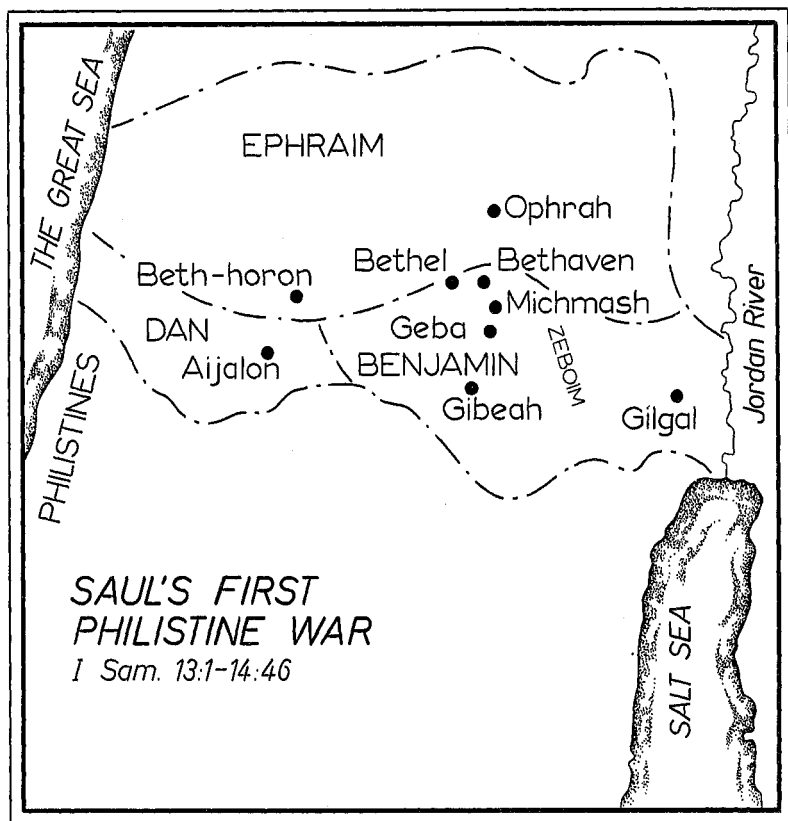


FIRST SAMUEL

7. What did Saul ask the priest to fetch? _____
8. What had Jonathan eaten? _____
9. What did Saul threaten to do to him? _____
10. What was the name of Saul's wife? _____

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 15

- Vv. 1- 6 *Saul sent against the Amalekites.* The children of Amalek had been constant aggressors against the Israelites. They were the first nation to attack Israel when they left Egypt (Exodus 17:16). At that time God instructed Moses to write an account of the conflict in a book and note that their aggression would not go unpunished. Saul was thus ordered to utterly destroy the Amalekites.
- Vv. 7- 9 *Saul's incomplete obedience.* Saul destroyed most of the men of Amalek, but he spared the king. He also spared some of the best of the animals. He excused his failure by saying that they were to be used as sacrificial animals.
- Vv. 10-23 *Samuel delivers the Lord's message of condemnation.* Once again it was Samuel's hard lot to deliver a message to judgment from the Lord. This time the message was one of complete rejection. When Saul had presumptuously offered sacrifice, Samuel announced that Saul's kingdom would not continue for long. After Saul failed to destroy the Amalekites, Samuel announced that God had rejected Saul himself.
- Vv. 24-35 *Samuel and Saul parted permanently.* Saul begged Samuel to stay with him, even seizing Samuel's robe and ripping it. Samuel did stay with Saul long enough for Saul to summon



