do to those who had made derogatory remarks about Saul at the time of the anointing.

The people made a serious error in this decision. They assumed that it was Saul who had been responsible for this victory. They were unaware that it was the Spirit of God who had energized Saul to plan and carry out this monumental campaign.

But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished deliverance in Israel." I Samuel 11:13

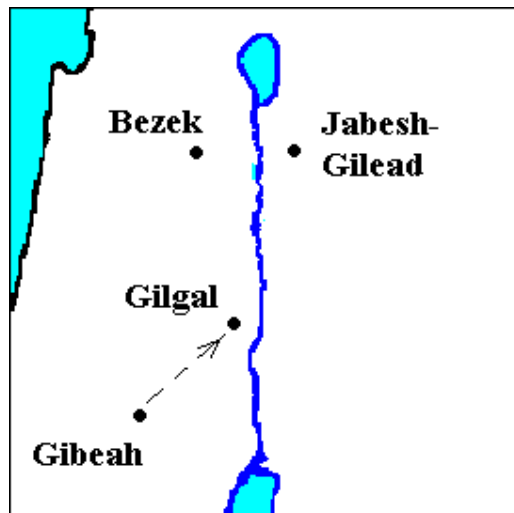
One is forced to wonder, Is this really Saul who is speaking? This is the man with so little spiritual background that he did not even recognize Samuel, the most highly visible representative of the LORD in all Israel. Now Saul is the first to recognize that this victory really belongs to the LORD.

Observe also that he is turning out to be a compassionate king. He was as aware as anyone else that these are the men who declared that he would not rule over them. He had to remember keeping silent when they refused to congratulate him by bringing gifts to him after he was anointed king of Israel. Nevertheless, he decreed, that, "Not a man shall be put to death this day." One cannot help but wonder what Israel's history would be like if he had kept to this pattern of ruling Israel. He knew the truth – God performed the miracle against the Ammonites.

I Samuel 11:14- 15 – Samuel Called Israel To Gilgal To Sacrifice

Then Samuel said to the people, "Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there." I Samuel 11:14

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



We do not know where Samuel had been, but he suddenly bursts upon the scene, again. Samuel moved Israel around the country a lot – from this city to that. As we noted earlier, Gilgal is located just a bit north of Jericho. Samuel, Saul and the people are now in Gibeah, where Saul lived. This is a trip of about 15 miles. Keep in mind, however, that this is travel on foot. It is not quite a full day's travel.

So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly. I Samuel 11:15

Saul's reign, though determined by God, had never been consummated in a human ceremony. Now it was to be official; this in spite of the fact that he had already led the nation through a time of crisis and led the army of Israel to victory in battle. In Gilgal, Saul was crowned king of Israel.

Observe also that it was not exclusively a civil ceremony. Again, in Gilgal, Samuel led them in sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD. The peace offering was an offering of thanksgiving. This would always be presented to the Lord in connection with a sacrificial meal. It signified God had come to their rescue and that they would be living in peace with God as a result of what he had done on their behalf.

In a very quiet way, Samuel placed the focus where it belonged. Saul's friends focused on what Saul had done. This was the basis of their decision to kill Saul's detractors. Samuel, however, knew it was God who had delivered the Ammonites into their hands. He, therefore, called all Israel to a sacrifice of peace and thanksgiving to God for all that he had done.

Conclusion

A study of the people God uses is always intriguing to say the least. Anyone who was present when Saul was anointed king had every reason in the world to be discouraged. Everything a king must be Saul was not. He was not internally strong enough to be introduced as the king, much less function as one.

This, of course, makes Saul a prime candidate to be used of God for His glory. Nothing changes until 11:6, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul. The man once too shy to be introduced to Israel as their king became a brilliant leader and masterful tactician under the auspices of the Spirit of God. From that point on, the bashful, timid man became a forceful leader in Israel. The one who had to hide so as not to be introduced as king, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, was courageous and aggressive enough to defeat the Ammonites who had threatened to destroy one of the strongest cities east of the Jordan River.

God is not searching for what we are able to do. Without His help there is nothing we can do. He is searching hearts to discover what one is willing to allow Him to do through us by His Spirit. By chance, does any of this sound a bit familiar?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 12

SAMUEL'S SOLEMN RETIREMENT SPEECH – I SAMUEL 12:1 – 25

1. There are only three paragraphs in the twelfth chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

12:1-5	
12:6-18	
12:19-25	

2. In I Samuel 12:1-5, Samuel at the time of his retirement, asked Israel to declare their witness before the LORD.
- a. In 12:1, 2, Samuel began his farewell address to Israel.
 - 1) How would you characterize the atmosphere of his message?
 - 2) There is a contrast in these two verses. What two things is he contrasting?
 - b. In 12:3, 4, Samuel continued his farewell address to Israel.
 - 1) What does Samuel mean when he said, "Bear witness against me"?
 - 2) Why does he ask these four questions?
 - c. In 12:4, the people responded to Samuel's questions.
 - 1) What did they say?
 - 2) What are they trying to say to him?
 - 3) Why was this necessary?
 - d. In 12:5, there is a change of tone.
 - 1) Why is the LORD witness against these people?
 - 2) Samuel spoke of "His anointed." Of whom was he speaking?
3. In 12:6-18, Samuel issued a warning to the people of Israel.
- a. In 12:6, Samuel begins his sermon. He spoke of Moses and Aaron.
 - 1) What have they to do with these people?
 - 2) What is Samuel trying to say?
 - b. In 12:7, Samuel challenged the people.
 - 1) What does he mean when he said, "take your stand"?
 - 2) Why would Samuel want to plead with them concerning the righteous acts of the LORD for them and for their fathers?
 - c. In 12:8, Samuel continued by a specific statement concerning Jacob and their fathers in Egypt.
 - 1) Again, what is this about?
 - 2) What does this have to do with the people to whom Samuel was speaking?
 - 3) What is Samuel trying to establish here?
 - d. In 12:9, 10, Samuel draws a contrast with 12:6-8.
 - 1) What does Samuel contrast?
 - 2) In what way, if any, are these people doing what Samuel described in 12:9, 10?
 - 3) Why is Samuel doing this?
 - e. In 12:11, Samuel talked about God sending four men to deliver Israel.
 - 1) Who are Jerubbaal, Bedan and Jephthah?
 - 2) What did each of the four men in this verse do that resulted in Israel's deliverance and security?
 - 3) What does this have to do with the people to whom Samuel is speaking?
 - f. In 12:12, Samuel talked with Israel about an incident that had recently happened to them.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

- 1) What does Israel's response to Samuel, "NO, but a king shall reign over us," have to do with Samuel's response, "although the LORD was your king"?
 - 2) Compare the way Samuel refers to deity in this verse with the way he refers to deity in the rest of this chapter. What difference, if any, does this make?
 - g. In 12:13, there seems to be a contradiction.
 - 1) What is this apparent contradiction?
 - 2) What does it mean?
 - 3) How would you describe Samuel's attitude in this verse?
 - h. In 12:14, there is an observable change in Samuel's message.
 - 1) What is this change?
 - 2) This is a conditional statement
 - a) What conditions does Samuel identify?
 - b) Explain each condition?
 - c) What result does Samuel promise?
 - i. In 12:15, Samuel makes a second conditional statement
 - 1) What are the two conditions Samuel mentions?
 - 2) What result does Samuel promise?
 - 3) How would you compare or contrast the conditional statements of 12:14 and 12:15?
 - j. In 12:16, Samuel issued a challenge to Israel.
 - 1) What does Samuel mean, "even now take your stand"?
 - 2) What is Samuel asking of them?
 - k. In 12:17, there is a change in atmosphere.

What is the change?

What is Samuel trying to accomplish in this verse?

Why does Samuel see asking for a king as great wickedness?
 - l. In 12:18, Samuel called upon the LORD to send thunder and rain on Israel's harvest.
 - 1) How would you describe this action?
 - 2) If you were Samuel, why would you do this?
 - 3) One can understand why the people might be afraid of the LORD, but why would they be afraid of Samuel?
4. In I Samuel 12:19-25, Samuel both comforts and warns the people of Israel.
- a. In 12:19, the people responded to Samuel's message.
 - 1) Observe that they requested Samuel to pray for them to "the LORD your God." What did they mean by this identification?
 - 2) Read this verse carefully two or three times.
 - a) Is this repentance?
 - b) If so, how would you describe this repentance?
 - b. In 12:20, Samuel spoke again to the people. Again in this verse there is an apparent contradiction.
 - 1) What is this apparent contradiction?
 - 2) How would you describe Samuel's tone in this verse.
 - c. In 12:21, Samuel issued an instruction to the people.
 - 1) What is this instruction?
 - 2) What reason does he give?
 - 3) What does this verse tell us about the nature of sin?
 - d. In 12:22, Samuel gave an explanation.
 - 1) What explanation does he give?
 - 2) Compare/contrast this verse with 12:18. What did you learn?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 12

- e. In 12:23, Samuel made a personal commitment.
 - 1) What is his commitment?
 - 2) This is Samuel's farewell address as the leader of Israel. How, then, is he going to instruct these people?
 - 3) In what way would it be a sin against the LORD to cease to pray for Israel?
 - f. In 12:24, Samuel gave Israel three instructions.
 - What are the three instructions?
 - What reason does he give for these instructions?
 - g. In 12:25, the closing verse of the chapter, Samuel issued another warning in the form of a conditional statement.
 - 1) What was his warning ?
 - 2) Study the promise Samuel made. What is obviously ironic about it?
5. In conclusion of the study of chapter 12, we do not have a king and no one is asking for a king. In what way can you apply the message of this chapter to your life.?

LESSON 12

SAMUEL'S SOLEMN RETIREMENT SPEECH – I SAMUEL 12:1 – 25

There are only three paragraphs in the twelfth chapter of I Samuel. There is a brief summary of each paragraph on this table.

12:1-5	Samuel Asked Israel To Declare Witness At His Retirement
12:6-18	Samuel Warned Israel About Choosing a King
12:19-25	Samuel Comforted and Warned Israel Concerning Disobedience.

I Samuel 12:1-5 – Samuel Asked Israel To Declare Witness At His Retirement

Then Samuel said to all Israel, "Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me, and I have appointed a king over you. I Samuel 12:1

Saul had been properly installed as the king of Israel. Saul even had won his first military encounter on behalf of his people. This is a moment of emotional upheaval. People are excited that they finally have the king they wanted and demanded. They even have a victory over their hated enemies, the Ammonites. These things elicit shouts of joy. On the other hand, Samuel is being unceremoniously dismissed from the position God gave him. Samuel knows that God did not want Israel to have a king and yet this is just what they demanded. Everyone knows that Samuel was displeased with Israel's demand. It is now time for him to step aside. He does so as graciously as one can, given the circumstances. He affirmed that he had listened to their every demand and appointed a king when he knew that this did not represent wisdom in any possible way. As you read the statement he made in this paragraph, you can feel the bittersweet atmosphere in every word he said.

And now, here is the king walking before you, but I am old and gray, and behold my sons are with you. And I have walked before you from my youth even to this day. I Samuel 12:2

Observe that as you read each sentence, there is a growing sharpness in Samuel's words. In this particular verse, his feelings almost reach the point of sarcasm.

Samuel has been very faithful to God throughout his ministry. He was one of those rare individuals who did the right thing even though it was not popular to do so. Now, in his old age, he is being ungracefully dismissed and he knows it and feels the intense pain it produces. His message to Israel, as always, was very clear and honest. It was not necessary, but he gave the people one last chance to criticize him and his work. As you reflect over verses one and two, you can sense a rising disturbance in the words and ideas he shared.

In the opening statement of this verse, Samuel insinuated a double, sharpened contrast. He begins by mentioning their young king, walking before them, but Samuel is old and gray. This is the sound of old age sensing it is being put out to pasture and not too happy with the prospect. Add to this the fact that God was as unhappy about this turn of events as Samuel was.

He drew an even sharper contrast between himself and his sons. Observe, he described his sons as, "my sons are with you." You may remember that in I Samuel 8:1-6, the evil conduct of his sons was the basis on which the people demanded a king. At the time, Samuel said nothing. Now he speaks. He described his sons, who were obviously evil, as being with the people. It is a way of saying they were of the same mind. Though every courtesy was observed, the knife sharp words cut to the core.

Samuel then described the way he had conducted himself among them – "I have walked before you even from my youth." This is a contrast between Samuel's lifelong faithfulness and their youthful sinfulness. One can feel the bitter pain of his heart as he speaks.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

Here I am; bear witness against me before the LORD and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore it to you." I Samuel 12:3

Samuel's words take on a cooler, sharper tone. Despite the fact that his words are razor sharp, they are indeed a wonderful commentary on his ministry. How many people could dare to make this kind of statement about their entire life. There is a quiet confidence that increases word by word. If there is any way in which he has not been faithful and honest, they now have their opportunity to confront him and he promised to repay what he has wrongfully taken. This kind of offer only finds its origin in a heart confident of purity and responsibility.

Observe the broad sweep of his offer. He exposed himself to censure concerning theft, fraud, oppression and bribery. This is either total confidence or absolute foolishness. Total confidence it is.

And they said, "You have not defrauded us, or oppressed us, or taken anything from any man's hand." I Samuel 12:4

As indicated earlier, the king was already anointed and properly installed in office. Samuel's retirement was already in place. All of this would change nothing. Still, Samuel seems driven to gently, but firmly, demand that they explain why they demanded a king instead of his direction.

Samuel's penetrating questions forced them to admit that he was guilty of none of the things that would require his replacement. Put yourself in the place of the people as Samuel insisted on their admission that nothing he had ever done brought them to this place. There is a painful level of embarrassment involved when this kind of honest pressure is increasingly applied.

And he said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day that you have found nothing in my hand." And they said, "He is witness." I Samuel 12:5

Samuel cannot let it go. He is impelled to take the next step – he has established the fact that he is guilty of nothing worthy of being removed from his God-given office. The next step is to focus attention upon their responsibility and error. This Samuel did in a gentle way when he said, "the LORD is witness against you and His anointed is witness this day." Samuel spoke with great care. In Israel, truth was established with the word of two or three witnesses. Samuel chose the witnesses with great care.

- a. **The LORD** – He whose word is truth cannot be challenged by mortal men. Besides, God did not want Samuel to be removed in the first place.
- b. **"His anointed"** – Samuel called upon King Saul to be witness against the very people who demanded that his office be established. There is a certain irony in these choices.

One final time, the people are forced to implicate themselves by saying, "He is witness." Look at these words again. Samuel spoke of two witnesses – the LORD and King Saul. When the people responded, however, they said, "He is witness." The text does not clarify the statement, but it appears that their reference to "He" is a reference to the LORD and not to Saul.

I Samuel 12:6-18 – Samuel Warned Israel About Choosing a King

Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt." I Samuel 12:6

Having vented his soul about his dismissal, Samuel turned his attention to the message he was to convey from God. Often when people read this verse, their attention is focused on Moses and Aaron. That is not Samuel's emphasis. Samuel pointed out three things in this verse. First, it was God who appointed the leadership of Israel. It was not the choice of the people as to the kind of ruler they would have. Second, the men chosen for this theocratic form of government were Moses and Aaron. These men were members of the tribe of Levi – the priestly tribe, not from Judah, the kingly tribe. Third, though Moses and Aaron were priests and

SAMUEL'S SOLEMN RETIREMENT SPEECH

not royalty, the LORD used them victoriously to lead Israel out of the land of Egyptian bondage and into the land of promise. Samuel is establishing the effectiveness of a leadership style in which God leads Israel through His chosen servants.

So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers. I Samuel 12:7

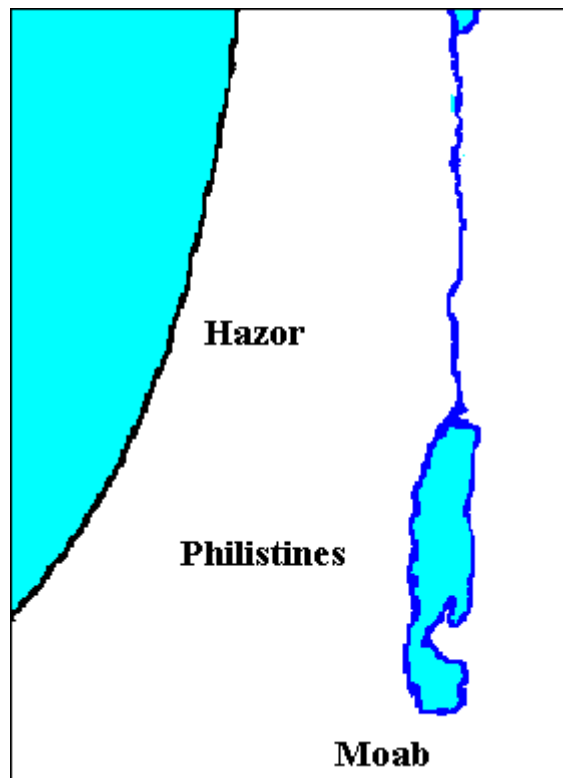
Having established the fact that a theocratic form of government can be effective, Samuel now proceeded to describe the way the Lord blessed Israel under this form of government.

Samuel's use of the picture of a court scene would be obvious to every Jew who listened to his message. Samuel's emphasis in this message is that the LORD did many acts of righteousness through this theocratic form of government. The fact that his description of God's acts includes both them and their fathers changes the emphasis of his message. He is stressing God's righteous acts, but emphasized His faithfulness across the centuries to fathers and father's fathers.

When Jacob went into Egypt and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place. I Samuel 12:8

The Jews were quite familiar with the way the LORD brought their people out of Egypt. In the family, it was the father's responsibility to teach this to his sons. These men would know every detail. They also knew about Israel's idolatry and disobedience in the land we call Palestine. They also knew that despite this failure to obey, still God gave them all the best land in Egypt. When the Egyptians used and abused the people of God, He heard their cry and through Moses brought them out of Egypt to settle them in Israel. This is a picture of a gracious God who extended mercy even when they were totally disobedient.

But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. I Samuel 12:9



THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The author begins this verse with the word "but." This makes it clear that we are in the midst of a very strong contrast. We need to be reminded of the things being contrasted:

- a. God appointed Moses and Aaron to deliver Israel from Egypt. These two brothers were used of God to take Israel out of Egypt and lead them into the land of promise.

"BUT"

- b. The people forgot God, so God allowed them to be taken advantage of by the army of Hazor as well as by the Philistines and Moabites.

This is a contrast between the faithfulness of God and the disobedience of Israel. As you can see in this verse, the author spoke of God as "the LORD their God." This is the name that focuses attention on God as the Merciful Judge. They had received far better than they deserved and in their better moments they knew it.

In this verse the author lists three peoples who fought against Israel and devastated them. On this map, observe where these people were located. God allowed the people from the far north – Hazor; the far south – Moab; and the far west, the Philistines to each defeat Israel in the midst of their disobedience.

Sisera was the commander of the army of King Jabin of Hazor. As we observed in Judges chapter 10, these Canaanites oppressed the people of Israel for forty years.

The Moabites made life miserable for Israel on a number of occasions. Judges chapter three tells of the trouble King Eglon caused for Israel.

This verse also mentions the Philistines. Israel had just experienced the trouble the Philistines could cause them. This was very fresh in their minds.

And they cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned because we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth; but now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve Thee.' 1 Samuel 12:10

Each time Israel lapsed into disobedience, in the midst of God's showering His mercies upon them, the LORD allowed them to be devastated. In each case, this caused Israel to cry out to Jehovah, repent of their sins and seek His deliverance. That, of course, is exactly what the LORD was trying to accomplish in their lives. It was not the LORD venting his uncontrollable hostility.

Read this prayer again. There are four parts:

1. They confessed their sin
2. They detailed their confession
3. They pleaded for the LORD'S deliverance
4. They promised to serve God, again.

They did not try to hide their sinful ways. They admitted their evil, immediately. If you read this verse a few times, you will notice that there is something missing. There is urgency in their prayer. They cried out quickly. They admitted their sin on the spot.

The people of Israel did not generalize their confession. They admitted that they had forsaken the LORD. Indeed, they were specific about how they had forsaken the LORD –they served Baals and Ashtaroth. Ashtaroth was the female consort of Baal. Whenever Baal and Ashtaroth are mentioned together, it identifies an expression which is nothing less than a sexual orgy. This was the habitual downfall of Israel.

Israel pleaded with God to "deliver them from the hands of their enemies." These people enjoyed their sin right up to the point where God allowed them the real consequences of their choices. At this point, they immediately wanted to be delivered from their pain.

Israel concluded their confession with a tired promise, "we will serve thee." How many times had Israel made this same promise only to violate it again and again?

Earlier, we mentioned that there was something missing in this prayer. Look carefully to see if you can find an expression of sorrow for their sin. There is sorrow that they are suffering and facing danger. There is both general and specific admission of their sin, but no real sorrow for that sin. As happens so often, there is

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real sorrow for being caught or sorrow for paying the consequences for sin, but no sorrow for having committed the sin.

"Then the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around, so that you lived in security. I Samuel 12:11

There is a picture of what God is like in this verse. Israel sinned grievously and God allowed their enemies to prosper against them. Israel cried to the LORD, in the midst of their sin, and He delivered them. The LORD'S punishment of Israel, like that of a loving father, is not to give vent to His wrath, but to turn His children toward righteousness and Himself.

In this verse, Samuel tells Israel how the LORD saved them – by sending them four leaders. The first of these leaders is Jerubbaal. We probably know this man better by the name Gideon. It may surprise some that God would think of Gideon as a deliverer because he ultimately faltered and failed God. That is true, but prior to that, Gideon led Israel against the Philistines in battle after battle and enabled Israel to conquer these hideous enemies.

The second deliverer mentioned by Samuel is Bedan. We cannot say for certain, but it appears that the one called "Bedan" is really Barak. Barak, by this name, is mentioned only in Judges and Hebrews chapter 11. Barak refused to go into battle, as the LORD commanded, unless Deborah, the Judge, went with him. Like Gideon, Barak was not a perfect servant. Nevertheless, God used him to deliver Israel from decades of oppression.

The third deliverer Samuel mentioned was Jephthah. Other than this verse, Jephthah is mentioned only in Judges chapter 11 (23 times) and chapter 12 (five times). Jephthah judged Israel for six years. The son of a harlot, Jephthah was mistreated by his mother's other sons and eventually ejected from the family. He is remembered most for the sacrifice of his daughter. He should be remembered, however, for his summary deliverance of Israel from the constant oppression of Israel by the Ammonites.

There is some debate about Samuel being the fourth deliverer mentioned in this verse. The debate originates from two basic reasons:

1. Samuel mentioned himself in this role. This was probably difficult for him to announce. We should keep in mind, however, that he was merely relaying God's message to Israel.
2. Samuel did not lead Israel in a single military expedition. Samuel did, however, serve as one of the strongest spiritual leaders of Israel since his early youth until he was retired when presenting Saul as Israel's first king. Though Samuel was a giant spiritually, he had one obvious flaw. He did not have control of his own family.

As you look at these four men, you realize that though they were available to God, there was no perfect saint among them. Samuel summarized the results of the ministries of these four men when he said, "And delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around so that you lived in security." This was a very forceful way of saying that the theocracy had been a very effective tool in the hands of God in protecting and defending His people.

When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' although the LORD your God was your king. I Samuel 12:12

Samuel had been describing for Israel the way the LORD had been completely faithful to their forefathers even through the theocracy that they wanted to abandon. Now, he has brought them up to the present. This is probably not Samuel's gentlest statement to the people of Israel. Now, he is talking about these people, not their ancestors.

He talked with them about their recent encounter with Nahash, the Ammonite king. When he came against the people of Jabesh Gilead, these very people confronted Samuel demanding the theocracy be terminated and a king be anointed to rule over them. In spite of the fact that God delivered the feared Nahash into their hands, still they demanded a king.

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Samuel's words were penetrating. He confronted them with demanding a king when "the LORD your God was your king." It is interesting the way Samuel worded his charge. He has been talking about "the LORD." Now, his charge becomes increasingly strong and he talked about their demanding a king while "the LORD your GOD" was your king. Whenever he speaks of "the LORD your God" it is a way of referring to God as "the merciful judge." Actually, Samuel is making an additional charge against them. It is more than the pride of wanting a king to rule over them as other nations have. Samuel was charging that they do not want the LORD to rule over them, a spiritual charge. This is a far more serious charge.

Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you. I Samuel 12:13

Gentle Samuel has turned into an attacker. He is letting the people know just how upset he is with them. He stressed the fact that God did not force the king upon them. They demanded a king to rule over them. In effect, Samuel has presented a very subtle truth that can be found in several places throughout the Scriptures. When we will not hear and obey, God sometimes works so that our punishment will be that we get what we want. They demanded a king and God set a king over them. They forgot that even if they have a king, God is still in control of their lives and their nation.

If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God. I Samuel 12:14

If you read carefully, you will sense that there is a change of tone in Samuel's message at this point. Samuel has carefully, painfully reminded them of the fact that the LORD is merciful as well as just. In this verse, Samuel presents a conditional statement in four parts. Samuel said, "If you will fear the LORD." The word translated "fear" is "yare" (יָרֵא). This word was originally intended to convey the idea of fright. It changed with time and use and became an expression of reverence. It is exactly the same word that is used in Proverbs 1:7 where the author said, "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." It means "to stand in awe;" "it is to be so impressed with the greatness of the LORD that no price of obedience is too great."

The second requirement of this conditional statement is "(If you will) serve Me." To "serve" the LORD is more than blind, unthinking obedience. It includes doing what He commands as a response to His goodness to us. It is a serious response to His mercy. It is action out of desire and not necessity.

The third requirement of this conditional statement is "(If you will) listen to His voice." This is significant because in the past they have refused to listen to His voice. They repeatedly did just the opposite of what He counseled them. That was the common response of their lives to a loving God.

The fourth condition is, "(If you will) not rebel against the command of the LORD." This may sound like the reverse side of the previous condition. It is that, but it is more than that. These people were notorious for their rebellion. They wanted, even demanded the LORD'S protection and benefits, but had no interest in His control of their lives. They were supposed to be an example to the nations, but they wanted to live the way other nations did, including disobedience to the God of Israel.

Having stated the conditions, in this part of the sentence, Samuel now turns his attention to the promise that follows the keeping of the conditions. This promise is composed of two parts. Samuel promised, "then ...you... will follow the LORD your God." This indicates that these four conditions form a description of the way to live in such a way as to be pleasing to God. Observe that Samuel speaks, again, of "the LORD your God." As previously indicated, this is a depiction of God as the merciful judge. It suggests that these four conditions establish a framework of harmony between God and His people.

The second part of this promise is, "Then...the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God." This sounds strangely like a different form of theocracy. This is a very important consideration. It demonstrates the fact that this is not a divine quest for power, but a deep yearning for relationship. Once

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more, the reference "to the LORD your God" places an emphasis on the fact that the one they follow is the merciful judge.

And if you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers. I Samuel 12:15

There is an unusual situation that exists between 12:14 and 12:15. This second verse begins with the word "and." This word should always identify a continuation of similar, equal parts of a sentence or sentences. In this instance, 12:14 and 12:15 form a contrast. 12:14 describes what happens if they obey. On the other hand, 12:15 describes the opposite – what happens if they do not obey. That being said, the other side of it is that these two sentences are two parts of the same idea. By stating it in this manner, Samuel has added great force and emphasis to the two conditional statements.

This verse is a single sentence. Like 12:14, it is a conditional statement. There are two conditions that pertain to the promised result. The first condition is, "If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD." This condition has nothing to do with the ability to hear sound. It is a description of refusing to be in full compliance with the divine instructions. Listening would include being willing to let God be their king. It includes a willingness to allow God to lead us in a way that is different from the way other nations and peoples live.

Immediately after his statement of the first condition, Samuel inserted the word "but." In almost every instance, this word indicates that you are in the midst of a serious contrast. In this instance, however, the material that follows is a contrast with the previous one in that the first is stated positively and the second part is stated negatively. If you look at this piece carefully, it is clear that this is nearly an identical statement with the first condition. This is a repetition of the situation between 12:14 and 12:15. Having said that, there are some differences. First, Samuel spoke of "the voice of the LORD" in the first condition and "the command of the LORD" in the second. These definitely differ in terms of their intensity. Again, the first deals with not listening. The second deals with rebelling. In Scripture, this is a form of intense emphasis."

The promise of result is the same for both conditions, "The hand of the LORD will be against you." Here again, Samuel chose the divine name with great care. He was speaking of promised punishment for disobedience. He chose the name "LORD," a name most commonly associated with God's justice. Samuel spoke of "the hand of the LORD." The mention of the hand is an emphasis of great power.

Having stated the conditions and the promised punishment, Samuel illustrated what he meant. His words, "As it was with your fathers," would be clearly understood by every Jewish person listening. Israel rebelled against the LORD and He let them walk in the wilderness for 40 years. With the exception of a very few, none of the others ever entered the land of promise. Again, Israel rebelled against the command of the LORD while they were in Canaan and God allowed the pagan nations to take them captive and kill them ruthlessly.

Even now, take your stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes. I Samuel 12:16

As Samuel nears the end of his sermon, he made a plea for the people to hear and change their ways. You may remember Joshua's plea with Israel, as recorded in Joshua 24:14, 15. He pleaded with the people to make that final decision to follow only the LORD. That is exactly what Samuel is doing in this verse.

As you read this verse again, observe the timing. They are called upon to take their stand for God before they see anything happen. It is clearly a call to trust God and only then will He do mighty deeds before them.

Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king." I Samuel 12:17

There is a sudden, shocking change in the message of Samuel. The text makes no effort to account for this change. In Jewish form, Samuel begins this appeal with a question, "Is it not the wheat harvest today?" Samuel chose one of the most vulnerable situations in the farmer's year to bring them to a point of decision.

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Wheat grows on tall stalks and at harvest time it is easily damaged by heavy wind and rain. This is, obviously, a threatening situation. We need to keep in mind that in times of complacency, Israel sometimes felt that God had no alternative but to bless them. After all, they were His chosen people.

Samuel's threat comes as an announcement. He made no claim to personal strength or ability. He promised that he would call to the LORD – the God of justice. It is God who will send thunder and rain. Keep in mind that the wheat harvest comes in late May and early June. During these weeks it seldom if ever rains for a period of five months or more. For it to rain at such a time would constitute a miracle these people had never seen before. They needed dry hot weather to prepare the harvest. A heavy rain at this time would devastate their food supply for the coming year. We should also keep in mind that the Jewish people had been worshipping the fertility gods out of fear that their crops would not be what they ought to be. This would be a blow to their trust in these idols.

Samuel explained why he would make such a devastating prayer to the LORD. He made it known that this is not a fit of anger. This is a way to make it fully known that their position was much more serious than they wanted to think. The purpose focuses upon their light-hearted attitude about how wicked it really was that they had asked for a king. Samuel announced that this is most serious in the sight of the LORD. Samuel is stressing that it is more than just wanting a king. It is that they rejected God as their king.

So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. I Samuel 12:18

Interestingly, the text does not give us any information about Israel's immediate response. At some time after Samuel's announcement, the text tells us what Samuel did. Did he wait to see if they would respond? Did he just take action immediately? We do not know.

At some point, Samuel acted as he said he would. Three times in this brief sentence, the author refers to God as "LORD." This is judgment falling upon people unwilling to repent of their evil choices. This sentence establishes a cause and effect relationship. The cause was clear – Samuel called upon the LORD and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day. The effect was just as clear – "All the people feared the LORD and Samuel." The word translated "feared" is exactly the same word we encountered in verse 14, where we indicated that very early it meant to be frightened, but it later became a description of reverence and awe. There are some references, however, where the word is used to describe a gripping fear that is out of control. This appears to be one of those situations. The people's fright both of the LORD and of Samuel was so intense that it was almost beyond their ability to control their emotional responses.

Observe that this fear applied both to the LORD and Samuel. The people had a trembling fear of what the LORD, in His judgment, might do to them. The LORD, at this point, was the object of their fear.

These people greatly feared Samuel. It does not mean that he was omnipotent or that they thought he was. They were, rather, afraid of what he could get God to do to them. They might literally quake in Samuel's presence. After all, he had gotten the LORD to devastate their livelihood for the coming year.

I Samuel 12:19-25 – Samuel's Solemn Retirement Speech

Then all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, so that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil by asking for ourselves a king." I Samuel 12:19

There is another shift in the tenor of the text. This time, it is in the response of the people. Until now, they have been quiet and unresponsive. Now they suddenly react vigorously. It is quite certain that Samuel has finally gotten their attention. Their response bears careful observation. The people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God." They had practically ignored the admonitions, if not the presence of Samuel. Now, suddenly, they are pleading with him to serve as their priest, the one who intercedes on their behalf. This is unusual to say the least. They prided themselves as being the unique people of God. In their great fear, they dropped all forms of pretense, the fiction that they were God's people. It is clear to them that the LORD was Samuel's God, but they were not nearly so confident that He was their God.

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The use of the words "so that," indicates that a statement of purpose is about to be given. The purpose of their urgent plea is, "that we may not die." If you read this verse very carefully, several times, it is clear that there is an intensity in their plea, but it is difficult to describe this as a state of real contrition. As we saw in verse 10, these people are, again, keenly aware of the nature and severity of their sin, but are not devastated by it.

And Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. I Samuel 10:20

Here we see another side of the ministry of Samuel. He had just severely scolded the people for their disobedience. Now, he is showing great compassion for them. Samuel's approach is very interesting. He gave the people a message that should frighten them to death and then instructed them, "Do not fear." It seems like a contradiction, but it is not. It is total integrity. He told them exactly what would happen if they obeyed. He told them exactly what would happen if they did not obey. He was simply helping them to see how God works.

Having told them how the LORD works, Samuel turned his attention to what God is like. To instruct them, "Do not fear," is not whistling in the dark. It is reasoned instruction based on the nature of God. Because God is compassionate, we should not fear so long as we are obedient.

Samuel spoke, again, of the extent of their sin. He used strong emphasis when he said, "You have committed all this evil." Samuel wanted to fully and honestly describe the depth and extent of their sin without giving them the impression of hopelessness.

Samuel concluded this sentence with a strong contrast. In Jewish instruction, truth is often best conveyed by telling what something is NOT and then telling them what it is. That is precisely what Samuel did here. He first told them what they should not do – "Do not turn aside from following the LORD." Remember that this whole conversation has to do with rejecting the theocracy God instituted and then demanding a king. If they are going to refrain from turning aside from following the LORD, they will have to cease this kind of rebellion. This is now a very delicate situation because Saul had already been anointed King of Israel. The key to this instruction is that though their rebellion got them into this difficult situation, they can still ask God to rule through their king. Is this God's first choice for Israel? NO! Nevertheless, God will use even their rebellion to eventually bring honor to His name.

Having told them what not to do, now Samuel turns his attention to what they must do, "BUT serve the LORD with all your heart." Again, this conversation has to do with their rebellion against the theocracy God intended for Israel. Serving the LORD with all their heart involves sorrow for their previous rebellion and the fact that these choices were irreversible. They can, now, be absolutely determined to be totally obedient so that the government God allows may be as near God's intention as He can make it with their obedient cooperation.

And you must not turn aside, for then you would go after futile things which can not profit or deliver, because they are futile. I Samuel 10:21

If you read carefully, you will sense a change in the appeal of this verse. In verse 20, Samuel appealed to their sense of fear of divine judgment. In verse 21, he appealed to their sense of logic. In the process, he gave them an even stronger picture of the situation they had created for themselves.

Samuel's direction is constant. He first gave them the message of instruction from the LORD. Having done this, he then spelled out the reason this instruction was imperative.

Notice that this sentence begins with the word "and." This tells us that this sentence will be a continuation of the idea of the previous sentence. That is precisely what Samuel has done. Observe, in verse 20, Samuel said, "Do not turn aside from following the LORD." Now in verse 21, Samuel instructed them, "And you must not turn aside." This is repetition for the purpose of emphasis. This is an essential point that they cannot afford to miss.

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Following the initial command of this verse, Samuel used the word "for." This immediately tells us that he is going to give you an explanation of what he has just said. Samuel said and then emphasized that they must not "turn aside." The reason that he gives is that when you "turn aside" you will go after things that are futile. Again, remember that he said this in a context of their rebellion against God ruling over them in a theocracy. He has made this point more than once. If they have a king, they will be led in the direction of the pride over the expressions of royalty that will surely follow. This would include palaces (plural) and an army worthy of the king's royal position. This, of course, would make other countries concerned and it would cause them to increase their military prowess and this would escalate the whole position of military danger to which the whole area would commit itself.

Samuel explained, "things which cannot profit or deliver." The pride of royalty is an exercise in futility. The price is high, but the benefit is non-existent. There is no real benefit from pride or its constituent parts. If you are in the midst of an attack, pride cannot deliver you no matter how expensive it may be. In the closing phrase of this sentence, Samuel repeats his position by the words that he used.

The word translated "futile," is exactly the same in both instances in this verse. The word is "tohuo" (תֹהוּ). This word describes something worthless. It is the picture of the desert, a wilderness. It would be difficult to describe something more futile or worthless than this pride.

For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself. I Samuel 12:22

The fact that the author began this sentence with the word "for," indicates that he now will present an explanation for his previous statement.. As you read and reread this sentence, it is clear that Samuel is describing foundational statements about who God is. The statement is composed of three parts.

1. **THE LORD WILL NOT ABANDON HIS PEOPLE** . This is a divine principle. It is, however, a principle that requires some clarification. The Jewish people, to whom Samuel spoke, had seen the Philistines, the Ammonites, and others devastate Jewish cities and households. Some of them may have seen relatives carted away as slaves, never to be seen again. Certainly, some of these people needed to understand what Samuel was trying to say in light of their experiences. However, it is possible to honestly say that God will not abandon His people and admit the tragedies that Israel had experienced at the hands of their enemy neighbors. When one contends that the LORD will not abandon His people, it is not also saying that everything will be pleasant and prosperous for them. We must also add that God's mercy is always in balance with His justice. There are many occasions, particularly in Judges, where the LORD allowed His people to suffer severely in order to draw them back to Himself rather than destroying them because of their sin.
2. **"ON ACCOUNT OF HIS GREAT NAME"** There were times when it was difficult to see why God would either delay His judgment or show mercy on Israel even in the midst of their sin. One suspects that on occasion, at least, Israel thought that God had to bless them simply because they were His people. That, of course, is not true. One can not determine the mind and purposes of God by human, finite, logic. It appears reasonable to assume that God blessed Israel even while they rebelled against Him. He probably did this to maintain His faithfulness rather than a response to Israel's goodness. God promised to give Israel the land of Canaan. We know that along the way there were several of these chosen people who were far less than deserving. Still, God in His wisdom and power dealt with these people and still kept His word to give Israel the land of promise.
3. **BECAUSE THE "LORD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO MAKE YOU A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF."** It was because of His mercy, not because of their goodness that so many blessings were experienced by such a wayward people. Because God is faithful and longsuffering, He chose Israel as His people and retained that commitment through many disappointing experiences with them. It gave

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the LORD great pleasure to claim the wayward people of Israel as His people. This, of course, is difficult to understand because true mercy is incomprehensible.

Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way. I Samuel 12:23

Samuel has talked with the people of Israel about who God is and what He will do. Now, Samuel turned attention to himself. He described his own frame of mind. In view of the early part of this message, people could easily get the impression that Samuel was an ogre. He was responsible for asking God to make it rain on their harvest-ready wheat crop. He had spoken many very harsh words of prophecy about them. The prophet must speak as the LORD commands him. This verse gives us a glimpse into the prophet's broken heart.

Samuel said, "Far be it from me." This is like saying, "this is the very last thing I would think of." This is a picture of great mercy, even in the mind of Samuel whom these people had often disappointed. Samuel considered it a sin against Jehovah if he would fail to pray for these people who had been so rebellious against God.

In the last part of this verse, the author separates the two halves of the verse by the use of the word "but." This, of course, signals the presence of a strong contrast. Look at the verse again. The two parts being contrasted are as follows:

1. He would not sin against the LORD by failing to pray for these rebellious people.

BUT

2. He will instruct them in the good and right way.

Read the verse again, carefully. It is not really a contrast. It APPEARS to be a contrast because one statement is negative and the other is positive. Both of these statements can be made in the positive form. Samuel said, "I will instruct you in the good and right way." If this is true, and I believe it is, why does Samuel position this statement in the form of a contrast? Samuel was a master at emphatic statements. This is a way to add serious emphasis to an already strong statement.

Samuel said, "I will instruct you in a good and right way." Samuel has stated this in such a way that "good" and "right" mean two separate but equal things.

The word translated "good" is "tov" (טוֹב). This is the generic term for good in every sense of the word. It describes something precious, something quite worthwhile. This does not mean that this "good" is always pleasing. It does mean that those who are good will always be pleasing to God. The word translated "right" is yashar (יָשָׁר). This word describes a person who is absolutely as upright as he appears to be.

It is, therefore, important to describe the difference between the two concepts. As previously indicated, the word "good" is quite generic. It identifies the good in every sense of the word. The word "right," on the other hand, is a uniquely spiritual term. It would be good to have an honest economy for the good of the nation. It would be "right" to conduct oneself so that one is obedient to the command of God and the Scriptures. The fact that there is a "right way," inescapably suggests that there is a wrong way. The "right way" must point in the direction of obedience to God. Samuel would guide them in a way that would bring the blessing of God and not punishment. This is a picture of the love of God manifest in human relations.

Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. I Samuel 12:24

Verse 24 and 25 form a contrast. Samuel has carefully pointed out the danger they face in disobedience. Now, he turned his attention to describing the way to be fully obedient. He began by instructing them, "Only fear the LORD." As in most of the rest of Scripture, the word "fear" means to stand in awe; to be stunned in reverence rather than to be afraid of the LORD. One need only be frightened if unwilling to part with the life of disobedience. Standing in awe is an expression of intense worship that grows not out of necessity, but out of admiration, out of holy gratitude for His greatness and mercy.

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Samuel continued, "serve Him in truth." Samuel could have simply said, "serve Him." The addition of the words "in truth" suggests that some might even attempt to serve HIM some other way. The sad truth is that then as now there are those who attempt to serve the LORD on some other basis. To "serve Him in truth" is an expression of godly sincerity, to be before God exactly what you appear to be. It is to do exactly what He directs us to do for the reasons He gives us to do them.

"(Serve him) with all your heart." It is to crave only the things he would have us do and be absolutely unwilling to do anything else. It describes an eager excitement to see God's purposes achieved as if they were our own; indeed, to make them our own.

Samuel began the second part of this sentence with the word, "for." The use of this word always indicates that the speaker is going to give a reason for what he has previously said. The word translated "consider" is "raaw" (ראו). This word literally means "to see." It is to gaze intensely upon something. It is to stare at something the way a detective ponders a piece of evidence. It is to discern that which is just beyond the obvious, to perceive something that previously eluded your understanding. It is the exact opposite of casual thought. It is to be totally unwilling to take anything God does for granted. This would require that they be reminded that the things that happened in their lives were not coincidences, but the direct result of divine direction and intervention in their lives. Samuel instructed the people to call to mind everything the LORD had done for them, to say nothing of what God had done for their forefathers.

But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king shall be swept away." I Samuel 12:25

Samuel gave the people one parting warning. He begins the sentence with the word "but." This suggests that the message that follows will be a direct contrast with what had been previously said. In verse 24, Samuel urged them to serve the LORD wholeheartedly and to remember what God had done in their lives. Now, in verse 25, he contrasted that message with a warning against disobedience.

This is a conditional statement. As usual, it begins with a statement of the anticipated condition and ends with a description of the consequences. Observe, Samuel did NOT say, "If you do wickedly." He said, "If you shall STILL do wickedly." This suggests that Samuel is accusing them of already leading a wicked lifestyle. The words translated "still do wickedly," is literally the same word used twice, "haareea taareeuw" (הָרַע תִּרְעֶה). In Hebrew, this is a way to present an exceptionally strong emphasis. This word literally means to break in pieces. It was used to describe action that was known to be evil and destructive. It is to intentionally do harm and displease God. Samuel was saying that if they made a lifestyle of doing evil, there will be equally severe consequences.

In the second part of this conditional statement, Samuel described the consequences of such deliberate rebellion. "You and your king will be swept away." This type of warning was always a part of Samuel's message to Israel. It was not because he was harsh. Rather, it was "tough love" that wanted them to be fully aware of the consequences of their choices and actions. Observe that he said that both the people and the king would suffer the same consequences. There is irony in this warning. Part of their professed reason for wanting a king was to protect them from this very consequence. Now, Samuel warns them that continued disobedience will bring about this consequence for them and the king they wanted so badly.

The word translated "swept away" is "sawfaw" (סָפַף). It is the word used to describe what happens when a man shaves. It is to scrape away so that nothing is left. It is to totally destroy. It is the idea Jesus described when he said of the temple that not one stone would be left on top of another. This is a shocking statement, but that is exactly what Samuel intended it to be.

Conclusion

There are three themes that seem to resonate through this section of the book.

1. Rebellion leads to punishment.
2. Real repentance (from disobedience to obedience) is the key to turn punishment to mercy. The LORD will deliver the guilty when they cry to Him.