SAUL'S FIRST PHILISTINE WAR

I Sam. 13:1-14:36

1. Saul gathers 2000 men at Michmash, and Jonathan 1000 at Gibeah. (13:1-2)
2. Jonathan smites Geba. (13:3)
3. Saul goes to Gilgal and makes a foolish sacrifice. (13:4-14)
4. Saul goes to Geba with 600. (13:15-16)
5. Philistines camp at Michmash, and send out raiders toward Beth-horon, Ophrah, and Valley of Beboim. (13:17-23)
6. Jonathan and armorbearer climb the pass between Geba and Michmash, and smite Philistines. (13:24-14:15)
7. Saul's troops join in and smite Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon. (14:16-23-31)
8. Jonathan is saved from Saul's curse about eating. (14:24-30, 32-46)



The village of Michmash

Matson Photo Service

STUDIES IN SAMUEL

Agag. Samuel then slew Agag, after first worshipping with Saul. Finally, Samuel left Saul, never to see him until the day of his death.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Sin cannot go unpunished.* Israel defeated the Amalekites in battle when they first met, but the defeat was not complete. Though the Amalekites might have thought they had escaped rather intact, God had declared that He would “. . . utterly put out of the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Exodus 17:14). Men today who resist God and His word should expect no happier end.
2. *“To obey is better than sacrifice”* (v. 22). This eternal principle needs to be burned into the hearts of men today. It is better to do God’s will in the first place than to expend great amounts of time, money, and energy in an effort to make atonement for failure to follow God’s leading.

The Lord’s Rejection of Saul, 15:1-35.

Saul Sent Against the Amalekites. 15:1-6

Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee *to be* king over his people, over Israel; now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord.

2 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

6 And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

1. *Why did Samuel remind Saul that he had anointed him 15:1*

Samuel wanted Saul to place current events in the proper perspective. Saul had seemingly lost his way. He had presumed to offer a sacrifice when he had no right to serve as a priest. He had grown fainthearted in battle and placed a useless curse on his people. Samuel must have felt that he could not help Saul unless Saul were to return to his former humble self. By remembering his origins, Saul might be able to understand the error of a proud man's way.

2. *How could the Amalekites be doomed to destruction? 15:2*

There was a quarrel that Israel had with the people of the Amalekites. It was this quarrel that was to be avenged and since the Amalekites were completely reprobate, they were appointed of God to utter destruction. The Kenites who were ordered out were kinsmen of Moses' wife. They had come along with Judah into Canaan; but when the land was allotted to the children of Israel, the Kenites had returned to the desert. We are unable to locate Havilah and Shur with certainty, but they were quite evidently the two extremities of the country of the Amalekites. God had predicted the fall of Amalek when they first attacked Israel in the days of Moses (Exodus 17:14).

3. *Was God cruel in ordering the slaughter of all? 15:3*

The people of Amalek had been given more than 400 years in which to repent of their opposition to God's people. They had attacked Israel when Israel first came out of Egypt, around 1447 B.C. While Israel wandered forty years in the wilderness, Amalek made no effort to make amends for her senseless attack. As Israel had settled in the promised land, there were still no overtures from Amalek. In fact her opposition to Israel had been constant. While the judges led Israel through a three-hundred-year period, Amalek still made no attempts to live at peace with God's people. God had finally called a halt to the rebellious ways of the Amalekites. It is an eternal principle that any nation who falls to the depths in which Amalek was wallowing must perish before a people who are roused by a vision of a higher destiny. To allow even the women to continue in such a life would not be mercy. Infants growing up in such a society would have no hope beyond that of a reprobate. God was attempting to work an act of mercy through the sword of Saul.

4. *Where was Telaim? 15:4*

Telaim comes from a Hebrew word which means, "young lambs." A form very close to this is a word *Telen*. Telen is a town in the southern border of Judah (Joshua 16:24). It lay between Ziph and Bealoth. The gathering of Saul's army at this point is the only important event which transpired there according to Bible history. Once again the men of Israel were separated from the men of Judah. The proportion was still ten to one, with Judah making up one-tenth of the number of soldiers in Israel.