SAMUEL'S SOLEMN RETIREMENT SPEECH

3. Often our punishment for disobedience is that we get what we want.

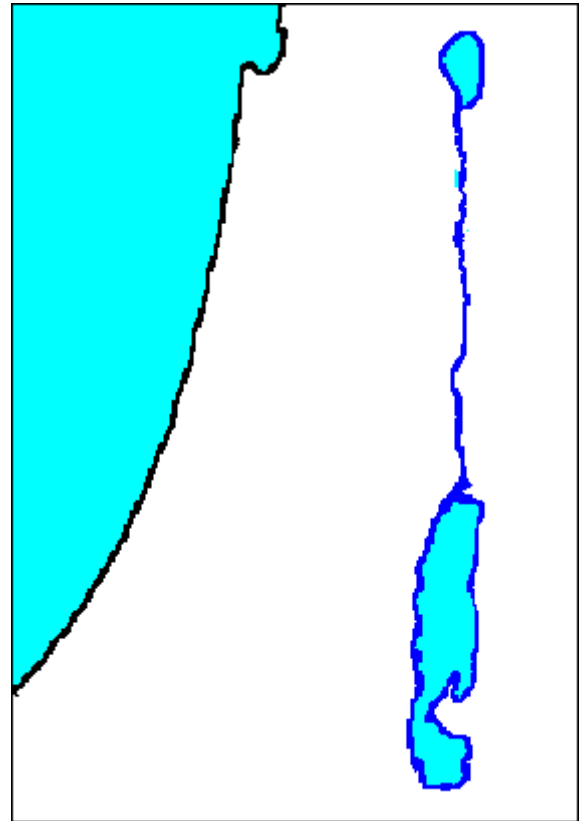
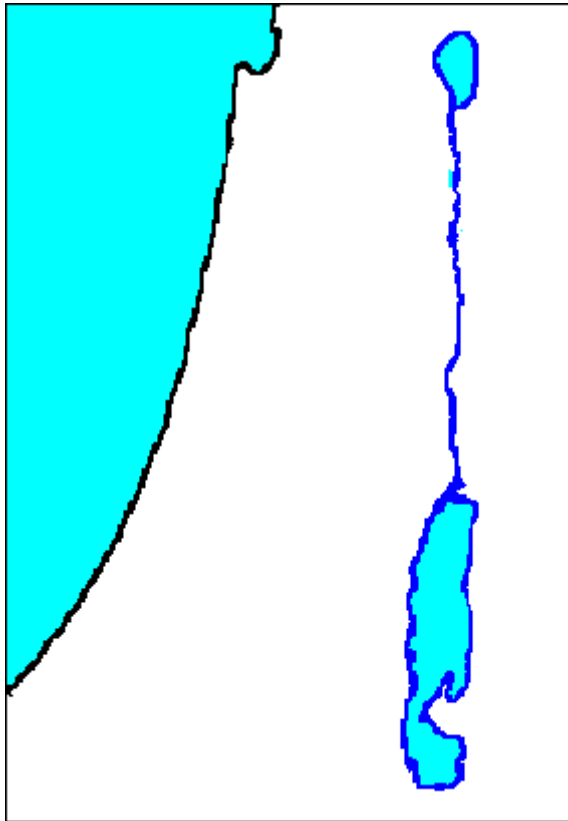
Come to think of it, if we just close our eyes and ponder our lives, we just might hear the pastor of our church or even the custodian saying, painfully, "our rebellion will inevitably lead to punishment." Real repentance, however, is the key to turn our punishment into the mercy of the LORD when we cry to Him, because our inevitable punishment will very likely be that we get what we want. Just a thought.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 13

SAUL OFFERED A BURNT OFFERING – I SAMUEL 13:1 – 23

1. There are five paragraphs in the thirteenth chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of each paragraph in eight words or less.

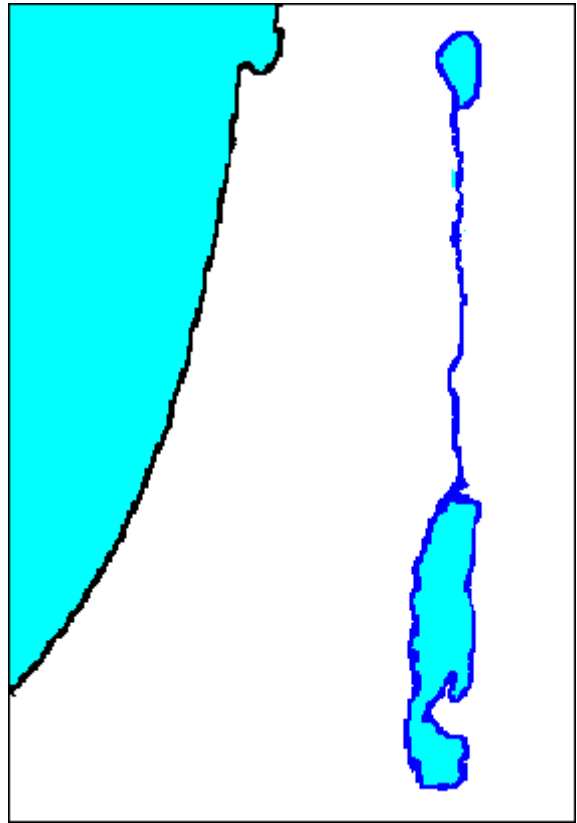
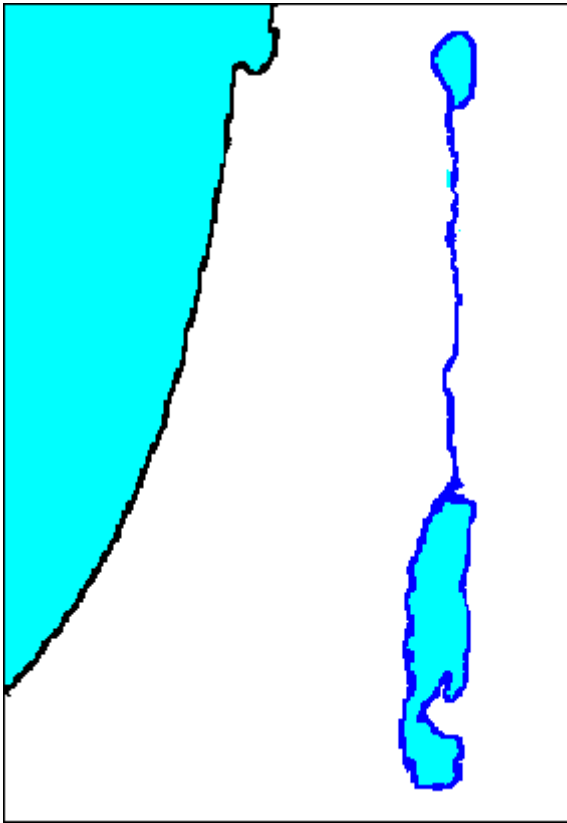
13:1 - 4	
13:5 – 7	
13:8 – 15a	
13:15b – 18	
13:19 – 23	



2. In I Samuel 13:1-4, Saul initiated war with the Philistines.
- In 13:1, the author attempted to explain the length of Saul's reign. What purpose would be served by this action?
 - In 13:2, Saul enlisted men to serve in his army. Attempt to explain Saul's strategy of deployment of troops using this map.
 - Why would Saul place 2,000 men with himself in Michmash?
 - Why would he place 1,000 men with Jonathan in Gibeah?
 - What does this suggest about Saul?
 - In 13:3, Jonathan destroyed the Philistine garrison at Geba. In this verse, there is a hint that both Saul and the Philistines were surprised by this turn of events. Why would this be?
 - In 13:4, Israel heard news of the victory over the Philistines in Geba.
 - In 13:3, the text says, "Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines." In 13:4, the text says, "The news that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines. How can we explain this difference?

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- 2) Why would Saul summon the people to Gilgal?
- 3) What does this say about Saul?



3. In I Samuel 13:5-7, the Philistines counter-attacked.
 - a. In 13:5, the author described the Philistine battle plan.
 - 1) On this map, point out the battle plan.
 - 2) Using a biblical atlas map, identify the pluses and minuses as far as the Philistine location is concerned.
 - 3) Using the biblical atlas map, again, identify the pluses and minuses for the Israelite army in this situation.
 - b. In 13:6, the author described the flight of Israel when they realized the threat of the Philistines. Why would the people of Israel do this?
 - c. In 13:7, the author continued to describe the flight of the Israelites. Why would these people flee east of the Jordan River rather than flee west into the mountains and caves as others had?
4. In I Samuel 13:8-15a, Saul made a sacrifice because Samuel was late.
 - a. In 13:8, 9, the author described Saul's dilemma.
 - 1) The author listed two reasons why Saul made the sacrifice. What are they?
 - 2) There is a principle involved in Saul's decision to make the sacrifice. What is that principle?
 - b. In 13:10, the inevitable happened. Saul panicked because the people were leaving him quickly. Samuel was late and Saul felt he had to act. As soon as he did, Samuel came.
 - 1) Why would Saul go out to meet Samuel?
 - 2) Could Saul have known he was doing something forbidden by God?
 - c. In 13:11, 12, Samuel confronted Saul.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 13

- 1) How would you describe Samuel's confrontation?
 - 2) How would you describe Saul's response?
 - 3) What reasons did Saul give for his actions?
 - 4) How valid were these reasons?
 - 5) How did Saul confess? How did he repent?
 - d. In 13:13, 14, Samuel told Saul the consequences of his known disobedience.
 - 1) What were the consequences Samuel described?
 - 2) Read I Samuel 13:13, 14 carefully. Then read II Samuel chapter 12 just as carefully.
 - a. In what ways are the two situations similar?
 - b. In what ways are the two situations different?
 - e. In 13:15a, Samuel left the city.
 - 1) On this map, trace the trip that Samuel took.
 - 2) Compare this parting with that reported in chapter nine.
5. In I Samuel 13:15b-18, the Philistines look for Saul
- a. In 13:15b-16, Saul numbered his men and set up a defensive camp in Geba.
 - 1) Using a Bible Atlas map, indicate, on the map to the left, where the Israelite and Philistine camps were located.
 - 2) From the same Atlas map, discover the kind of terrain to be found in each camp area.
 - b. In 13:17, 18, the author spelled out the war plan being initiated by the Philistines. On this lower map, show how the war would proceed. Explain how it would work.
6. In I Samuel 13:19-23, The Philistines prepared for a lopsided battle
- a. In 13:19 – 21, the author inserted a parenthesis.
 - 1) What is this parenthesis?
 - 2) What is the purpose of this law the Philistines imposed?
 - 3) What did this law do to Israel?
 - b. In 13:22, the author made a shocking announcement.
 - 1) What is this announcement?
 - 2) What problem does this uncover?
 - 3) How then would the army of Israel defend itself?
 - c. In 13:23, the author gave us some information that would be crucial in battle. What is it?
7. Review your study of chapter 13. Identify the common thread that runs throughout this chapter.
- a. What is that common thread?
 - b. What illustrations of it do you see in this chapter? What difference will this discovery make in you?

LESSON 13

SAUL OFFERED A BURNT OFFERING – I SAMUEL 13:1 – 23

There are five paragraphs in the thirteenth chapter of I Samuel. You will find a summary of each paragraph on the following table.

13:1 - 4	Saul Initiated War With the Philistines
13:5-7	The Philistines Fought Back: Frightening the Israelites
13:8-15a	Saul Sacrificed to Jehovah: Samuel Came Late
13:15b - 18	The Philistines Look for Saul
13:19 - 23	Philistines Prepared for Lopsided Battle

I Samuel 13:1-4 – Saul Initiated War With The Philistines

In this chapter, there is a serious change in direction. Saul has taken over, officially as the king of Israel.

Saul was forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-two years over Israel.

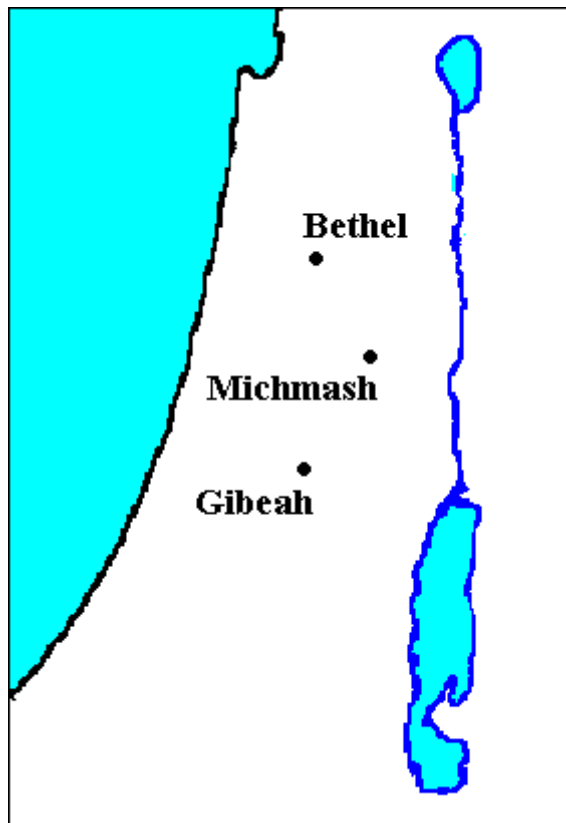
I Samuel 13:1

In this verse, the author speaks of Saul as being 40 years of age when he began his reign. In our English text, the number 40 is an educated guess. The number "40" does not appear in the best Hebrew text. The number "32" identifies the length of Saul's reign. This number does appear in the Hebrew text. It may be getting a bit ahead of ourselves, but this gives one an idea of just how long Israel was subjected to Saul's control and sometimes his abuse.

There is some question about Saul being 40 years of age when he began his reign, whether it is in the Hebrew text or not. There is no good reason to believe that the number 40 is a part of the text and one's uneducated guess seems to be that the number 40 is unnecessarily high. There would seem to be too many years that pass since he took control of the country. There is, of course, no way to confirm or deny this assertion.

Now Saul chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel, of which 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, while 1,000 were with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin. But he sent away the rest of the people, each to his tent. I Samuel 13:2

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This verse provides a general idea of the defense posture Saul adopted for Israel. As you look at the map, it is clear that Saul did not spread his forces throughout the whole nation. He rather focused his power in three strategic places. These locations, as you can see, are in central Israel. The reason for this is clear. There were several national groups that Saul had to treat with great care. The Philistine's power was located in central Israel just to the west of the locations where Saul placed his troops. The Moabites and Ammonites were located just to the east of the locations where Saul located his troops. This was an excellent move on Saul's part.

The way Saul divided the forces, however, was not a work of genius. To keep 2,000 soldiers around himself was not a poor decision. An enemy force would always want to attack and capture the king rather than his son. There is, however, a weakness in his design. Saul and the 2000 soldiers in Bethel/Michmash were located farther from the Philistine force than were Jonathan and his 1,000 men. Add to this the fact that the terrain in Bethel/Michmash was flatter and was easier to travel to and involved more level terrain. This made him much more at risk than his father.

Observe the way in which the author described the selection of the troops. The author does not indicate the means Saul used to select the 3,000 men. The way it is reported, however, suggests that the selection process was carefully carried out in order to obtain seasoned veterans rather than novices who might freeze up in the heat of battle. Basically, Saul did an excellent job of preparing the defense of his kingdom.

The text indicates that Saul sent away the rest of the people, "each to his tent." This gives us some additional information. Topographically, Israel is divided into two basic areas. The area north of Gilgal is excellent farmland. In this area the people were not nomadic. They settled in a location and built houses to live in. The area South of Gilgal was rugged terrain and there was essentially no farming in that area. The people supported themselves by herding sheep and goats. In such rugged terrain there was no abundance of grass for the animals. This made it necessary for the people to be nomadic and live in tents. When the author said that Saul sent the rest of the people to their tents, he was also saying that most of them were from the South. One wonders, though we cannot tell for sure, whether most of the 3,000 soldiers were taken from the people of the

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South. If they were, then it would be clear that the bulk of the forces came from the south part of the country where by far the best soldiers lived.

And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." I Samuel 13:3

In view of what we have just reported, it is exciting to discover that Jonathan was able to destroy the Philistine encampment at Geba. The way it is reported, Jonathan did more than win a battle. This is an act of devastation. Observe that the author reported, "and the Philistines heard of it." The Philistines were a proud, warlike people. This is news that they would not accept gracefully. They were accustomed to vanquishing their foes and their pride in military prowess was immense.

Saul, like all Israel, was very familiar with the Philistine reputation for battle. They all knew that the Philistine forces would certainly retaliate with great force and zeal. To begin Israel's preparation for this serious encounter, Saul drew the attention of all Israel to this situation.

And all Israel heard the news that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines. The people were then summoned to Saul at Gilgal. I Samuel 13:4

There is a contrast between the report of 13:3 and 13:4. In 13:3, the author reported that Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines. In 13:4, however, the author reported that "all Israel heard that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines." Obviously, both reports cannot be accurate. In one sense, the king would always receive credit for any victory his forces might achieve. One suspects, however, that it may well have been that the people did not know which way it really happened.

The author also reported that, "Israel had become odious to the Philistines." This is interesting. The Philistines lose the battle, but the Israelites become odious in the eyes of the Philistines. Nevertheless, that was the case. The word translated "odious" is "sane" (סַנֵּי). It means "to be an utterly hateful enemy."

Saul knew, only too well, that repercussions would be mounted almost immediately. Because of this, Saul summoned the people to Gilgal to prepare for the onslaught.

I Samuel 13:5-7 – The Philistines Fought Back: Israelites Were Frightened

Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven. I Samuel 13:5

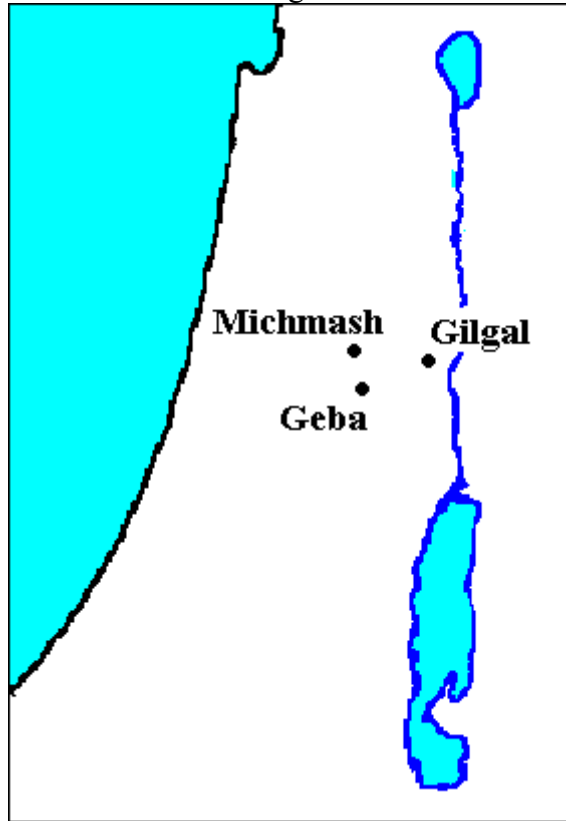
Having been humiliated by Jonathan and his 1,000 soldiers, the Philistines were absolutely determined to get revenge. This verse gives you an idea of just how many soldiers the Philistines could call together. One should keep in mind, however, that they would have to get every able bodied Philistine in the entire western half of Canaan in order to mount a force of this magnitude. This gives you an impression of just how determined they were to take revenge on the little band of Israelites. The Philistines had three times as many horsemen as Saul had men in his part of the army of Israel. At the same time the Philistines had another 30,000 chariots – the nuclear threat of warfare in that day. This is 10 times the total number of soldiers Saul had at his disposal. The Philistines didn't even have a count of the number of foot-soldiers they brought to this endeavor. It is immediately clear that there is no possible way that Israel could survive much less win this engagement.

As usual, an army would set up base camp several miles from the projected battle site. This was for security purposes. As you can see on this map, the camp at Michmash was about 15 miles from the Israelite forces in Gilgal. By setting up their camp in this manner, they maintain for themselves a level of flexibility as well as the freedom to maintain a degree of surprise which is a definite advantage for the attacker. Only against the army of Pharaoh had the Israelites faced such compelling odds.

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As you look at this map, you can see that the Philistines have positioned themselves in the best possible location in relation to the two forces of the Israelites. They are about 15 miles from Gilgal and only about five miles from Geba.

There is a plus and a minus to this location. The plus side, for the Philistines is that they are located in such a position that they can strike at either of the two forces without the other being aware of it. The element of surprise is theirs. Again, if the Philistines struck at Gilgal, their base camp is located in such a place that they could prevent Jonathan and his forces from coming to the aid of his father's troops.



The minus side for the Philistines has to do with the terrain. Their base camp is located in hill country that is laced with steep hills and sharp valleys. This makes it difficult to traverse. It also makes it difficult to retreat in a hurry if things should turn against them. A second problem, for the Philistines, is that Gilgal is located in the midst of a crisscross pattern of water courses. These are not rivers or lakes, but water courses none-the-less. Depending upon the weather, with 30,000 chariots, this could become a quagmire from which it would be very difficult to extract the troops.

A negative factor for Israel is that they are located on a flat plane that would be an excellent place to conduct a battle for a large force such as the Philistine army. Also, because the Israelite camp is located on this plane right next to the hill-country, the Israelites would be fighting uphill against an overwhelming force. This is a definite disadvantage for the Israelites.

When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were hard-pressed), then the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits. I Samuel 13:6

The verse reflects how severely outnumbered the Israelites were in the face of such a force. This is a time of terror for the Israelite army as well as the citizens of the country. In such a time, there was a procedure that was universally practiced. They would hide. Besieged soldiers and civilians would always flee to the mountains if possible. The mountains, in most of Israel, were composed of porous limestone. Weather and erosion combined to wear away the limestone and create caves and caverns where people could hide. Uneven rock formations also created hiding places where fleeing soldiers could hide and surprise attacking soldiers.

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In almost every instance, an army would halt their pursuit rather than take the risk of being surprised and killed by those in hiding. If soldiers could reach the mountains and caves, they could hide there for months. This was due to the fact that people stored food and water in these caves for occasions like this.

The text mentions that they hid in "pits." A pit is a cistern. At this time of year, there was no water in the cisterns. This provides us some additional information. A cistern is deep and it is not possible to get in or out without assistance. In a time of severe trauma, such as this, no one would have time to stop long enough to help someone into a cistern. It means that the person(s) would have to jump down into the cistern. These underground caverns were 10-15 feet deep. To jump into it was a risk of severe harm to oneself. There was an additional risk. If you jump into the cistern without help, no one would know you were in there and there would not be the help that is essential to get out. It is worse, in one sense, to starve to death in a cistern than to be killed in battle.

The author listed several places the people of Israel took cover when they realized the size and potential of the Philistine forces. This was a common practice in that time and in that part of the world. You may remember the instructions of Jesus when he said,

"But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Mark 13:14

Every army had orders that if the enemy fled into the mountain, they were not to pursue them. There are many caves, rock outcroppings and places to hide and surprise soldiers in such a place. These people were just doing what they and their ancestors had been doing in similar situations for centuries.

A fleeing population quite often had an advantage over a pursuing army. The people in Israel often had enough food to support them for weeks stashed away in the nearby mountain caves. They could hide for long periods of time in these situations. Again, the Philistine army had another disadvantage. If they pursued the citizens into the mountains, they would spread themselves out so far that they became an easy target for pockets of resistance. It was a rule of thumb that if a person reached the mountains, he could count on being secure against pursuing soldiers.

Also some of the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. I Samuel 13:7

The text indicates that some of the Jews crossed over the Jordan River into the land of Gad and Gilead. This sounds casual enough. If you look at the following map, it is clear that this is a distance of at least 20 miles and probably a lot more. Again, almost all of this distance was through very rough terrain. This would be at least two or three days of exhausting travel to make such a trip.

The second part of this sentence begins with the word "but." This indicates that there is a serious contrast in progress. The author first said that some Israelites fled across the Jordan River. Following the word "but," the author contrasts the location of the Jews on the east side of the Jordan with Saul who had remained in Gilgal. Not only had he remained in Gilgal, but the people who were with him had lost their confidence and were in the midst of panic. Everything about this situation spelled trouble for Saul.

I Samuel 13:8-15a – Saul Sacrificed To Jehovah: Samuel Came Late

Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. I Samuel 13:8

There is a lot that happened between verses seven and eight. The conditions in verse eight are the same or worse than they were in verse seven. During this time, however, Saul was in contact with Samuel. Samuel instructed Saul to wait for him in Gilgal seven days. The purpose of the trip was that Samuel would offer sacrifice. The seven days had passed, but Samuel had not come. Saul was in a serious bind. His life was in jeopardy in Gilgal. All the people who were with him were at risk for their lives. It was strategically fatal to wait in such a vulnerable situation. At the same time, the seven days he was supposed to wait for Samuel

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were over. From a strategy standpoint, Saul could not afford to wait longer. To make matters worse, the people knew how dangerous it was to remain in Gilgal and they were leaving quickly. Each person who left the city made it just that much more vulnerable to the Philistine forces. Military tactics demanded that Saul act and act quickly.

On the other hand, Samuel had strictly ordered Saul to wait for him. Every Jew in Gilgal knew that though Saul was king, this did not give him the right to make a sacrifice. Still Saul knew that unless they could enlist the help of God, their outlook was absolutely hopeless. I am sure you remember that before Saul became king, he was so unfamiliar with spiritual life in Israel that he did not recognize Samuel when he walked by. Saul had to make a life or death choice in a field of knowledge where he had no idea of what was appropriate and what was not. One thing was certain; he did not have a strong background of faith in the power of God.

So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. I Samuel 13:9

Saul made an unfortunate choice that set a whole series of events in motion. His natural choice made it clear that he was relying more on human logic and power than upon the power of God to deliver in impossible circumstances. Saul took the place of the prophet/priest and made the sacrifices that God would accept only from the hand of the anointed priest. Saul's choice and action created at least two problems:

1. Only the anointed priests were permitted to make sacrifices to God. Because of this, Saul's sacrifice was spurious and could have cost him his life. Eli's sons made spurious sacrifices and paid for it with their lives.
2. These authorized priests were only authorized to make such a sacrifice when they had been properly cleansed and prepared for this sacrifice.

Saul could claim neither of these for himself and yet he made the sacrifice. There was a penalty to be paid for his usurping this position. He did the right thing in the wrong way and God did not approve of Saul's decision to act as a priest.

And it came about as soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, that behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him. I Samuel 13:10

Isn't much of life this way? This is quite often the dilemma of people who are unable to see the hand and presence of God in the dilemmas they face in life. Things were bad. They were not as bad, however, as they appeared to Saul. It caused Saul to make a fatal error.

Notice that Saul went out to meet Samuel as though nothing had happened. There is no doubt that Saul knew what he had done. He may have felt justified, but he knew it was not permissible. It appears that he went out to meet Samuel trying to smooth over a faulty move on his part. He had little experience in Jewish worship, but his attempt to smooth over his disobedience clearly shows he knew he was wrong.

But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, I Samuel 13:11

This sentence begins with the word "but," which signifies that a contrast is in motion. Saul came out to meet Samuel as though nothing was wrong. But Samuel was not fooled. He knew what Saul had done and was not going to pretend that it was alright. Samuel asked a telling question, "What have you done?"

There is a principle involved in the reply of Saul to the penetrating question Samuel asked. Essentially, Saul was saying that the end justifies the means. He knew and we know that this is not true.

There is a severe contrast in the tone of the statements made by Saul and Samuel. Samuel came with a demanding tone. There was conviction in his words. He was not about to be put off.

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Saul, on the other hand, was almost whining in his response. He made three lame attempts to defend his inappropriate actions. His contentions are these:

1. He said, "I saw the people scattering from me." That was true.
2. He said, "You did not come within the appointed days." That was true.
3. He said, "The Philistines were assembling in the bivouac area at Michmash. That was true.

The problem was not with the truthfulness of his lame excuses. It was that they did not matter. Nothing could account for not doing God's business God's way. The weakness of his protest betrayed the lameness of his excuse. He did something wrong and he knew it. He could not change it even though he would have given anything to be able to do so at this moment.

Could Eli's sons bear witness to how serious this was, they would remind him that one would be put to death for tampering with the divinely designed system of sacrifice. It seems impossible to overestimate the idea that Saul knew how wrong it was for him to do this.

Therefore I said, ' Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering. " I Samuel 13:12

Saul's meager attempts at logic had to seem extremely hollow even to him. He leaned on his own logic to defend direct disobedience to the LORD. The truth is that this is a way to shift the blame.

Saul also was claiming the high moral ground. He was insisting that he was aware of how important it was to seek the favor of God for his venture into battle.

Saul concluded his defense with a pious, but weak claim, "I forced myself..." The word translated "forced" is "aphaq" (אָפּהאַק) and literally means "to restrain oneself," "to corral one's desires." It was a way of saying he pressured himself to do something that he knew was wrong, but couldn't help it. There was a problem with this. Samuel didn't buy it.

And Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. I Samuel 13:13

True to form, Samuel told Saul the truth about his actions. He said, "You have acted like a fool." Normally, this is not something that a king would want to hear. This would be considered inappropriate and the speaker would probably pay for that miscalculation with his life.

Observe the careful logic of Samuel's words. First, Samuel charged Saul with disobedience to God's command. (We know that Samuel gave Saul instructions, but God did not personally speak to Saul. The text has stated this in such a way that when Samuel speaks, God has spoken through him.) Having established Saul's guilt, Samuel then pronounced the consequences of this evil.

There is a problem inherent in Samuel's statement. He said, "For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever." God could do that. But if we return, again, to Genesis 49:10, it was announced that the descendants of Judah would be the ongoing rulers of Israel. When we come to the study of David's family, we will see that God made that promise to David as well.

We do not fully understand this. Because the prophet thus spoke, we must accept it as God's word. Some would explain it by saying that God could say both, "the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever," and Jacob/ Israel could say, under divine direction, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah." Because the LORD is omniscient, He knew Saul's selfish weakness. Beyond this we can conjecture, but we cannot know. One thing is clear, judgment has come to Saul's house.

But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." I Samuel 13:14

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Samuel then said the same thing in a different way. He said, "Your kingdom shall not endure." In Scripture, particularly in the Psalms, this is called parallelism. The author said essentially the same thing in two different ways for the purposes of emphasis.

Samuel gave further explanation in three simple statements. In these three statements, Samuel used the name "LORD" three times. As previously observed, this name is in the divine pronouncement of judgment.

Samuel said, "the LORD has sought out for himself a man after His own heart." In saying this, Samuel was saying that Saul was not a man after God's own heart, but after his own. The use of the words "after His own heart," is more than a picture of obedience. It is a way of saying that this man the LORD found shared the LORD'S purposes and ways. This is much different from saying this man, David, would do as God said.

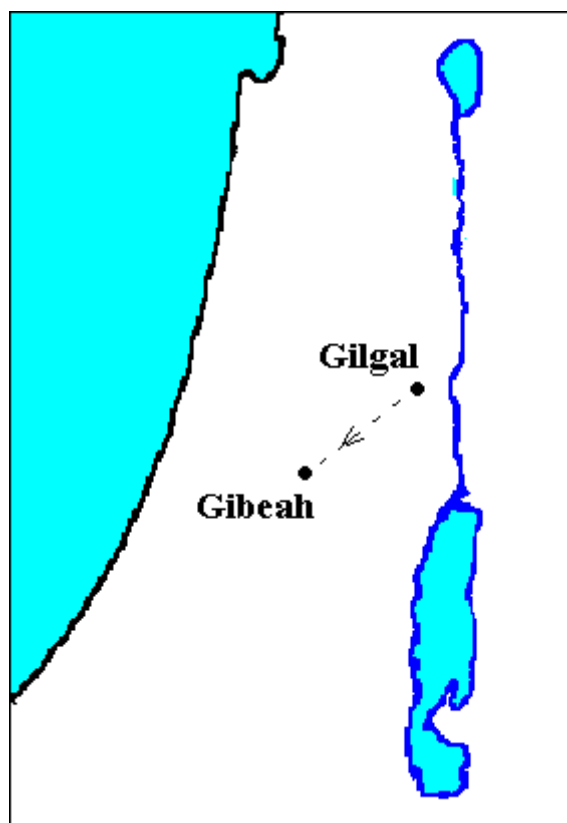
A third time, Samuel explained to Saul why his rule was terminated, "Because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." This is a shocking statement. The shock is not that this statement is true. The shock is that in our time many people treat disobedience quite casually. Here, and in a host of other places in Scripture, the cost of disobedience is severe, at best.

Inevitably, one is reminded of the sin and punishment of David, in II Samuel chapter 12. People use this comparison/contrast to verify that some sins are worse than others. It appears to this author that this is not a good basis for that assertion. One holds that position because of the differences between the two situations.

DAVID, SAUL SIMILAR	DAVID, SAUL DIFFERENT
Both sinned – disobedience	The sins were different – David-adultery, murder: Saul took priest's place.
Both confronted by a prophet – Saul by Samuel; David by Nathan	David confessed his sin: Saul did not
Both were punished	David repented: Saul did not
Both lost sons	Saul removed from being king and lineage also
	David's immediate lineage damaged in royal line, but is still intact.

Then Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. I Samuel 13:15a

SAUL OFFERED A BURNT OFFERING



As you can see on this map, this is a trip of about 15 miles, 15 difficult miles. Samuel left the flat coastal plain along the Jordan River and climbing into the hill country at Gibeah. Observe that the text says, "Samuel arose and went up..." It is interesting that when we use the geographical indicator, "He went up," it is almost always an indication that the person is headed north. Conversely, when we say, "He went down," we usually indicate that the person went south. That is not the case in Scripture. As in this instance, Samuel was climbing from a coastal plain to the high hills in central Israel.

As you read this portion of a sentence, a comparison comes to mind. Observe how different this parting was from that recorded in chapter nine.

CHAPTER 9	13:15a
Saul was given the place of honor at sacrificial meal	Samuel not treated as honored guest
Saul given guest chamber (upper room) to rest	Samuel did not occupy the guest chamber
Saul slept in the cool upper room	Samuel was not escorted to the city gate
Saul was escorted to the city gate	Not sent on his way in peace
Saul was sent on his way in peace	Clear to all the two were not parting friends
Clear to all that they parted best of friends	

I Samuel 13:15b-18 – The Philistines Look for Saul

*And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men.
I Samuel 13:15b*

Today, the science of census-taking is about as accurate as officials want it to be. There are a host of uses to which this information can be put. That was not the case in ancient times. The "numbering of people" had just two basic purposes:

1. The preparation for taxation, especially by a conquering nation. This was the case when Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to be registered for purposes of taxation.

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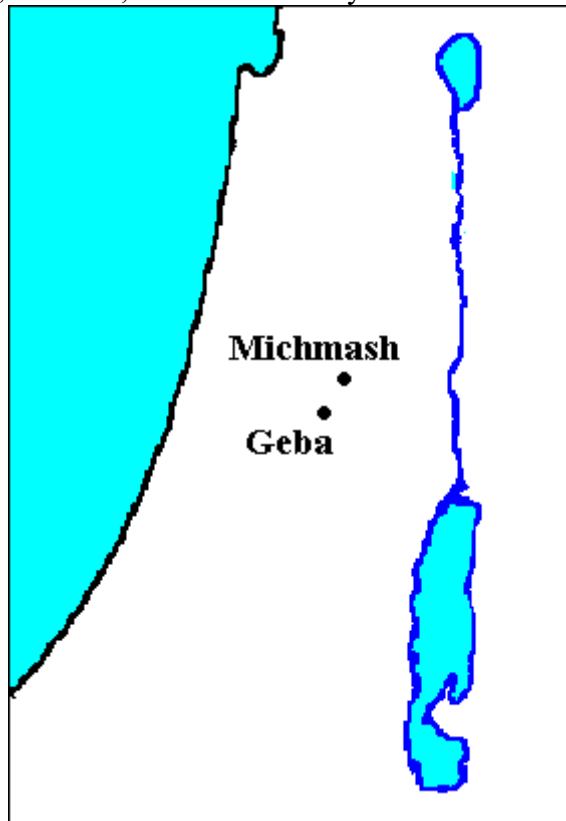
2. The discovery of available manpower in preparation for battle. Later we will see a situation where the LORD told David not to number the people. This was because the LORD did not want him to depend upon the size of the available army, but to trust in the LORD.

Observe that there were only 600 men with Saul. This means that 1,400 had left. Needless to say, 600 men were not a substantial force when you anticipate impending combat with the forces of the Philistines. Saul had to be very concerned about this situation.

Now Saul and his son Jonathan and the people who were present with them were staying in Geba of Benjamin while the Philistines camped at Michmash. 1 Samuel 13:16

This is the first time that the author has mentioned that Jonathan was present with his father. That does not mean that Jonathan has been somewhere else until now, but it is the first time, in recent chapters, that Jonathan is mentioned as being with Saul. The text does not indicate how many warriors were with Jonathan in this encounter.

Saul was faced with two horrible choices. He could stay in a very awkward military position where he was quite vulnerable. We also must indicate that the hilly/mountainous terrain made the Philistine position as vulnerable as that of Israel, but the Philistines were much better trained and certainly were better equipped to go into battle. Because of this, the Israelites were at a very distinct disadvantage. Saul's second option was that he could flee the area. This, however, was almost always disastrous. Saul chose to stay in Geba.



As you can see on this map, Saul and his forces were in Geba while the Philistine forces were camped at Michmash. The two camps are only about two miles apart. This is a very short distance for two base camps to be placed. The nature of the terrain, however, indicated that this was a safe distance. If you look at an atlas map, you will note that this is an area with steep hills and narrow valleys. It is not a good place to conduct a battle. The Israelites had a slight advantage because they lived in more hilly territory than the Philistines. The Philistines, however, had a greater advantage in terms of training and equipment.

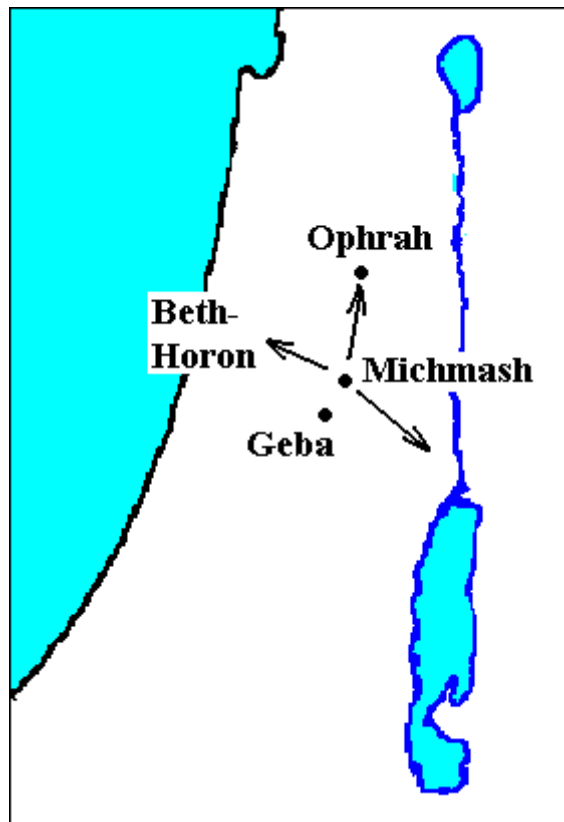
SAUL OFFERED A BURNT OFFERING

And the raiders came from the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, I Samuel 13:17

This was a common military maneuver. This was called a "pincer movement." Because the enemy was able to encroach on Israel from three sides, it destroyed their concentration. It also gave larger forces a great advantage that would enable them to avoid severe losses while inflicting maximum losses on the Israelites, the outnumbered army.

The column of soldiers that went toward Ophrah was in an excellent position to mislead Saul's forces. This was particularly devastating for Israel because this was a very hilly area. The Philistines could travel through the hidden valleys without being noticed by the Israelites unless they had advance patrols keeping the entire area under surveillance. Not only was this column a diversionary force, it was also able to bring an element of surprise to the battle.

And another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another company turned toward the border which overlooks the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. I Samuel 13:18



As you can see on the map, the second column went toward Beth-horon. This column was a decoy. They were sent out to keep the Israelites from being able to concentrate on the columns that were the immediate threat. The column going toward Beth-horon were not even able to give assistance to either of the other two columns should trouble break out for them.

A third column was sent the long way around to the area of the Valley of Zeboim. This placed them in an excellent position to be able to attack the southern flank of the Israelite forces. This is the force that was the most danger to the forces of Saul. This is pointed out on the previous map.

I Samuel 13:19-23 – The Philistines Prepared for Lopsided Battle

Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears." I Samuel 13:19

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The Philistines had made an earlier, strategic move after one of their campaigns. They knew the dogged determinism of the Israelites as a people. They knew that they had to find a way to keep these people at a definite disadvantage or they would find a way to harass their conquerors. As we have indicated earlier, the Jews were always at a disadvantage in terms of the latest weaponry.

The Israelites had access to a number of mines where copper could be mined, but this was not useful for making weapons or pieces of personal armor. The Israelites had very little access to mines where iron could be mined. Because of this, the Philistines made it unlawful for anyone to make a metal instrument or to sharpen iron instruments. In order to enforce this law, the Philistines removed all the equipment that could be used by a blacksmith to make weapons of war. The most common result of this was that the Jews had to take a long journey just to sharpen or repair their iron tools. The Philistines could charge them very high prices for these repairs and humiliate them at the same time.

So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. I Samuel 13:20

The fact that the Israelites had to go to the Philistines to get their agricultural tools sharpened made them dependant upon their conquering enemy at a very personal and intense level. This law also had a very devastating psychological impact upon the Jewish people. It intensified the feeling of helplessness among the Jews. This, of course, is exactly what the Philistines wanted to accomplish.

One thing that the Philistines did not anticipate was that this humiliating situation would have a positive effect upon the Jews in making them determined to find a way around this oppressive rule and give them an edge of which the Philistines were not aware. The Jews would find a way to circumvent that rule. They found it.

And the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the hoes. I Samuel 13:21

When one nation conquered another, the taxes they imposed upon the defeated nation were outlandish. If these taxes were paid, it would be almost impossible for the conquered people to earn enough to survive. Now the Philistines created another source of revenue. They knew that they had no competition for these services, so they would charge exorbitant prices and the Israelites could not avoid paying this outlandish fee. The fee they charged was two-thirds of a shekel to do these repairs. This amounted to enough money to pay a servant for several days work.

The author listed some of the tools that were charged in this way for repairs.

1. **Plowshares** – This tool was a very sharp point that was pulled through the ground in order to turn over the sod and prepare for planting. It had another use as well. A person could take this plow point and attach it to a wooden shaft and use it as a spear. It was important to the Philistine war effort to make sure that the Jews could not use these to create new weapons with which to arm their soldiers.
2. **The mattocks** – This tool was like a very large hoe, but it was larger and sharper. It was used to weed the terraced gardens and fields. The head of this instrument was very flat.
3. **The forks** – This instrument was and is a very useful tool to gather and move hay and straw. It was sometimes also used to break up soil, especially in situations where the people were under the control of another country. Metallurgy was not a well developed science at this time. Often the iron from which these forks were made was less than useful in doing the work on a Jewish farm. The Jews could get a fork from their Philistine captors, but it was of poor quality. It was often necessary to return with the instrument to have it reformed to be able to use it in farming again. Again, the fee would be high. The reason that the Philistines had such a rule concerning this tool was that the tines of the fork could be heated and straightened out and it would become a serious weapon for battle.
4. **The axe** – The axe was absolutely essential if a person needed to cut wood in any way, for any need. Again, the metallurgy was poor and the axe heads were of inferior quality. This also meant that they

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were not easy to sharpen and they would not hold their edge with protracted use. The Philistines were very concerned about the use of axes because it could be used as a weapon without any reconfiguring of the instrument at all.

5. **The hoe** – The hoe was one of the tools the farmer used most. It had to be made of strong iron and because the iron was not refined properly, it had to be sharpened often. The price was high; the service was not good.

As previously indicated, the basic reason for this restriction was to make sure that the Israelites were not able to secretly make more weapons. There were some farm tools that could be turned into weapons without too much effort. The Philistines would refuse to repair such tools. They too could be fastened to a wooden handle and used as a weapon of war.

The inconvenience, control and humiliation of this rule is indescribable. That was, in some respects, the reason that the Philistines enacted the law in the first place.

*So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan, but they were found with Saul and his son Jonathan.
I Samuel 13:22*

This is a shocking announcement. The Philistine army was the best equipped force in the world. They were now facing a rag-tag army that had only two swords and two spears among the entire force. To make matters worse, these weapons were in the hands of the king and prince who would not be doing any fighting to speak of. They were there to give direction to the battle from a safe position.

The other soldiers were forced to go into battle with only farm tools and kitchen knives as weapons. The disadvantage of this can not be overstated.

And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash. I Samuel 13:23

Against such tragic odds, the Philistine army made their move. Army intelligence was as important in that day as it is today. A general had to know every possible detail about the enemy and his army if he had any hope of survival for himself and his troops.

This included an awareness of every move the enemy made. Saul had scouts that kept him informed of every move made by the Philistine forces. Because they were in the hilly country, it was easy for Saul's forces to keep careful watch on the Philistine forces as they moved into position for battle. At the same time, because they were in the hill country, it would be difficult for the Philistines to be totally sure that they were not being watched.

When Saul discovered that the Philistines had moved to the Pass, it was clear that an attack was imminent. The fact that they moved through a pass indicates the kind of terrain through which they were passing. Mountainous areas are difficult for battle and protection, but excellent for surveillance.

Conclusion

On several occasions in this chapter, the author focuses our attention on the fact that there are consequences for the sins we choose to commit. Here are a few illustrations

1. There is no way to justify disobedience – v. 8
2. There is no way to enable the end to justify the means. V. 9
3. Catastrophic conditions make no impact on whether it is acceptable to sin. v. 9
4. God will test us to see if we will be obedient no matter what may happen. v. 10
5. Disobedience always will be punished. – v. 13, 14
6. The fact that God's name and kingdom will be debased will never keep Him from punishing evil – v. 22

The serious emphasis on the consequences of disobedience focuses a spotlight on the purity and holiness of God. In our time, there are a growing number of people in the church who being forgiven, no

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longer think of disobedience in serious terms. Saul made that mistake and it was devastating to his life and that of his people.

As I study this chapter again and again, I want to be constantly reminded that God takes every sin seriously, particularly mine. Certainly, God forgives our sin, but because it is our choice, He allows us to have the consequences of our sin along with the freedom to choose to disobey.