5. *What kindness had the Canaanites shown Israel? 15:6*

Hobab was a Canaanite. He is known as Moses' brother-in-law. As the people of Israel departed from Mt. Sinai, Moses invited his brother-in-law to accompany Israel through the wilderness. He promised Hobab that they would share their blessings with him and his people. At

first Hobab declined to go along with them, but as Moses insisted he must have yielded and served as a scout for the hosts of Israel (Numbers 10:29-32). No doubt this is the kindness which the Canaanites showed Israel in the wilderness as mentioned here.

Saul's Incomplete Obedience 15:7-9

7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah *until* thou comest to Shur, that *is* over against Egypt.

8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing *that was* vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

6. *Where are Havilah and Shur? 15:7*

Shur was in Negeb, the land lying south of Beer-sheba. Generally speaking it is territory to the west of the south end of the Dead Sea. Havilah was on the edge of the Negeb. Another region by the same name was encompassed by the Pison branch of Eden's river (Genesis 25:18) and reached into north Arabia (Genesis 2:11).

7. *Who was Agag? 15:8*

Agag is the common name for all the Amalekite kings similar to the name of Pharaoh, the name of the kings of Egypt, or like Caesar, the common name of the rulers in Rome. Balaam makes mention of Agag in his prophecy (Numbers 24:7). His reference implies that the king was a leading monarch at that time or else that he was the first one to attack Irsael when they came out of Egypt. This particular ruler was evidently no better than his predecessors and he was to be slain, but Saul spared him.

8. *What else did Saul spare?* 15:9

Saul spared the best of the sheep, the oxen, and the lambs. As a matter of fact, he did not destroy that which was good. Only that which was vile and refuse was destroyed. Saul was senseless in disobeying God's commandment in this way, but he gave a feeble excuse when he was confronted with his sin.

Samuel Delivers the Lord's Message of Condemnation.

15:10-23

10 Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying.

11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night.

12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed *be* thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

14 And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

17 And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?

18 And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord.

20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.

22 And Samuel said, Hath the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

9. *Why was Samuel grieved at Saul's action? 15:11*

Samuel loved Saul. Those who try to make Saul's being rejected a jealous act of Samuel miss the gist of the entire story. Samuel regretted the action which Saul had taken. What Saul had done was nothing small; he had completely changed from the humble fellow he was when he was chosen king. He had elevated himself and the people had elevated him until he had lost his modesty. When he disobeyed, he was unfaithful to God. In one sense, he had almost carried out God's orders; but yet he had failed to carry out the order directly and was certainly culpable. The narrative shows how he tried to shift the blame from himself to the people, and his whole unmanly character comes out.

10. Where was Carmel? 15:12

The most famous Carmel is Mt. Carmel, the mountain which juts out into the Mediterranean Sea on the west coast of Israel along the northern border of the tribe of Manasseh. Samuel was not usually in this area, and it is doubtful that this reference here is to this northern Carmel. The name itself signifies a "fruitful field." Another Carmel is a name given to a town in the hill country of Judah (Joshua 15:55). This was the home of Nabal (I Samuel 25:2). One of David's wives is known as "Abigail, the Carmelites" (I Chronicles 3:1). It was doubtless here that Saul set up a marker for his partial victory over Amalek.

11. How could Saul say he had performed God's commandment? 15:13

Saul had evidently lost his understanding of truthfulness as well as humility. He had partially fulfilled the commandment of the Lord, but he had openly and blatantly disobeyed God's commandment to destroy utterly the Amalekites. This loss of his ability to discern between truth and falsehood is indicative of the sad condition into which Saul had fallen.

12. What was Saul's excuse for his disobedience? 15:15

As Saul had excused himself for offering a sacrifice by saying that he was afraid the people were going to leave him, so he once again blamed the people for his disobedience of God's commandment to destroy the Amalekites. He said the people had spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord. He took partial credit for having destroyed the rest, but he took no blame for saving the best.