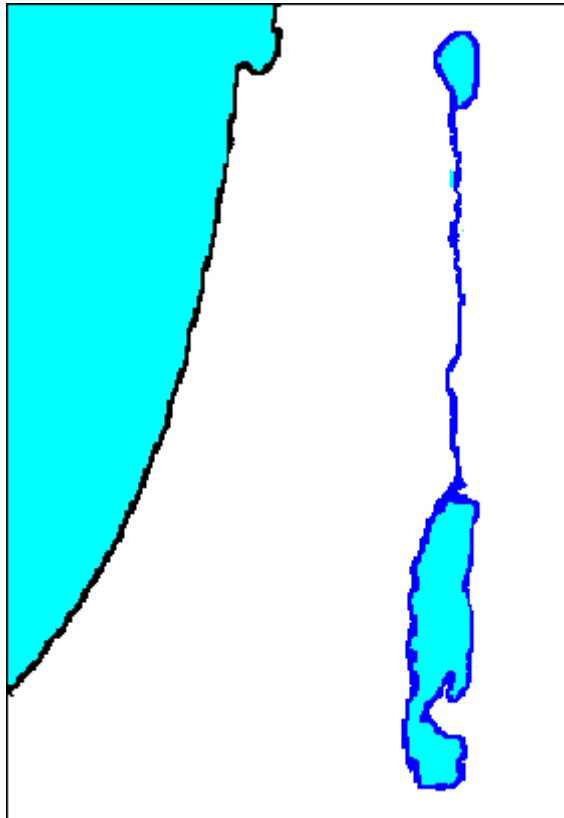
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14

JONATHAN ROUTED THE PHILISTINES – I SAMUEL 14:1 - 52

1. There are nine paragraphs in this lengthy chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph

14:1-5	
14:6-15	
14:16-23	
14:24-30	
14:31-35	
14:36-42	
14:43-48	
14:49-51	
14:52	

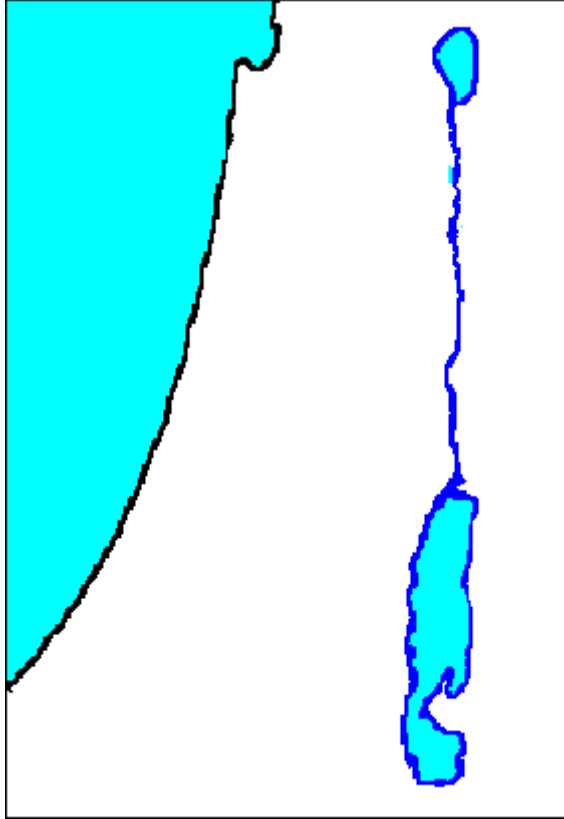
2. In I Samuel 14:1-5, Jonathan scouted out the Philistine forces.
- a. In 14:1, the author gives us information about Jonathan and his relationship with his father.
- 1) What does the author say about the relationship between Jonathan and Saul?
 - 2) What does this verse tell us about Jonathan?



- b. In 14:2, the author gives some geographic information. On this map, locate the following
- 1) The Philistine camp as recorded in 13:23.
 - 2) The location of Jonathan as assumed in 14:1.
 - 3) The location of Saul as identified in 14:2
 - 4) Study this map. What conclusions can you draw from this study?

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- c. In 14:3, you have two different kinds of information.
 - 1) Identify these pieces of information.
 - 2) What do these pieces of information have to do with each other?
 - 3. What message is the author trying to convey with this information?
- d. In 14:4, the author gives us some information about the area in which both the Philistines and Jonathan were located. What has the author told us in this verse?
- e. In 14:5, the author gives us some additional geographical information.

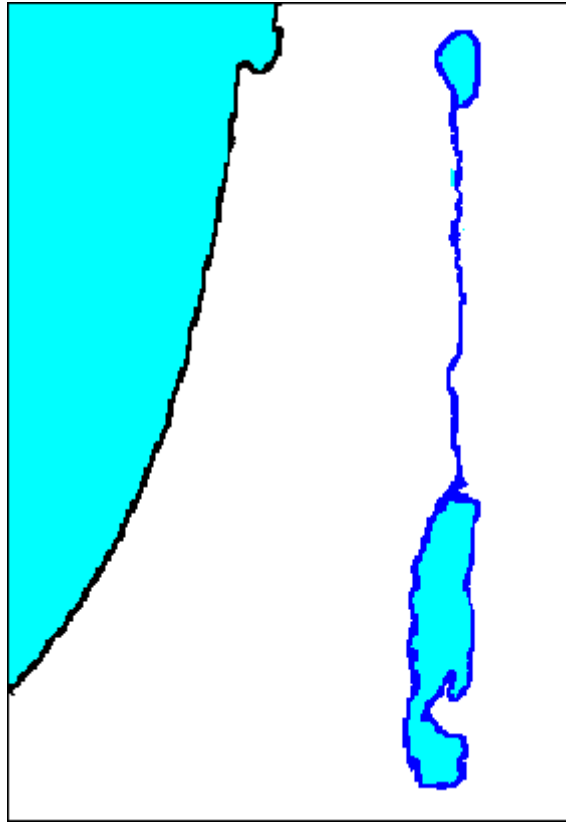


- 1) On this map identify the location of the places the author mentions.
 - 2) Study this map for additional information.
 - a) The Philistines intentionally came to this place. In view of the information on this map, why would they choose this spot?
 - b) In view of the location of both Saul and Jonathan, what appears to be their strategy?
3. In I Samuel 14:6-15, Jonathan and his armor bearer slew 20 Philistines.
- a. In 14:6, Jonathan decided to go on the offensive.
 - 1) Who went with him?
 - 2) Why would he make this choice as opposed to other possibilities?
 - 3) What was the basis of Jonathan's decision?
 - 4) Look carefully at Jonathan's choice of the name he used for deity. What does this suggest?
 - 5) How would you describe Jonathan's attitude as portrayed in this verse?
 - b. In 14:7, the author described the attitude and commitment of Jonathan's armor bearer. How would you describe this?
 - c. In 14:8, the author quotes an exchange between Jonathan and his armor bearer.
 - 1) What does this say about Jonathan?
 - 2) Compare this image of Jonathan with the picture of Saul you see in 14:1-7.
 - d. In 14:9, 10, Jonathan outlined his battle plan with his armor bearer.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14

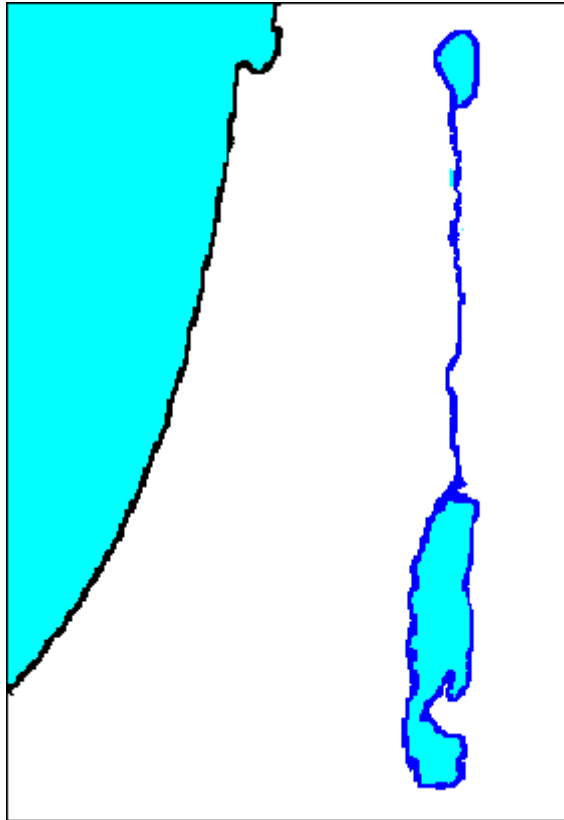
- 1) What attitude do you detect in these verses?
 - 2) In 14:10, Jonathan makes a statement about what God will do. How did he know this?
 - 3) Jonathan used the name "LORD" to identify deity. What does this suggest?
 - e. In 14:11, 12, Jonathan and his armor bearer exposed themselves to the Philistines.
 - 1) There is a comparison in these verses. What can we discover about each side of this comparison?
 - 2) Comment on Jonathan's response to the Philistine invitation.
 - f. In 14:13, 14, the author describes the encounter between Jonathan and these Philistines. In view of the fact that this is two men against more than 20 Philistines, how would you describe this engagement? (remember that in 13:22, only Saul and Jonathan had real weapons of war.)
 - g. In 14:15, the author reports the Philistine reaction to Jonathan's mission. There are two contributing factors to this response.
 - 1) What are these factors?
 - 2) How do they relate to each other?
4. In I Samuel 14:16-23, The Philistines are in disarray and kill each other.
- a. In 14:16, Saul's watching guards observed something happening in the Philistine camp. What did they see?
 - b. In 14:17, 18, the guards reported this activity to Saul.
 - 1) What was his response and his attitude?
 - 2) What is the significance of the ark of the Covenant being on the field of battle rather than in the temple?
 - c. In 14: 19, 20, the tide of battle has turned.
 - 1) How can you account for this great change?
 - 2) How can we explain Saul's instruction to the priest to "withdraw your hand"?
 - 3) The author, in verse 19, wrote, "every man's sword was against his fellow and there was great confusion." About whom is he writing – Jews or Philistines?
 - d. In 14:21, the writer introduces some surprising information.
 - 1) What is this surprising information?
 - 2) How can we account for this?
 - e. In 14:22, the author reported on some unexpected help in the battle.
 - 1) Where did this help come from?
 - 2) Why were these people in this location?
 - 3) In what way could they be helpful?
 - f. In 14:23, the author gives a short wrap-up of this battle.
 - 1) How did he express it?

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- 2) On this map, identify the critical locations we are talking about at this point of the study.
5. In I Samuel 14:24-30, Jonathan innocently disobeyed Saul's curse.
 - a. In 14:24, there is a difficult thing taking place in Israel.
 - 1) What happened?
 - 2) What would be the consequences of such an action?
 - 3) What major rule of warfare has been violated?
 - b. In 14:25, the author spoke of "people" rather than soldiers.
 - 1) Is there anything significant about this change?
 - 2) If there is a significance, what is it?
 - c. In 14:26-28, the author reported the result of Saul's oath. If you were one of these people and saw Jonathan eat, what would you have done?
 - d. In 14:29, 30, Jonathan responded to the news the people told him.
 - 1) How would you describe Jonathan's response?
 - 2) How would you describe Jonathan's emotional frame of mind?
6. In I Samuel 14:31-35, Israel devastated the Philistines and ate meat with blood.
 - a. In 14:31, the author described an expedition against the Philistines.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14



- 1) Look carefully at a map of this area and list two things that posed major problems for Saul's forces.
- 2) We should keep in mind as we reflect upon this venture that Saul's forces were outnumbered many times over.
- b. In 14:28, the author stated that the troops were "weary." In 14:31, the author said that these people were "very weary." What, if anything, is the significance of this information?
- c. In 14:32, the author reported on a very rash action that the people took.
 - 1) What was that action?
 - 2) How can we account for this unusual action?
- d. In 14:33, 34, Saul discovered the action of the people.
 - 1) How would you describe his reactions?
 - 2) If you were one of the people,, how would you feel?
- e. In 14:35, Saul built "an altar to the LORD."
 - 1) What is your initial reaction to this move by Saul?
 - 2) The author commented that this is the first altar Saul built to the LORD. What, if any, significance do you attach to this comment?
7. In I Samuel 14:36-42, Jonathan's trespass was disclosed.
 - a. In 14:36, there is a contrast between Saul and the people on one side and the priests on the other.
 - 1) Describe this contrast and its implications.
 - 2) What does this say about Saul?
 - 3) What does this say about the priests?
 - b. In 14:37, Saul inquired of God, but God did not answer him.
 - 1) How would you describe Saul's prayer?
 - 2) If you were Saul, what would your conscience prompt you to do?
 - 3) Why would God not answer?

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- c. In 14:38, Saul took the next step in seeking guidance.
 - 1) What was that step?
 - 2) How would you evaluate Saul's attitude in this action?
 - d. In 14:39, Saul made another oath.
 - 1) What is your immediate reaction to this oath?
 - 2) How would you describe the people's reaction?
 - e. In 14:40, 41, Saul pursued his attempt to discover the sinner. Saul called for a determination whether the sin was with the troops or with himself and Jonathan.
 - 1) What difference would this make?
 - 2) Why would you suppose the people encouraged Saul, "Do what seems good to you"?
 - 3) If you were one of the people, what would you think about the results reported in 14:41?
 - f. In 14:42, the lot was cast again and Jonathan was indicted.
 - 1) If you were Saul, would you have been surprised?
 - 2) Think carefully about casting lots at all. Is this an appropriate tool for believers in God?
8. In I Samuel 14:43 – 48, the people rescued Jonathan from Saul.
- a. In 14:43, Saul verbally attacked his son, Jonathan. In this verse, Jonathan confessed his actions and presented himself for punishment. What does this tell you about this man?
 - b. In 14:44, Saul took an oath against his son Jonathan.
 - 1) What does this oath accomplish?
 - 2) Reflect upon the necessity of death in this instance. What do you think?
 - c. In 14:45, the people and the army intervened in Saul's determination to put his son Jonathan to death.
 - 1) What did the people mean when they said, "Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this deliverance in Israel, Far from it!"?
 - 2) These people then delivered a challenge to Saul. Why did they have to add the words, "As the LORD lives"?
 - 3) This was obviously a successful challenge to Saul. What did it mean to him?
 - d. In 14:46, Saul abruptly changed his strategy.
 - 1) Why would he do that?
 - 2) Why would the Philistines go home when they had not reasserted their superiority in battle?
 - e. In 14:47, 48, you see a brief review of Saul's accomplishments. What does this mean at this point?
9. In I Samuel 14:49-51, the author rehearses the lineage of Saul.
- a. Why would he do this?
 - b. What does it add to the story of I Samuel?
10. In I Samuel 14:52, the author summarizes Saul's battle experiences with the Philistines.
- a. What is the point of this summary?
 - b. The author concludes the chapter saying that Saul started to develop his army. What message did this send?
11. Review your study of I Samuel chapter 14. What spiritual lessons have you learned in this study?

LESSON 14

JONATHAN ROUTED THE PHILISTINES – I SAMUEL 14:1 – 52

There are nine paragraphs in this fourteenth chapter of I Samuel. A brief summary of each paragraph appears on the following table.

14:1-5	Jonathan Scouted Out The Philistines
14:6-15	Jonathan and Armor Bearer Slew 20 Philistines
14:16-23	Philistines In Disarray: They Killed Each Other
14:24-30	Jonathan Innocently Disobeyed Saul's Curse
14:31-35	Israel Devastated Philistines: Ate Meat With Blood
14:36-42	By Lot, Jonathan's Trespass Was Disclosed
14:43-48	People Rescued Jonathan From Saul
14:49-51	Saul's Lineage
14:52	Saul's Battles With Philistines: Army Build-up

I Samuel 14:1-5 - Jonathan Scouted Out The Philistines

Now the day came that Jonathan, the son of Saul, said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the Philistines' garrison that is on yonder side." But he did not tell his father. I Samuel 14:1

This verse gives us some information that is vital to the story. It describes, at least to some extent, the relationship between Jonathan and Saul; between father and son. Frankly speaking, these two men had very little in common except family.

In this paragraph, Jonathan dares to do something and intentionally hide it from his father. Now, kids will do this sort of thing and it simply indicates that they are kids-bad kids, but kids just the same. Saul and Jonathan, however are grown men. Such actions on their part points to the weakness of their father-son relationship. This was a very serious situation for Jonathan. As the prince and heir to the throne, he was risking that neither his father nor the national leaders would appreciate what he had done.

This gives us some insight into the level of courage Jonathan possessed. Jonathan embarked on a very dangerous military intelligence action. He did not view it as that dangerous. He certainly had to know the risks he was taking. This is evident in the fact that he took every precaution to make sure that his father did not learn of what he was doing.

This draws a serious contrast between father and son. When threatened by Goliath, Saul hid in his royal tent when he was the only one in the camp who was of a size to properly challenge Goliath. Jonathan, however, knew he was taking serious risks, but treated it as though it were no risk at all. He and his armor bearer went to spy on the enemy. He did not seem to be very clear on his use of the rules of intelligence. One of their chief rules was, and is, be with the enemy, but never engage them. Be where you can know everything about them, but remain out of sight. One should avoid all confrontation with them at all costs.

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, I Samuel 14:2

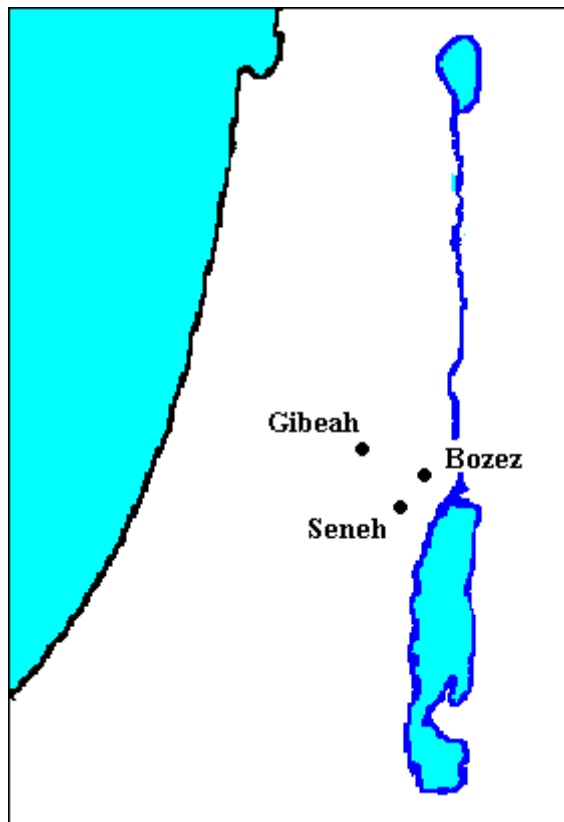
The way this is worded, the author has told us that the tree is mentioned because it is the only pomegranate tree in that whole area. As you can see on this map, Jonathan and his armor bearer are positioned right close to the Philistine enclave. His father, on the other hand, along with his 600 trained soldiers was at a safe distance from any confrontation with the Philistines. Saul is not even on military alert in case he would have to defend himself and his people.

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And Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of the LORD at Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. And the people did not know that Jonathan had gone. I Samuel 14:3

This verse seems almost out of place here. The two sentences in the verse seem to be conflicting with each other. One sentence deals with the fact that Eli's descendants were wearing the ephod. This is a symbol of the fact that they were performing the service of a priest at this time. It is not at all surprising that these young men were performing the work of a priest. Eli and his descendants were members of the Levitical tribe and thus were not available for any other vocation. The other sentence reminds us, again, that no one knew that Jonathan had left the camp. If you look at the verse again, what at first appears to be a contrast of subject is in reality a careful presentation of just how mixed up life was at this point in the land of Israel.

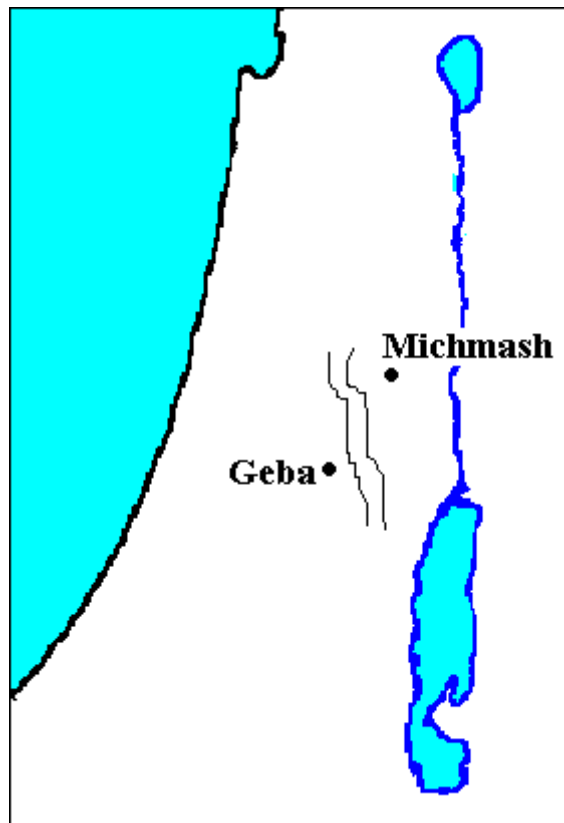
And between the passes by which Jonathan sought to cross over to the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp crag on the one side, and a sharp crag on the other side, and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. I Samuel 14:4



The use of the words "passes" and "crag" indicate the kind of terrain in which Jonathan was attempting to move. As indicated earlier, this mountainous region was a terrible area in which to conduct warfare. It was ideal, however, to carry out surveillance, whether offensive or defensive. Because of the rugged nature of the area, it was extremely dangerous even without the presence of an enemy. One cannot help but observe the precision of the author in identifying the places mentioned in this story.

The one crag rose on the north opposite Michmash, and the other on the south opposite Geba. I Samuel 14:5

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On the surface, it sounds as though these crags were located in a small, local area. In fact, they were probably the result of an earthquake. As you look at this map, it becomes clear that there is here, a picture that covers several miles. To traverse this area was to take some calculated, serious risks. On the map, it indicates that this is a distance of at least five to ten miles of steep crags and very mountainous terrain. This is not to suggest that it cannot be done. It is to indicate just how difficult it would be. Jonathan and his armor bearer would be trying to get as close to the enemy as possible without being detected. That would not be easy. The way this location is described indicates that one could be easily detected as you climb around the rocks trying to get close and get a better view of the enemy without being detected.

I Samuel 14:6-15 – Jonathan And Armor Bearer Slew 20 Philistines

Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the LORD will work for us, for the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few." I Samuel 14:6

The idea of having someone to carry your armor was not a benefit that every soldier enjoyed. There are several people mentioned in Scripture where it tells us that they had a young person who carried their armor. Saul had an armor bearer. Goliath had one and so did David. It was not necessarily a privilege reserved for royalty. It was, however, reserved as a privilege for people they wished to honor.

This gives us an additional view of Jonathan's spiritual life. He had no fear of the Philistines despite their huge numbers and their frightening reputation.

Jonathan spoke of the Philistines as, "Those uncircumcised..." This reference is usually understood to mean that the person is a Gentile. It means this and more. Circumcision is a sign that the person is a participant in the covenant God initiated with Israel. The term "uncircumcision" is also a term of derision among some Jewish people; it is a form of contempt for paganism.

It is clear that Jonathan had a very high view of the power of God. Jonathan expected that God would give them victory no matter what danger they might face.

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And his armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart; turn yourself, and here I am with you according to your desire." I Samuel 14:7

This verse, on the other hand, gives us a picture of what the armor bearer was like in terms of his faith and his devotion to his master. If Jonathan was going to risk his life, this armor bearer was prepared to do no less. There was no demand that would be asking too much of him on behalf of his master. This had to be a great source of comfort and confidence for Jonathan.

Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men and reveal ourselves to them. I Samuel 14:8

This is part of the ongoing contrast between Jonathan and Saul. At this very moment, Saul was content to sit under the tree in a city a safe distance away from the enemy. At short range, Jonathan was going to make something happen and then expect God to give them victory.

Jonathan was not going to sneak up on the Philistines. He planned to come out of hiding right in front of them. This took great courage. The Philistines were the best fighters in that part of the world. He was going to intentionally make himself visible to see what God would do on their behalf.

"If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you'; then we will stand in our place and not go up to them. I Samuel 14:9

We should not get the impression that Jonathan was a dare-devil. He was not. He was carefully planning to find a way to allow God's glory to become visible in their actions against the enemy.

"But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the LORD has given them into our hands; and this shall be the sign to us." I Samuel 14:10

Jonathan was prepared to let them set the stage any way they wished. The issue was never whether or not the LORD would deliver the Philistines into their hands no matter what their reactions might be. The basis of Jonathan's bravery was not his own bravery, but the faithfulness of God. He was not hoping God would intervene or gambling on that happening. He was certain of it and acted upon that confidence. It was equally clear to Jonathan that it was God who would take the victory, not his own skill and planning.

The text does not clarify whether or not Jonathan's plan was his own decision or God's prompting. He dealt with the situation with absolute certainty. If the Philistines said, "come to us" or they said, "we will come to you," it was a sign to him that God would give them victory. He was prepared to act no matter what the Philistines might say when they discovered him.

And when both of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, the Philistines said, "Behold, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." I Samuel 14:11

There is yet another comparison in this verse. The author compared Jonathan's confidence in God with the Philistines confidence in themselves. The two men acted upon their faith and intentionally came out into the open.

It is clear, in the last part of this sentence, that the Philistines were laughing and mocking Jonathan and his armor bearer. The remarks of the Philistines were intended to humiliate and intimidate the two Jews.

So the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor bearer and said, "Come up to us and we will tell you something." And Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has given them into the hands of Israel." I Samuel 14:12

The men of the Philistine garrison were toying with Jonathan and his servant. The Philistine's promise to tell them something was a poorly disguised design to do them great harm.

Just as clearly as the Philistine's were making fun of Jonathan and his armor bearer, it is clear that Jonathan was paying no attention to them at all. Jonathan is convinced that God would deliver these superior

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numbers of Philistines into their hands. This was a physical impossibility. Jonathan had a conviction that God would make this happen. Observe that Jonathan did not say, "God MAY give them into our hands." He said, "The LORD has given them into the hands Israel..". Now, it was not Israel that was taking this stand. It was Jonathan. This was his way of insisting that this was God's doing, not his.

Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer behind him; and they fell before Jonathan, and his armor bearer put some to death after him. I Samuel 14:13

The Philistines held the valued high ground. The army holding the high ground was virtually certain of victory in most any battle.

Despite this limitation, Jonathan managed to kill some of the Philistines. The ones Jonathan did not kill, the armor bearer did kill. This was a huge source of embarrassment for the Philistines.

And that first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half a furrow in an acre of land. I Samuel 14:14

We must acknowledge that the killing of 20 Philistines was a great number. The way in which this happened is quite a miracle. Not only did God do this, He did it in a short distance of battle. This points up how aggressively Jonathan waged the small battle and how great the power of God really is.

And there was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even the garrison and the raiders trembled, and the earth quaked so that it became a great trembling. I Samuel 14:15

The Philistines had won so many battles, they never even considered the possibility of defeat. Psychologically, the Philistines were not prepared to sustain even a small loss. The impossibility of the Philistines experiencing even a small defeat began to show on the Philistine soldiers in the field. The whole garrison reacted with extreme fear to this shocking news.

Add to the Philistine shocking defeat, the forces of nature also took part. The Philistines knew that there were a few earthquakes in the area, but they had never experienced one. They did not understand the tremors of nature as we do today. Add to their instability of footing, which would threaten the bravest of soldiers, the frightful danger that as the earth shook and trembled, it just might come apart with all this shaking. The area was evidence that this had happened before.

I Samuel 14:16-23 – Philistines In Disarray" They Killed Each Other

Now Saul's watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude melted away; and they went here and there. I Samuel 14:16

The scene shifted from Jonathan's southern, trembling battlefield to the location some miles north of this fragile, trembling battlefield to see how all this affected Jonathan.

The Philistines in the immediate battle zone where Jonathan fought were trembling and fearful with sufficient reason. The impossible was coming into being. Several miles north of this battle field, Saul and his legions were prepared to take on the defense of the king. There were some soldiers in the area, but no one was prepared for what was happening. This verse suggests that though the Philistines were accustomed to victory, they had a new experience, defeat. As this happened, the Philistine soldiers, who were in the area where Saul was, got this news and were as frightened as those who faced Jonathan. The author described it as though these once brave soldiers became like butter before the oven's blast. They fled in every direction like a newly defeated army. This is no orderly retreat.

And Saul said to the people who were with him, "Number now and see who has gone from us." And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not there. I Samuel 14:17

Saul was confused and there was no way to explain these events and no need to try to hide their confusion. For some reason, Saul wondered if perhaps some of their soldiers had left camp without permission. In

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modern terms we call this being A.W.O.L. This means Absent Without Official Leave. It was done. They discovered that no large group of Israelite troops was missing, but Jonathan and his armor bearer could not be accounted for.

Put yourself in Saul's position for a moment. How would you feel? How would you consider your son's courage beyond description and your own complacent hiding? Add to this the fact that you and your son have not always gotten along very well and your values were very different. The shock for Saul had to be beyond description.

Then Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here." For the ark of God was at that time with the sons of Israel. I Samuel 14:18

This is the first mention of the ark of the Covenant being with Saul and his army on the field of battle. There is no indication that God told them to bring the ark to the place of battle. In the midst of troubles, Saul called for the ark to be brought.

There is every evidence here that Saul is preparing to use the ark like a talisman. This would be a tragic misuse of the ark to say the least. Observe, also, that there was no resistance or complaint from the priests to assert that the ark had no business being on the battlefield. It belongs in the house of the LORD. This would be very offensive to Jehovah. It would be treating Him like any of the idols the Philistines worshipped and carried into battle with them.

And it happened while Saul talked to the priest, that the commotion in the camp of the Philistines continued and increased; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." I Samuel 14:19

This would be a most difficult moment for Saul. He was torn. He wanted to use the ark of the Covenant to gain help and direction. He also saw an opportunity to do great devastation in the camp of the Philistines. As we have observed from the beginning, Saul's relationship with Jehovah was one of advantage rather than worship. Like many others, he tended to turn to God in time of need and to go it alone on all other occasions. When Saul saw that the Philistines were weakening, he abandoned his intention to seek God's help in favor of pursuing the Philistines in their flight.

Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and came to the battle; and behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion. I Samuel 14:20

There is more than a simple reversal in battle conditions here. Saul and his army had held their own, but there was enthusiasm for the fight. When the Philistines realized that their situation was deteriorating, they did not know how to deal with negative battle conditions. They were accustomed to winning. They turned and fled from the battle scene.

This verse can be confusing. Notice, first, the author indicated that the men of Israel rallied to the fight. In the second part of the sentence, the author indicates that every man fought with his fellow soldiers as though the Israelites fought against each other. A careful reading of the context indicates that it is the Philistines who were confused and were killing each other. In a number of Old Testament situations, God caused the enemies of Israel to be confused and turn against each other rather than to attack the Israelites. This is one more indication of that situation.

Now the Hebrews who were with the Philistines previously, who went up with them all around in the camp, even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. I Samuel 14:21

There are a couple of surprises in this verse. In the first part of the sentence, the author indicates that there had been some men of Israel who had been fighting alongside the Philistines against their fellow Israelites. This is hard to imagine, but the text is clear. These Jewish men had been fighting against Israel. Now, when the fortunes of warfare turn in favor of the Israelites; these traitorous Jewish soldiers turn their alle-

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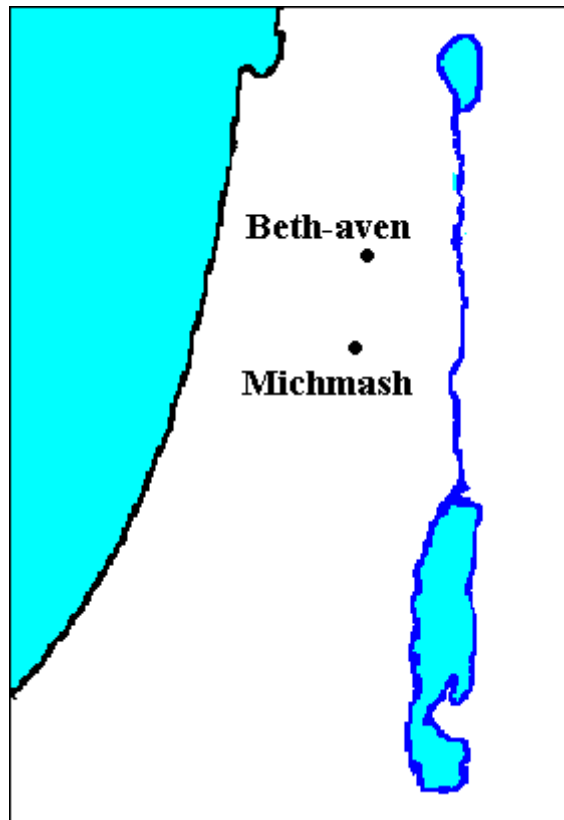
giance again and begin to fight alongside the Israelites. This had to be a shocking surprise to both the Israelite and the Philistine armies. It also had to seriously add to the advantage that suddenly turned in favor of Israel over the Philistine army.

The second surprise comes at the end of the verse. As you read this part of the verse, it is clear that Jonathan and his men were some 10-15 miles south of the location of Saul and his smaller group. Suddenly, in the end of this verse, somehow you find Jonathan and his men fighting alongside Saul and his men. The author gives no indication of how this happened or when.

When all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, even they also pursued them closely in the battle. I Samuel 14:22

There is another surprise in this verse. Saul had conscripted specific individuals to be in his army. He did not call all men to serve. In this time of serious danger, one would expect those men who were not a part of the army to try to help their army in whatever way they could. That did not happen. The men who were not a part of the army fled into the mountains and caves of this region. It was safe in these mountains and caves. No army would chase after men who went up into the mountains and hid in the hundreds of caves that blanket the area. It was too dangerous because the element of surprise was with those who fled there. Now, when it becomes clear that the advantage is clearly on the side of Israel, these individuals abandon their secure caves and come out to take part in the chase and incidentally to share in the plunder as well. Nice people!

So the LORD delivered Israel that day, and the battle spread beyond Beth-aven. I Samuel 14:23



As you can see on this map, Beth-aven is located north east of Michmash.

Though the Israelite troops were the ones who killed the Philistines, the author knew who it was who produced the results in this battle. It was a battle the LORD won on behalf of Israel. When it was clear that they were being defeated, the Philistine troops fled in all directions. Normally, it was advantageous for troops to flee in all directions. That proved not to be the case here, as the Jewish soldiers chased them down and

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killed them all. (AN ASIDE: The town of Beth-aven, near Bethel, proved to be a message in itself. The name Bethel means "house of God." The name Beth-aven means "house of a false god.")

I Samuel 14:24-30 – Jonathan Innocently Disobeyed Saul's Curse

Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food. Samuel 14:24

It is very difficult for an army to chase a fleeing army in full army gear. It tires them out quickly and wears them down. Afterward they need some time to rest and regain their strength. It also requires time for additional food because there was no time to eat properly when they were chasing the enemy.

At the time they needed to eat and rest, Saul imposed an order forbidding them from eating. This was a serious tactical error. There was no good military reason to impose this curse. Saul just did not want anything to get into the way of killing as many Philistines as possible. It was a personal vendetta for him.

And all the people of the land entered the forest, and there was honey on the ground. I Samuel 14:25

It appears that all the soldiers were willing to obey the command. It is also probably true that they were not all that excited about such an order. There were two things that made this situation even more difficult. At this time of year, it was customary for the people to find these honeycombs. It was the fall of the year when honey was most plentiful. They were even hungrier because they were forbidden to eat anything.

When the people entered the forest, behold, there was a flow of honey; but no man put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath. I Samuel 14:26

This verse gives us an impression of just how much the soldiers feared the edict of Saul. Their desire to survive was stronger than their desire to eat food. Notice that it does not say that they did not eat. It says they did not put their hand to their mouth, lest someone think they were eating.

But Jonathan had not heard when his father put the people under oath; therefore, he put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened. I Samuel 14:27

This verse is a little parenthesis. We must keep in mind that Jonathan slipped out of the camp without being noticed. He did not know about his father's ban on eating. It is not that Jonathan ate a lot of honey. He simply dipped the end of his spear into the honeycomb. This could get him a taste of the honey, but not very much. Nevertheless, it was a violation of Saul's edict. In such instances, the king would not dare to make an exception for his son. Observe the closing remark in this verse. It says that Jonathan's eyes were brightened. This suggests that the honey had helped to restore Jonathan after a very taxing expedition.

Then one of the people answered and said, "Your father strictly put the people under oath, saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food today.'" And the people were weary. I Samuel 14:28

The soldiers knew that Saul would be bound by the words of his curse, even though the violator was his son. For this reason, one of the soldiers reminded Jonathan that there was a curse on anyone who would eat. Notice that the verse closes by adding the statement that the men were weary. It is not that they were just tired. There is a weariness that goes beyond the bounds of being simply tired. The tired person, in a crisis, can rally enough strength and energy to get himself through the struggle. The weary soul is beyond tired. All of his resources and particularly his will has been spent. There are no reserves upon which to draw.

Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See now, how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. I Samuel 14:29

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There have been several occasions so far where Jonathan and Saul disagreed seriously. Until now, Jonathan either disagreed quietly or worked in the background to right some of his father's obvious errors. Now Jonathan changed his approach. He has openly dealt with his father's error.

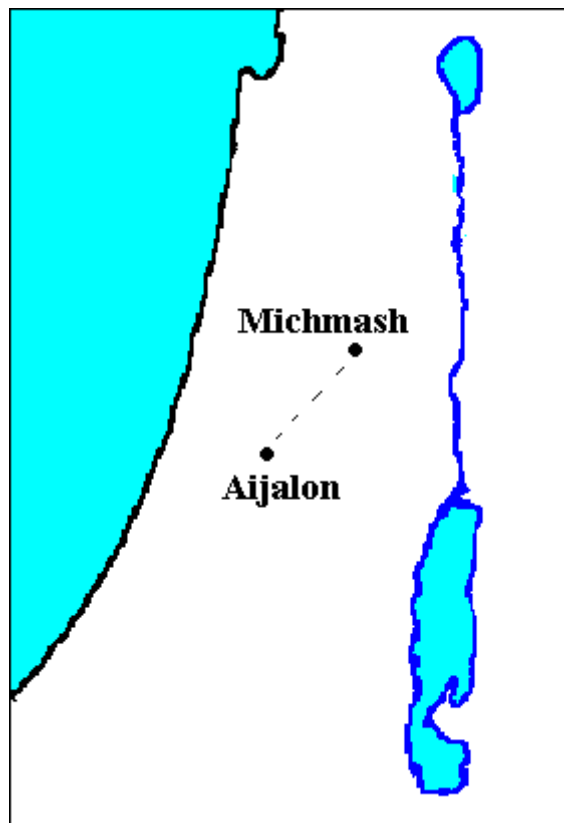
There is no hint that Jonathan is sorry that he had eaten the honey. He admitted that his father had troubled the land on a number of occasions. In this verse he points out that this incident is a case in point. He was quick to point out that eating the honey rather than being bad for him had really been very good for him.

"How much more, if only the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great." I Samuel 14:30

Jonathan just could not let it go. He felt compelled to continue to deal with the flawed action of his father. Jonathan went a painful step further. He offered that the eating of the honey would have been very beneficial for the army rather than a danger. What is more, Jonathan held his father responsible for the fact that they had not overtaken more of the Philistines because the soldiers were simply too tired. A good meal would have helped solve this problem.

I Samuel 14:31-35 – Israel Devastated Philistines: Ate Meat With Blood

And they struck among the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very weary. I Samuel 14:31



As you can see on the map, this is a distance of about 25 miles through rugged terrain and into enemy strongholds. These soldiers, however, were far too weary to travel when this part of the march started. Add to this 25 mile distance the fact that this was not a plateau they were traversing. This is a trip through very rough and rugged terrain. Observe that in verse 28 the author said, "the soldiers were weary." Now, just three verses later, the author reported that the soldiers were "very weary." The emphasis in this advanced repetition does not go unnoticed.

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And the people rushed greedily upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood. I Samuel 14:32

The scene shifts dramatically in this verse. In 14:31, it is a picture of soldiers forcing themselves to pursue a frightened enemy. In this verse, the army draws upon a rush of energy at the sight of animals they can eat. One wonders had Saul been more reasonable in his demands, would the people have been more discreet in their lunge for food? We cannot say for sure, but it appears that this would be the case.

The problem for them was that they violated the law of God. Every soldier knew very well that it was not permissible for them to eat any meat with the blood still in it. These people had been driven hard and had nothing to eat for too long. It is not surprising that they were ravenous beyond concern over whether the meat was completely prepared for consumption or not.

Then they told Saul, saying, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have acted treacherously; roll a great stone to me today." Samuel 14:33

One might wonder why these people were so concerned that they spoke to Saul about this. It is interesting that this had to be brought to Saul's attention. Had he not observed that this was happening? Had he overlooked the fact or was he unaware that this was one of God's prohibitions? We can only conjecture. We have observed throughout this study that Saul was not the most faithful participant in worship. This may have had something to do with the fact.

The people may not have been any more faithful in worship than Saul was, but they did observe that when they obeyed God, they also won the battle. On the other hand, when they failed to obey God, they were always defeated. They were convinced that this disobedience would certainly result in failure on the battlefield as well. They were more concerned about the best interests of Israel than they were the desire to be obedient to God.

It is interesting that Saul was terribly upset over this violation of the law of God. Our first response is a telling one. As a serious sinner himself, it is surprising to some that he was so terribly offended by the sins of others. Our own concern, here, is an observation that some of the strongest protests over sin come from those who sin most frequently. The picture of the Pharisees, in the Gospels, attests to this.

And Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, 'Each one of you bring me his ox or his sheep, and slaughter it here and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.' "So all the people that night brought each one his ox with him, and slaughtered it there. I Samuel 14:34

This is shocking. Saul, for whatever reason, was determined to bring this violation of God's law to a quick solution. There is an interesting contrast in these verses. The author has just described some seriously inappropriate errors that Saul made in relation to his people. Now, the author pointed to Saul's emotional outburst at the eating of meat with blood still in it. Incidentally, it should be noted that this kind of duplicity is seldom wasted on the people. They may say nothing, but they know. Oh, do they know! The author points out how obedient the people were to the command of the king. This is particularly obvious in view of his guilt of at least poor judgment if not inappropriate commands.

And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD. I Samuel 14:35

Saul made sure that they dealt appropriately with their sin. The author discreetly points out that this is the first altar that Saul ever built. No one ever accused Saul of being overly committed to the worship of God. From the time Saul entered the concerns of this book, it has been clear that in his relationship with God, Saul was certainly not the most obedient person in Israel. Still, we are grateful for every evidence of obedience to the command of God.

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I Samuel 14:36-42 – By Lot, Jonathan's Trespass Was Disclosed

Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and take spoil among them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." So the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." I Samuel 14:36

In this verse, one can see again Saul's obsession with destroying the Philistines. One needs to keep in mind, however, that Israel was still outnumbered. To some extent, at least, Israel was still fighting without real weapons while the Philistines were the best equipped army in that part of the world. The author makes no attempt to explain why there was such a change in Saul's attitude.

We must point out the total willingness on the part of the people, to go with Saul into this very dangerous situation. The priests, however, were not quite so eager to follow this instruction as the soldiers were. The priests reminded Saul that they needed to go to God and seek His counsel for this situation. Now that was a noble, unusual thought for Saul. One wonders why Saul apparently never thought of that? Frankly, this took great courage on the part of the priests. They knew that even the apparent disagreement with a king could cost a person their life.

And Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Wilt Thou give them into the hand of Israel?" But He did not answer him on that day. I Samuel 14:37

On several occasions, Saul seemed to forget God and His control over Israel. Here, however, Saul went to God and asked if he should pursue the Philistines. We should keep in mind, however, that he only did this after being prompted by the priests. What the priest urged Saul to do was an affirmation that God was the ruler over the nation, even though they had a king.

There seems to be an element of surprise in the closing portion of this verse. When the people of Israel prayed in this way, they expected God to answer in a direct and specific way. In this instance, no answer was given at all. In most cases, when no answer was given, it was usually an indication that something was wrong. You can see that this is the way they treated the divine silence in this instance.

And Saul said, "Draw near here, all you chiefs of the people, and investigate and see how this sin has happened today. I Samuel 14:38

As previously suggested, Saul saw the divine silence as an indication that some sin among the people prevented God from answering. Saul acted upon that assumption. He was determined to find out what that sin was and deal with it so that they could get the information they needed. In one sense, they were treating the situation the way one treats a recalcitrant computer. Find out what has to be done to get this machine to give us the information we needed. In one sense it was using God rather than worshipping God.

Saul determined to do this by calling the chiefs of the people together. He called for an investigation to determine the source of the evil that stood in the way of receiving an answer from God. One gets the impression that Saul needed an answer from God so that he could get on with his pursuit of the Philistines. It is as though Saul would be shocked, stunned if God gave anything but a positive instruction.

"For as the LORD lives, who delivers Israel, though it is in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But not one of all the people answered him. I Samuel 14:39

Saul wanted to assure the people that no one would be exempt; no one would receive preferential treatment. The guilty party would be put to death even if it was his own son, Jonathan. Saul probably felt it was safe to make such a statement, because Jonathan was always on the side of righteousness and truth even if his father was not. Frankly, it should not have been necessary for Saul to take such a pledge. He should have known that. What might have caused him to do this? Was it his lack of rapport with his people? Was it his characteristic propensity for rash statements? Was it his own sense of insecurity that caused him to take such an oath? We cannot be sure. We only know that it seemed important for him to make such a pledge.

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Observe, the author concluded the verse with the somber statement, "but not one of all the people answered him." This suggests that they knew something that they were unwilling or afraid to share with him. This is not at all surprising for two reasons: These people had a deep love for Jonathan. Rather than implicate a man they loved dearly, they simply kept silent. Secondly, harsh and unpredictable rulers tend to cause people to be afraid of what they might do on any given occasion. Saul was that kind of ruler.

Then he said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." I Samuel 14:40

Though Saul did not know it, this was another unnecessary, dangerous move. For him, it was absolutely important to find who was at fault. It was also a situation where he would need to be temperate in his responses. He did not know if they knew the answer or not. The people, on the other hand, were in an awkward, untenable position. They knew the whole situation and they knew that Saul did not. Their response to Saul was the only thing they could say – "Do what seems good to you." At least, with this response, they did not have to tell on Jonathan.

The way Saul designed this standoff is significant. It was set up so that it would become obvious whether the sin was with Saul and Jonathan or with the people. The people, of course, did not have to fear this arrangement. They knew for certain that it was none of them that had done the wrong. It is most doubtful, however, if Saul had any idea or clue as to whom the guilty party might be.

Therefore, Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, "Give a perfect lot." And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. I Samuel 14:41

Saul made the appropriate request so that the guilty party would become obvious, no matter whom it might be. One suspects that Saul had to be extremely shocked that the lot showed that the wrong was between him and Jonathan rather than anyone in the rest of Israel. Now, Saul was trapped. He had no options because of his pledge to pursue this matter until the guilty party was identified.

And Saul said, "Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son." And Jonathan was taken. I Samuel 14:42

Saul did what he had to do. He asked that lots be cast between him and his son, Jonathan. Imagine Saul's confusion at this point. The very last person he would have expected to be guilty would be Jonathan. On the other hand, he knew that he had done nothing to cause this crucial impasse.

To Saul's surprise, the lot identified Jonathan as the guilty party. There are those who would question the wisdom of casting lots to determine the will of God. We only know that on occasion, this was an accepted form, even before the LORD. We also know that the priests sometimes used Urim and Thumim to determine the will of God. We do not know exactly how this worked, but with these colored stones they had a way to determine what it was God wanted them to do.

I Samuel 14:43-48– People Rescued Jonathan From Saul

Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." So Jonathan told him and said, "I indeed tasted a little honey with the end of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am, I must die!" I Samuel 14:43

Now, Saul was clearly on the spot. He did what he had to do. It was essential that he confront Jonathan concerning the nature of his wrong.

Jonathan's response was really telling. He told the truth. He did not dress it up in any way. He told Saul exactly what he had done. He was prepared to accept the results of his actions even though it meant dying. You may have noticed that when it became clear that Jonathan was the guilty party, he did not tell his father that he was unaware of the decree. He accepted the fact that he was guilty and should pay the consequences. What a young man!

JONATHAN ROUTED THE PHILISTINES

*And Saul said, "May God do this to me and more also, for you shall surely die, Jonathan."
I Samuel 14:44*

There seems to be a sense of fury in the retort of Saul when he discovered that it was Jonathan. First, Saul did not stop to ask Jonathan why he had disobeyed his command. Saul did not waver in anyway. He took another oath saying, "May God do this to me and more also," and then pronounced the sentence of death upon Jonathan. There was a double silence. There is no hint of indescribable sorrow. There was not a word of complaint or pleading from Jonathan. This exchange makes a great impression on our awareness of Jonathan. At the same time, it does not do much to salvage our impression of Saul.

But the people said to Saul, "Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan and he did not die. I Samuel 14:45

This verse begins with the word, "but." This indicates that the material that follows will be a serious contrast with the content of the previous verse.

This verse indicates how the people thought about both Saul and Jonathan. True, the people defended Jonathan. They did more! At great personal risk, they stood up to the king in a very forceful way. They asked a question that expressed their total disbelief at what Saul had done. They said, "Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this great deliverance of Israel?" The resounding answer is, "Far from it!" There is a sense of angry disbelief in their question. It is like saying, "How could you even think of killing the one who has just done what you could not do – deliver Israel. The people declared a defiant stand against the intended actions of the king. Having heard the two unfortunate oaths from Saul, they made an oath of their own. They said, "As the LORD lives..." It is like saying, "as long as the Lord lives this will not happen." It is a declaration of an oath that will never be changed no matter what the consequences might be. They did not ASK Saul, they told him what would and would not be done. "There shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground." What loyalty these soldiers had for Jonathan. What contempt they voiced for Saul's decision in their unchangeable oath.

The soldiers explained their unusual stand in a beautiful statement about Jonathan. "For he has worked with God this day." Wow! Put yourself in Jonathan's position. How would you respond to this brave loyalty from soldiers who risked their lives to protect yours? Again, what would you think about your father after this heart-rending encounter? If your name was Saul, how would you feel about your son? How would you feel about your soldiers who bravely shifted allegiance from you to your son? How would you feel about yourself? There is a very gentle anticlimax, "So the people rescued Jonathan and he did not die."

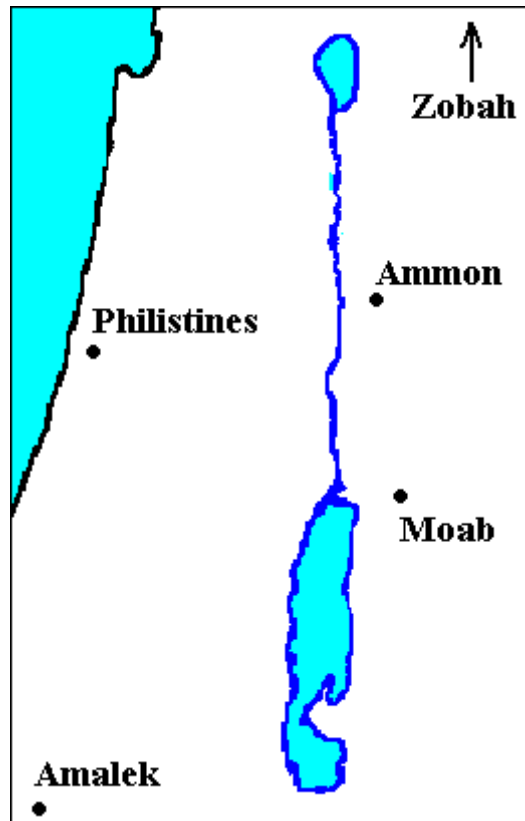
*Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.
I Samuel 14:46*

In this verse, the scene dramatically changes. It is as though the previous verses never happened. There is no explanation concerning why Saul interrupted his pursuit of the Philistines. Until this point, Saul had spared no effort to attempt to catch and destroy the Philistines. Granted, Saul has just emerged from one of the most heart-wrenching experiences one could possibly imagine. This does not seem to be sufficient reason to abandon a military action that held such high priority in his thinking. One wonders, did Saul again go before the LORD to see if he should chase the Philistines any longer? The text does not say, but one would be surprised if he did.

In the same way, one wonders why the Philistines abandoned their mission against the forces of Saul. Granted, they were not faring well in this action. Nevertheless, they outnumbered the Israelite army at least four-to-one and they fielded vastly superior weapons of war.

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Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment. I Samuel 14:47



This verse appears to be the beginning of a recapitulation of the reign of Saul. On this map, you can see the locations where Saul fought to rid his people of the oppression of these pagan peoples.

The misdirections and failures of Saul are well known. Unfortunately, however, we tend to call to mind the mistakes that Saul made and often fail to remember the positive things he did. His army valiantly defeated the habitual enemies of Israel.

And he acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them. I Samuel 14:48

As you look at verses 47 and 48, one wonders why the Amalekites are mentioned separately from the other four nations. The Amalekites did not do more damage than any of the other four nations. Saul conducted an outstanding campaign against the Amalekites. This is very significant because these distant relatives repeatedly plundered the crops and homes of the people of Israel.

I Samuel 14:49-51 – Saul's Lineage

Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan and Ishvi and Malchi-shua; and the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the first-born Merab and the name of the younger Michal. I Samuel 14:49

This verse indicates that Saul had three sons and two daughters. In this verse, the author begins to trace Saul's lineage. This is part of the summary concerning Saul. The author begins with a description concerning Jonathan. The fact that Jonathan is mentioned first gives us specific information. He is either the oldest son, which he was, or the favored one. He was the best of both. Jonathan was chiefly noted for four things: First, he was noted for his loyalty to David. Second, he was known for his determination to do right regard-

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less of the cost. Third, he had an unselfish view of life. Fourth, he was a man of high principles. Though he was Saul's oldest son, he does not appear to have taken part in any of Saul's many expeditions against David.

- a. **Ishvi** – He was Saul's second son. His mother's name was Ahinoam. Some scholars believe this is the same person as Ishbosheth.
- b. **Malchi** – This is the third son of Saul. He was killed at Mount Gilboa. He is also called Malchishua which means "my king is salvation."
- c. **Merab** – This is Saul's oldest daughter. She is the daughter Saul promised to the one who killed Goliath.
- d. **Michal** – She was Saul's younger daughter. Merab was promised to the one who killed Goliath. When this promised marriage was not consummated, Merab was married to Adriel. Saul then gave his younger daughter to David. She loved David and sensed that he was in danger. She plotted David's escape by delaying the messengers from Saul. She soothed her father's wrath over missing David. When David was outlawed, she was married to Pelti. She was forcibly restored to David when he returned as king. The relationship between David and Michal soured probably over religion. Eventually she disdained David for what she called dancing naked before the ark. She remained childless for the balance of her life. (II Samuel 6:23)

And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the captain of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. I Samuel 14:50

This verse continues the summary information about Saul and those closest to him:

- a. **Ahinoam** – She was Saul's only wife. He was apparently married to her after he became king, but we cannot verify that information. We know that her father's name was Ahimaaz. It is entirely possible that she is the same person who was married to David and bore the son Amnon for David. See II Samuel 3:2; 25:43.
- b. **Ahimaaz** – We know that he was the father of Ahinoam, Saul's wife. Again, it is possible that he is also the man who was mentioned as the son of Zadok, the High Priest. If so, then he was also the one who kept David informed of Absalom's revolt after David fled the city of Jerusalem.
- c. **Abner** – We know that Abner was the general of Saul's army. After Saul died, Abner became general of the army for Ishbosheth in his ill-fated attempt to be king. Abner was Saul's cousin- his father, Ner, was a brother to Saul's father, Kish. We know that on state occasions, he sat at the table at the king's right hand. I Samuel 20:25. Abner is the one who introduced David to Saul. Abner later accompanied Saul in pursuit of David. He was the leader championing the cause for Ishbosheth to be king instead of David. He was finally killed by Joab who was loyal to David.

And Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. I Samuel 14:51

In this verse, the author continued the description of Saul's lineage. He mentioned Kish:

- a. **Kish** – Kish was the father of Saul. We know that he was from the tribe of Benjamin. We assume that Kish (Saul's father) was the brother of Ner (Abner's father.) The text tells us that the father of Ner was Abiel. Because we know Saul and Abner were cousins, we assume that Kish and Ner were brothers and that Abiel was the father of both and grandfather of Saul and Abner. This is essentially all that we know about these people.

I Samuel 14:52 - Saul's Battles With Philistines: Army build-up

Now the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff. I Samuel 14:52

Though there is only one verse/sentence in this paragraph, there is a dramatic shift in focus back to the conflict between Israel and the Philistines. This shift is so dramatic that it almost seems out of place. This verse is a gentle reminder of just how difficult it was to rule when Saul was king. The battle between Israel

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and the Philistines had no conclusion, It just got interrupted. Interrupted conflicts have a way of smashing upon the stage of history when least expected. That is what happened here. It was just put on hold until the next engagement. The Philistines seemed unable to think of themselves as defeated in battle. They always had to try one more time.

Conclusion

Jonathan's trust was in the LORD, not his own skill. He counted on the faithfulness of God. The result of this was that he was never in danger of losing the battle. His father trusted in his own skills and he faced almost certain defeat.

It is not new information, but what a wonderful reminder! Jonathan's outlook was so true, "the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few." When one's trust is in the LORD, he can remember that the LORD can and will save no matter how outnumbered his people might be.

We would be wise to remember that every victory will be followed by an attack. Our enemy does not take kindly to defeat. Whether first or twenty-first century, his approach is always the same. When Satan failed to cause Jesus to falter in His temptation, the text says:

And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.
Luke 4:13

The enemy never accepts defeat. He simply postpones his attack until a more advantageous time.

If you study the actions of Jonathan in this chapter, it becomes clear that his faithfulness and integrity were the major ingredients in saving his life.

Each day we face the conflicts Jonathan faced. We may not use sword and shield, but the battle for truth and righteousness is always the same. Jonathan had two expectations he would not change:

1. He expected God to be faithful and almighty.
2. He expected Jonathan to be both faithful and absolutely honest. We would be wise to expect no less of ourselves.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 15

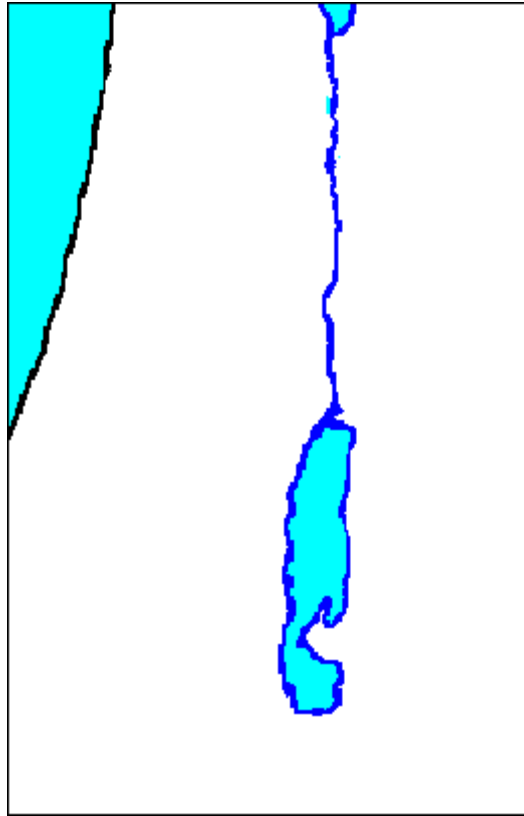
SAUL DISOBEYED GOD'S COMMAND CONCERNING AMALEK – I SAMUEL 15:1 – 35

1. There are six paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 15. On the following table, write a summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

15:1-3	
15:4-9	
15:10-16	
15:17-23	
15:24-33	
15:34, 35	

2. In I Samuel 15:1-3, Samuel commanded Saul, smite Amalek, destroy everything. In these verses, Samuel made it clear to Saul exactly what God wanted him to do.
- In 15:1, Samuel stressed the fact that he is the one God sent to anoint Saul king. Why does the author say Saul should listen?
 - In 15:2, Samuel explained why God was going to punish Amalek. Why was it?
 - In 15:3, Samuel instructed Saul to destroy Amalek along with everything. What does the author mean by the quote, "do not spare HIM?"
3. In 15:4-9, Saul destroyed Amalek and the people, but spared the king and the best animals.
- In 15:4, Saul set out to carry out this command.
 - How does numbering the people help accomplish this goal?
 - What does the author mean when he reported, "200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah?"
 - In 15:5, 6, Saul prepared for battle:
 - In 15:5, Saul set an "ambush."
 - What is an ambush?
 - Compare this tactic with the way Saul fought other battles. What did you learn?
 - Saul urged the Kenites to leave the city. Identify two reasons he would have for this action.

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- a) In 15:7, the author described the way this battle was fought. On this map, trace the movement of the battle. Approximately how far did they travel?
 - b) In 15:8, 9, The author described the victory of Saul. Compare 15:8, 9 with 15:3. What did you learn?
4. In I Samuel 15:10-16, Samuel confronted Saul's disobedience.
- a. In 15:10, 11, The LORD spoke to Samuel. What did the LORD mean when He said, "I regret that I have made Saul King?"
 - b. Why would Samuel "cry out to the LORD all night"?
 - c. In 15:12, the author reported about the monument Saul set up "for himself." What is the meaning of this report?
 - d. In 15:13, Saul greeted Samuel and made two statements. Study these two statements and record your observations.
 - e. In 15:14, Samuel responded to Saul's two statements. What does Samuel imply by these words?
 - f. In 15:15, Saul responded to Samuel's penetrating question. Study this verse very carefully. Then compare 15:15 with 15:9. What did you learn?
 - g. In 15:16, Samuel said, in response to Saul's explanation, "wait." Why would Samuel say this?
5. In I Samuel 15:17-33, Saul gave his excuses.
- a. In 15:17, 18, Samuel reviewed the LORD'S dealings with Saul. Why would he do this?
 - b. In 15:19, Samuel responded to Saul's explanation. Study this verse carefully. Now, compare this verse with Saul's statement in 15:13. What did you learn?
 - c. In 15:20, 21, Saul defended his actions.
 - 1) What does Saul really say?
 - 2) Compare this defense with the report found in 15:8, 9. What did you learn?
 - d. In 15:22, 23, Samuel responded to Saul's defense.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 15

- 1) In what way, if any, did Samuel refute Saul's statement?
 - 2) What did Samuel really say in these verses?
6. In I Samuel 15:24-33, Saul repented and the consequences came.
- a. In 15:24, 25, Saul's repentance is recorded.
 - 1) How do you define repentance?
 - 2) Did Saul repent?
 - 3) How do you know?
 - b. In 15:26, Samuel responded to Saul's request.
 - 1) How did Samuel respond?
 - 2) What difference would this make?
 - c. In 15:27-29, Saul reacted to Samuel's response.
 - 1) What was Saul's reaction?
 - 2) What did this reaction mean?
 - 3) What was Samuel's reaction?
 - 4) If you were Saul, how would you feel now?
 - d. In 15:30, Saul again confessed and again made a request. Study this verse very carefully.
 - 1) Specifically, what did Saul request?
 - 2) What would this request gain for Saul?
 - 3) In what way will Samuel's presence aid in Saul's worship?
 - e. In 15:31, Samuel agreed to Saul's request. Review 15:31 in view of the author's quotation in 15:26. How can we explain this turn of events?
 - f. In 15:32, 33, There is a dramatic change of direction.
 - 1) How would you describe the situation in 15:32?
 - 2) What, if any, contrast do you see there?
 - 3) In verse 33, Samuel explained the reason for killing Agag. Essentially, what did he say?
 - 4) It is one thing to kill a person. It is quite another thing to "Hew Agag to pieces before the LORD. How would you describe what Samuel did?
 - 5) How would you evaluate Samuel's actions in these two verses?
7. In 15:34, 35, Samuel separated permanently from Saul. In these two verses there is a very sad conclusion to the chapter.
- a. What is this sadness?
 - b. Describe, in detail, what the author meant when he said, "Samuel grieved over Saul."
 - c. What did the author mean when he said, "the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel"?
8. Reflect over your study of this chapter. What did you learn that will directly affect your spiritual walk?

LESSON 15

SAUL DISOBEYED GOD'S COMMAND CONCERNING AMALEK –I SAMUEL 15:1 – 35

There are six paragraphs in the 15th. chapter of I Samuel. You will find a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

15:1-3	Samuel Commanded Saul – Smite Amalek; Destroy everything.
15:4-9	Saul Destroyed Amalek and People; Spared King and Animals
15:10-16	Samuel Confronted Saul's Disobedience
15:17-23	Saul's Excuse; Samuel – "Jehovah Has Rejected You"
15:24-33	Saul Repented; Accepted: Consequences Still Came
15:34, 35	Samuel Separated Permanently From Saul

I Samuel 15:1-3 – Samuel Commanded Saul – Smite Amalek; Destroy Everything

Then Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD. I Samuel 15:1

Samuel was a prophet to Saul in the same way that Isaiah was a prophet to Hezekiah. Samuel came to Saul with a message from the LORD. The message would be very specific. Samuel reminded Saul that he had been the one who anointed him to be the King of Israel. This is the image of God that Samuel wants Saul to know very well.

Jehovah, through Samuel, gave Saul a full explanation of what was to be done and why. Jehovah told Saul that this was a punishment for Amalek. This, in itself, should have told Saul that it was essential that he obey every detail of these instructions exactly as they had been given. The reason for this judgment should have struck a cord with Saul. He had some experience in standing in the way of God's will. Amalek stood in the way of Israel when they came from Egypt on their way to the Promised Land. God gave Saul the privilege of being a part of the judgment of Amalek.

'Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' I Samuel 15:3

Saul could never claim ignorance. He was given very explicit instructions. Saul was to destroy everything that Amalek possessed. You may remember that Israel sought to pass through the territory of Amalek. It was their possessions that Amalek feared Israel would take. Now God, through Samuel, instructed Saul to destroy every possession of these pagan people.

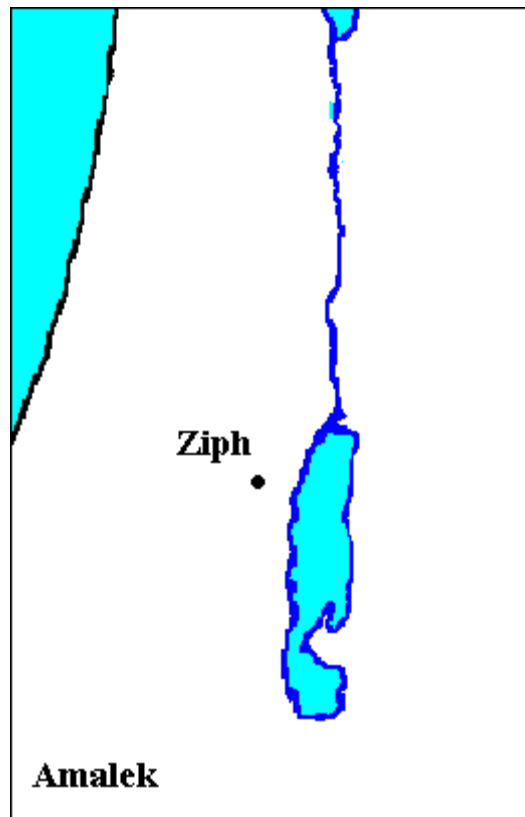
Saul was specifically instructed, "Do not spare him." Amalek was not a man to be spared or killed. There was, however, a man, a king, who represented all of Amalek. In that day, when a nation defeated another nation, they sought to take the king alive as a trophy for the conquering king. It was a trophy he could point to and boast of his great deeds. The defeated king would have his thumbs chopped off so the conquering king and his nobles could make fun of him as he tried to eat because he ate his food at the table of the conquering king. The big toes of both feet were also chopped off. Again, this was so that he could provide entertainment for the conquering king and nobles. As he struggled unsuccessfully to keep from falling down. Our balance, though we are not usually aware of it, is largely dependant upon the big toes of each foot.

Saul was instructed to put to death every man, woman, child and infant from the Amalekites. He obeyed that command except for the king. He also was instructed to put to death every ox, sheep, camel and donkey. This he did not do. This was clearly disobedience to the command of God through Samuel. It is possible that Saul chose to think of Samuel's commands as his own and not the command of God. If so, he as king, might resent another man who was really one of his subjects telling him what to do. Whatever the understanding and attitudes, this clearly was disobedience to God.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

I Samuel 15:4-9 – Saul Destroyed Amalekite people; spared King and Animals.

Then Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah. I Samuel 15:4



Saul numbered 210,000 fighting men in the city of Telaim. This city does not appear on this map. We only know that it is close to the city of Ziph which is identified on this map.

Observe that having identified 210,000 soldiers, the author then indicated that Saul counted 10,000 men of Judah. The question arises, why would he have two categories? Are the 210,000 men foot soldiers and the 10,000 men of Judah are not? Is this some form of discrimination? Not really! If anything, it is stated as an honor to the 10,000 men of Judah. These men were the superior fighters of all Israel.

And Saul came to the city of Amalek, and set an ambush in the valley. I Samuel 15:5

Here you can see a change in the battle plan. Earlier in his battles, Saul tended to hit an army head-on. Now he is willing to establish an ambush and be patient. This is a sign of a maturing military presence. He was going to do it right.

And Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. I Samuel 15:6

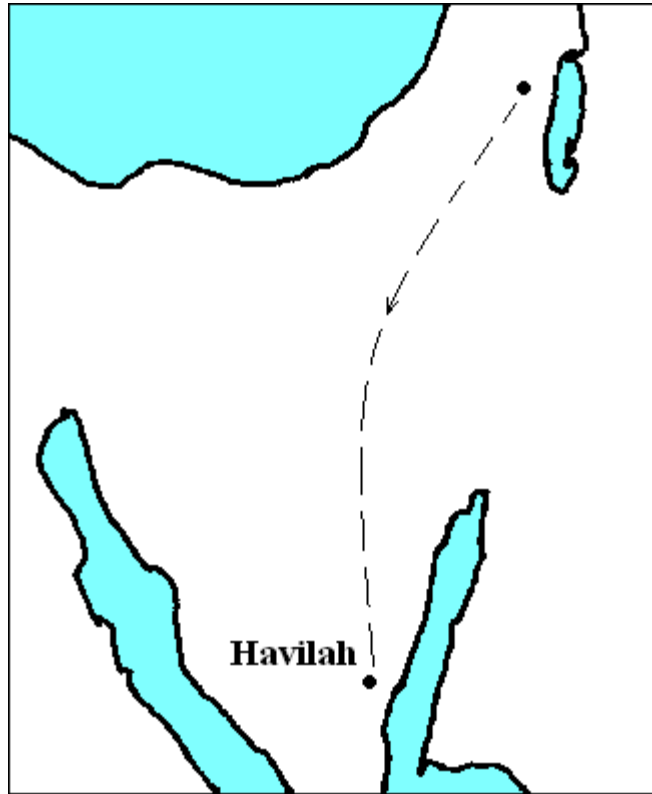
The text tells us that Saul told the Kenites to leave Amalek. The text does not tell us how he found the Kenites to tell them to leave the city.

Observe the reason Saul gave for sparing these people. It was because they had shown kindness to Israel as they came back toward the land of promise from Egypt. There is an ironic twist here. The Kenites had been with the Amalekites. The Amalekites had been most unkind to the people of Israel as they moved from Egypt to the land of promise. This is a very significant contrast in our story. This is a side of Saul we have

SAUL DISOBEYED GOD'S COMMAND CONCERNING AMALEK

seldom seen. We more frequently remember him taking the rash damaging stands. This is a very serious exception to the rule.

*So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt.
I Samuel 15:7*



As you can see on this map, Saul was prepared to travel great distances in order to defeat the Amalekites. This particular journey was a distance of more than 100 miles.

And he captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. I Samuel 15:8

Here we begin to see a crack in Saul's armor. He was told to kill everyone – soldiers and civilians. He did this to most, but not to all. He intentionally kept Agag alive. Agag was king of the Amalekites. In that day, the conquering king would keep their defeated opponents alive as a living trophy of their greatness. This was an ego trip for them. The conquered king would eat at the victors table to be humiliated and provide entertainment at every meal. These living trophies would eventually commit suicide or taunt their conquerors until they had them killed. It was their only way to escape this life of humiliation. Though this made Saul feel great, it was contrary to God's command.

But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. I Samuel 15:9

Observe that this was not something that Saul did on his own. The people were with him in this action. He kept the king. This gave him bragging rights. He kept the best animals for his own purposes. The despised and worthless things, however, he destroyed as God commanded. The way Saul did this removes all possibility that it was accidental or that he was not aware. It was an intentional act. This is selective obedience. It inevitably grows out of and increases arrogance and deeper disobedience.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

I Samuel 15:10-16 – Samuel Confronted Saul's Disobedience.

Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, I Samuel 15:10

Saul had no reason to think that his disobedience would be noticed. In many instances, it would make no difference because they did not think of partial disobedience as a serious matter. Saul did not count on the fact that God was present and observant of every move he made. God saw what Saul did and took action against it.

"I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not carried out My commands." And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night. Samuel 15:11

This verse contains a shocking statement by Jehovah. Observe that the author uses the divine name "LORD" which focuses on justice. For some reason, we tend to accept the idea that persons can use hyperbole, but only allow God to use literal statements. Jesus used hyperbole when He said, "If your eye offends you, pluck it out." It is not as though God was surprised to discover what Saul would do. God knew. Indeed, part of the reason Saul was chosen by God to be king was to show Israel just how accurate God's statement was about how a king would conduct himself and his reign. God's statement does, however, present an attempt of limited human language to perceive the depth of divine pain and anguish over human disobedience.

God explained to Samuel his reason for this statement about Saul. In this explanation the LORD made two charges against Saul: He charged Saul with turning back from following Him. He also charged Saul with not carrying out His commands. Samuel took this very seriously. He was the one who anointed Saul as king when he knew it was not wise to do so. Granted, this was not a mistake on Samuel's part. God instructed him to anoint Saul. The fact that Samuel cried out all night gives an insight into the heart of the prophet. In this verse there is a three way contrast. Saul was not disturbed at all. He was feeling quite proud of himself. In contrast with this, proud expression, there is intense sorrow. The LORD "regretted He had made Saul king" and Samuel cried out all night long. Also, there is a comparison. If you look at God's regret and at Samuel's "cried out all night long," you get a deeper understanding of the way God's faithful servants participate in God's anguish over sin; share His cross with Him.

And Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal." I Samuel 15:12

Here is another hint of the approach of the pride that was beginning to take hold of Saul. The text does not identify the speaker, but we should note what was said to Samuel, "He (Saul) set up a monument for himself." Saul took the credit for the victory God gave his army. In this monument, Saul impressed on the minds of his people his great prowess as a king in the victories God had given him. Whenever this happens, there will be dire consequences. This will happen quickly as it always does.

And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD." I Samuel 15:13

For some reason, sin never seems to come in a single package. A lie always requires a second lie to explain the first. It then requires a third lie to support the second. Pride very often comes in the company of deception. Having lied, in the monument about the source of the victory, Saul sought to deceive Samuel with pious language. "Blessed are you of the Lord," could cause a lesser person than Samuel to think that Saul had suddenly become quite focused upon God.

Observe, however, that Saul immediately followed up the pious talk with a second lie, "I have carried out the command of the LORD." That, of course, was not what happened.

But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" I Samuel 15:14

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Fortunately, Samuel was not deceived by these falsehoods. He immediately challenged the words of Saul. Observe that this verse begins with the word "but." This indicates that a serious contrast is unfolding; a contrast between what Saul said and what Samuel heard. Samuel demanded that Saul explain why he could hear sheep bleating and oxen lowing if Saul had, in fact, carried out the commands of the LORD.

Keep in mind who these men are. Samuel is a prophet of God, but Saul is the king of Israel. Saul was not accustomed to anyone challenging his word or calling him to account for his actions. This is to say that this exchange had to leave Saul in a very unhappy state of mind. Samuel, though he was a prophet of God, was a subject of Saul.

And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed." I Samuel 15:15

This story is a careful picture of the process of sin. When deception is exposed, the tendency is to minimize its importance and then shift responsibility. As Adam said, "The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree and I ate." Genesis 3:12. Eve said, "The serpent deceived me and I ate." (Genesis 3:14.) Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God." In 15:9 it clearly states that both Saul and the people were involved in this action. In the story we have studied, God did not command them to save the best animals for sacrifice. The story only indicates that they separated the best from the worst and killed the worst. The deception, as always, was as much in what Saul did not say as in what he said. He did not say that those he utterly destroyed were of no possible value to him whatsoever. He described them as "everything despised and worthless." Nothing else was destroyed. What seemed so insignificant, from Saul's point of view, is turning out to be ultimately important before God.

Then Samuel said to Saul, "Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak!" I Samuel 15:16

Samuel was not deceived by the selective words of Saul. Saul had to be surprised. He had not counted on God revealing to Samuel what really happened. Samuel was not going to let Saul get away with the deception and outright lies about his disobedience.

Notice that Samuel began with the word, "wait!" It is as though he was saying, "don't make it any worse than it already is." Samuel is about to make a divine announcement based upon a revelation God gave him in the night.

I Samuel 15:17-23 – Saul's Excuse: Samuel – "Jehovah Has Rejected You."

And Samuel said, "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel, I Samuel 15:17

Samuel's pronouncement did not begin with this current disobedience, but rather with the way God had dealt with him since calling him to be king. Samuel began with the question, "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes..." It is like saying, "Saul was a nobody who did not deserve to be king, but God made him king anyway." Samuel wanted to impress on Saul that the Lord had been most merciful to him.

And the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated.' I Samuel 15:18

Samuel continued with his very direct attack, "And the LORD sent you on a mission." Saul could not claim credit for the genius of this mission. God sent him to do this. He was only doing as he had been told. Samuel then confronted Saul, with the command that God had given him, "go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated." These are not God's exact words, but it is what God commanded Saul to do. Samuel wanted Saul to face the fact that he had clear, precise instruc-

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tions that he did not follow despite the fact that he said he had carried out God's command. Samuel is pointing out Saul's original error.

"Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" I Samuel 15:19

As happens so often, the guilty will defend themselves over the wrong sin. Saul claimed that he had done what the LORD commanded. That was not true. God commanded him to exterminate all the Amalekites and he did not do it. God commanded Saul to destroy everything. Saul disobeyed. A second error was perpetrated, but Samuel was just charging him with the initial charge, disobedience. Samuel's confrontation is in the form of a contrast. The words, "Why did you not obey the voice of the LORD?" are contrasted with, "But rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD." There is also a second contrast in these words. Samuel described how the people viewed this experience, "rushed upon the spoil." It was as though they could hardly wait to get their hands on things forbidden. Samuel's next statement points out the divine evaluation of what they could hardly wait to do, "and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD." The contrast between what they were eager to do and how God viewed the greedy anticipation is astounding.

Then Saul said to Samuel, "I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." I Samuel 15:20

In this verse, we continue to see the response of sin to its confrontation. In spite of being exposed, sin will try to defend itself. That is exactly what Saul did. Notice, however, the way he did this. He began, "I did obey the voice of the LORD." That is a half-truth. God sent him to destroy the Amalekites and he went to do that. At this point, Saul had to cover his tracks. He did go on the mission God sent him to perform. Notice how he presented his exception to God's command, "And have brought back Agag, the king of Amalek and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." Saul presented his disobedience, bringing back Agag, as though it was part of the LORD'S command. In fact, it is presented almost as proof that Saul had carried out the LORD'S command. There is a certain boldness present when evil seeks to defend itself. He said, "I have brought back Agag." That is true. He did bring back Agag. When caught in the web of falsehood, the deceiver will mix truth with falsehood in order to place himself in the position of honor. If you really exterminate people, there will be no one left. That was not the case and Saul knew it. Ignorance, Saul could not claim.

"But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal." I Samuel 15:21

This statement is a half-truth. The people, especially Saul, did take some of the spoil and the things devoted to destruction. He claimed motives, however, that were not intended to be part of God's command. God command nothing about taking these things for sacrifice.

When Saul first came on the scene in this book, he spoke about "the LORD your God." Now, under the spotlight, Saul again talks about "the LORD your God." The first time, this could be considered incidental construction. Repeated use suggests that there is specific intent involved.

Saul conveniently did not mention the fact that he had been involved in exactly the same things the people were doing. He did not mention the fact that when the people took these things, he made no effort to stop them, but was as active as they were. If you look carefully at Saul's defense, you will notice that even in his attempted deception he convicted himself. God said, "Exterminate them." Saul said, "They kept the best things for sacrifice." Was Agag kept for sacrifice? This is all disobedience.

And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams." I Samuel 15:22

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Samuel did not treat this as a debate. He did not argue the case at all. His next words were devastating for Saul. Samuel asked a simple question, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD?" In these words, Saul stood condemned. Samuel, in good rabbinic style answered his own question. He said, "To obey is better than to sacrifice." In these devastating words, the sham was peeled away and Saul was exposed with no possible defense.

"For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king." I Samuel 15:23

Samuel is describing the nature of rebellion. He compared it with divination and idolatry. Observe that he started this sentence with the word "for." This indicates that an explanation is forthcoming. Samuel wanted Saul to realize just how terrible his disobedience was. He wanted Saul to know that he had violated at least two commands – concerning worship and theft. Samuel described Saul's actions as both rebellion and insubordination to God. When sin is exposed, the consequences will immediately follow. Saul had to be totally devastated when he heard Samuel say, "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has rejected you from being king."

I Samuel 15:24-33 – Saul Repented, Was Accepted; Consequences Still Came

Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice." I Samuel 15:24

True to form, when the consequences are announced, the disobedient will try to appease. In many cases, this is not repentance at all, but an attempt to avoid the consequences of one's actions. It is difficult to tell the difference between true repentance and avoiding consequences. It has to do with what they do after that. When confronted with his sin in counting the people when forbidden to do so, David repented. He then faced the consequences of his evil deed without trying to avoid them. In this instance, Saul repented, as David did, but then Saul continued to try to explain why he had to disobey. His reason was simple, "I feared the people and listened to their voice." This is not a true statement. He was at least as involved as the "people" were. Keeping Agag alive meant nothing to the people. Keeping Agag alive helped make Saul even prouder of his accomplishments in battle. Nothing else. To be fair, we must add that Saul was not the only king to expand his pride by keeping defeated kings at his table in order to humiliate them.

"Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." I Samuel 15:25

Saul is now seeking reinstatement, avoiding consequences. He was prepared to worship the LORD in order to get it. Until punishment was announced, Saul said nothing about worshipping God. He did talk about "the LORD YOUR God." He is not dealing with God as a personal God. The proud was now pleading for mercy. The powerful had become powerless seeking help. He claimed to want to worship God. He wanted Samuel to go with him. We will see whether he has another agenda.

But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." I Samuel 15:26

It might seem as though Samuel is feeling too good to be with Saul. That was not the case. Samuel told Saul why he would not go back and worship with him. He said, "For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." There is an obvious cause-effect relationship here with regard to sin. Saul disobeyed God. God rejected Saul from being king over Israel.

And as Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. I Samuel 15:27

Saul was not accustomed to having people refuse to do as he asked. Samuel had the audacity to refuse to do as Saul asked. He grasped the fringe of Samuel's garment to force him to stay with him. In doing so, Saul

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tore the fringe from Samuel's robe. (He would later experience the same thing when David cut the fringe from his robe.) This fringe was the symbol of a person's power or position. In effect, it appeared that Saul had removed Samuel from being the prophet that he was. The only problem with that is that such an action was not within Saul's power as the king of Israel.

So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you. I Samuel 15:28

Samuel shocked Saul when he turned the situation around. Samuel rightly said, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today." It is bad enough to have to tell Saul that he could no longer be the king of Israel. Samuel continued, "And has given it to your neighbor who is better than you." It is much worse to tell him that this neighbor, obviously David, was far better than he was. Samuel, however, is not finished.

"And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind." I Samuel 15:29

Samuel referred to God when he spoke of "the glory of Israel." Samuel said, "The glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind." One of the major tools of the political process is to work out a deal so that the opposition can gracefully change their mind and you can still get what you need. Samuel is announcing that God is not about to be talked into changing His mind. It is final. God will not lie or pretend that Saul did something good when he did not. God will not change His mind and restore the kingdom of Israel to Saul.

Samuel used the word "for." This indicates that an explanation is forthcoming. Samuel said, "For He is not a man that He should change his mind." The prophet was pointing to the changelessness of God. It is not that the LORD is simply unwilling to change His mind. It is that it would be contrary to the quality of His nature to change His mind. It will not happen!

Then he said, "I have sinned; but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God." I Samuel 15:30

Now, Saul has changed his approach. Up until now, he has maintained his innocence. Now, faced with the catastrophic results of his actions, he admitted he did wrong, but wants to pursue damage control in front of the people. Saul asked Samuel to go back to the place of worship with him to make things appear that all was well. In effect, he was asking Samuel to join him in his deception of the people. The proposed motive for this was that he might worship Samuel's God. (Here it is again, "the LORD YOUR God.") Saul did not need Samuel's presence in order to worship God.

So Samuel went back following Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD. I Samuel 15:31

This is a sad sentence. Observe that Samuel followed Saul back to the city. No matter how much Samuel despised the rebellion of Saul, still he was respectful of his position. It appears that Saul actually went back to the place of prayer and worshipped God. The reason Saul worshipped God can be a real question. Did he worship the Lord because of the greatness of His grace? Did Saul worship because he hoped against all hope that the LORD would change his punishment? The text is silent. In view of recent events, it is hard to think he was serious about praising God. However, he was one of us and we can change.

Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." I Samuel 15:32

The scene completely changes in this verse. Samuel, not Saul, is the central focus. This section raises some questions in the minds of some. It is clear from the verse that Agag thought that the time of tension was past. He apparently misunderstood the fact that Samuel walked behind Saul as meaning that the problems had been cleared up. It must have appeared to Agag that Saul had found a way to justify what he had done in sparing the king's life.

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That was not even close to the truth, but Agag did not know it. In the eyes of Samuel, there was unfinished business in relation to Agag. God, through Samuel, had instructed Saul to destroy every person among the Amalekites. Agag, their king, was still living. God's will was not accomplished as long as Agag still lived.

But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal. I Samuel 15:33

This sentence begins with the word "but." Again, this indicates that we are in the midst of a strong contrast. The contrast is between what Samuel and Agag each thought. Agag thought, with great hope, that Samuel, the servant of God, was about to make his life easier and longer. Samuel, however, was preparing to put Agag to death. There probably will always be controversy about this verse. We must remember, however, that this is exactly what the LORD commanded Saul to do. Had Saul done as commanded, he would probably not have lost the throne, at least at this time.

There are two points one must keep in mind concerning Samuel's actions. First, Samuel did not just slash away Agag's life in blinding rage. He explained that this was the consequences of his lifestyle. This was his intent when Samuel said, "As your sword has made many women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." Second, Some people can handle the fact that Samuel killed Agag, but struggle when Samuel hacked Agag's body into many pieces and that he did this, "before the LORD." Keep in mind that it was God who commanded that Agag be put to death. Agag had been the source of great misery in his lifetime. The failure to put him to death caused untold grief in Israel. Samuel dealt with the fact that God's command had been completely ignored for some time. This is a dramatic finale to a tragic era in the history of Israel.

I Samuel 15:34, 35 – Samuel Separated Permanently From Saul

Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. I Samuel 15:34

There is some interesting speculation concerning this verse. The question is raised, why wouldn't Saul want to be in the same place where the prophet of the LORD could be quickly consulted during his whole reign. Another issue is raised in this verse. Did Saul walk away from Samuel at this time or did Samuel go away from Saul? I suspect the honest answer is that neither one is true. I believe the separation took place much earlier. Samuel, from before he met Saul, lived in Ramah. In his early life, Saul had not been one who spent a lot of time worshipping God. Saul did not even know who Samuel was when he was looking for his father's animals. When Saul became king, however, he established his residence in Gibeah, not Ramah. He made no effort to be close to Samuel or to bring Samuel close to him. Granted the cities of Gibeah and Ramah are only about ten miles apart, but they might as well have been a thousand. Things might well have ended quite differently if Saul had stayed closer to Samuel.

And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel. I Samuel 15:35

This is a true picture of the relationship between Samuel and Saul. At this point, Samuel did not want to associate with Saul in any way. Samuel had presented the message the LORD had placed on his heart and it was final. The words of this verse are quite graphic. Samuel grieved bitterly over what Saul could have become, but was unwilling to be. The text also reflects God's reaction to this ominous situation. The way this verse is written, has caused many discussions among scholars. It sounds as though there is a change in God. Of course, it is impossible for this to be true. There are a number of situations in the Old Testament that would cause great disappointment for God. In each one of these experiences, it speaks of God's reaction in the same way. In this instance, it sounds as though the LORD was happy with Saul as King and then regretted the whole thing. That is not the scenario at all. In each situation, it is the picture of intense divine disappointment rather than a situation of unusual change.

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Conclusion

This chapter is full of truths important for our continued growth. Here is a short list of some of the things that the author taught. Interestingly, they are divided into two parts: - Those that deal with the nature of God and those that deal with the nature of evil.

1. Those that deal with the nature of God
 - a. Obedience to God must be specific and total.
 - b. Only total obedience is really obedience in the mind of God.
 - c. Disobedience can be forgiven, but the consequences will not be avoided.
 - d. Pretense and deception will only make matters worse. God is offended by both.
 - e. Obedience is better than sacrifice.
 - f. God's will ultimately must be done, but not always immediately.
 - g. God and His servants grieve over the sins of the disobedient.
2. Those that deal with the nature of evil.
 - a. It begins with denial.
 - b. Increased pressure will lead to explanation of events through half-truths.
 - c. The major tool of evil is deception.
 - d. Lies come in multiples by necessity.
 - e. When lies are pressured, they turn to the shifting of blame.
 - f. When cornered – the evil will repent
 - g. Many times this repentance is nothing more than an attempt to avoid consequences. It is like sowing wild oats and praying for crop failure.
 - h. The defense of evil actions is, at root, an attack on the nature of God – try to get the changeless God to change.
 - i. The emphasis in this struggle is the changelessness of God.

Obviously, these are not new discoveries, but rather a shocking emphasis on truths well known. In His judgment, God is thoroughly and ultimately complete. At the same time, it is the necessity of His nature which is holy and just. In that Justice, there is mercy that defies description. Samuel's grieving over Saul is a glimpse of the way in which we must view the fallen.

The association of the serpent with the nature of evil is an apt parallel. It never comes thundering into our lives. Little by little, it takes command of the qualities of our lives. Integrity is one of the most important qualities that evil will attack.

The difference between the nature of God and the nature of evil is paralleled by the difference between Saul and Samuel. Each one of us is allowed to choose which one we want to be like.

THE CONCLUSION

Everywhere in this book there is an ongoing contrast between obedience and disobedience; between good and evil. The contrasts appear in the actions as well as in the character of the people involved. You will observe that there are more contrasts than comparisons.

CONTRASTS		COMPARISONS	
Hannah	Peninnah	David	Jonathan (+)
Samuel	Eli's sons	David	Abigail (+)
Samuel	Saul	Hannah	E1lkanah (+)
David	Saul	Eli	Samuel (-)
Servant	Saul	David	Egyptian slave (+)
Jonathan	Saul	Doeg	Saul (-)
David	Achish		
David	Wicked, worthless men		
David	Nabal		
Samuel	Hophni, Phinehas		
Israel	Philistines		
David & men	Philistine generals		
Samuel	Israel		
David	Doeg		
Moabite king	Saul		
David	Goliath		

In each of these situations, right triumphs and evil is destroyed. Interestingly, in each contrasting situation, the good and the evil; the obedient and the disobedient were all doing what seemed natural for them. You will also observe that almost all of the comparisons were between two obedient persons or groups.

In the midst of these displays, God is involved. The LORD abundantly blesses the positive comparisons as well as the obedient person in each contrast. There is a serious message here about the LORD. **The LORD is holy!** He punishes and destroys those who, in their disobedience are unholy. He blesses all those who are obedient, those who are holy. This emphasis is one of the major presentations throughout the entire Old Testament.

One of the most pervasive pictures of the LORD in the Old Testament is that He is changeless. If God was Holy in the time of Samuel and David, then He is still as holy as He was. Again, if God insisted that His people be holy in the time of Samuel and David, then because He is changeless, He continues to insist today that His people be holy because He is holy.