13. Why did he call the Lord Samuel's God? 15:21

Saul had a great deal of impudence to argue with Samuel with regard to his disobedience. Samuel reminded him of how God had blessed him when he was little in his own sight. He reviewed the circumstances which had led to

the giving of the commandment to destroy the Amalekites. Samuel openly confronted Saul with his disobedience, but Saul persisted in excusing himself. When he made reference to the Lord, he called him Samuel's God. Saul may have come to the place where he could not accept God as his own personal God. He was completely reprobate.

14. *What is the meaning of Samuel's question? 15:22*

Samuel clarified the issue. He drew a distinction between burnt offering and sacrifices and the obeying of the voice of God. Saul was excusing himself for sparing the best of the flocks and herds by saying that he was going to give them to God as a sacrifice. Saul was attempting to reason that it was all going to be given to God in the end and that it really made no difference whether he had obeyed God's voice or not. Samuel made it clear that it is far better to obey than to sacrifice. It is better to hearken to God than to offer Him the fat of rams.

15. *What added penalty was pronounced on Saul? 15:23*

Samuel taught Saul that rebellion against God is the sin of witchcraft. Saul put out the witches from the borders of the people of Israel, but he himself rebelled against God (I Samuel 28:9). Saul's stubborn heart was an iniquitous heart. Although he had not openly worshipped another God, he had made himself God and was as sinful as if he were an idolator. As a result, God rejected Saul personally from being king. This was a much more severe sentence than was passed on him when he offered his presumptuous sacrifice. At that time God simply said that the kingdom would be taken away from Saul's house and given to another. On this occasion, Saul himself was personally rejected as being fit to rule. On other occasions of rejection, God tempered His judgments by announcing that what He had predicted to come to pass would not come to pass in the lifetime of the one who had sinned. This might have been the penalty for Saul.

If he had not sinned again, Saul might not have lived to see the end of his dynasty. He himself might have been allowed to die in a good old age, but now he himself is to be punished.

Samuel and Saul Parted Permanently. 15:24-35

24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord.

26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

28 And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, *that is* better than thou.

29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent.

30 Then he said, I have sinned: *yet* honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.

31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshiped the Lord.

32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

16. *What was Saul's final confession? 15:24*

Saul finally came to the place where he said, "I have sinned." Before, he had tried to pass all the blame onto the people. At last he admitted that he was a transgressor. He said that he had transgressed the commandment of the Lord. He apologized to Samuel for disobeying his commandments, saying that he had transgressed the words which Samuel had spoken to him. He still blamed the people partially and excused himself by saying, "I fear the people and obey their voice." As far as the record is concerned, we have no evidence that the people caused Saul to spare Agag. Neither do we have any notice of their demanding that some of the best of the flocks of the herds be spared for sacrifice. This is a rationalization of a man's sin by the man himself.

17. *Why did Saul want Samuel to worship with him? 15:25*

Perhaps Saul wanted to offer a trespass offering or a sin offering. He was not eligible to offer the offering himself. He knew that Samuel was God's spiritual leader, and he wanted his presence with him. His repentance was too late. If he had been totally sincere about it, he could have gone to the Tabernacle and offered a sacrifice there under the leadership of the priests. His plea seems to be more of an outpouring of the spirit of the moment. It was not a longlasting nor deepseated repentance.

18. *Why did Saul tear Samuel's skirt? 15:27*

In his desperation Saul grabbed the skirt of Samuel's mantle and tore it. This is typical of the action of a man who is beside himself with emotion. Had he learned self-

control in other matters, he might not have gone to this extreme in his demonstration of his grief. Joel found the Israelites making a great show of their repentance in his day and he told them to "rend their hearts" and not their garments (Joel 2:13). Samuel seized upon this drastic action of Saul's and used it as a sign of God's judgment. He said that God had torn the kingdom of Israel out of Saul's hands on that day and had given it to a neighbor of his. He describes the neighbor as being better than Saul, but he does not identify him by name.

19. *Who is the Strength of Israel? 15:29*

Samuel used the title, the Strength of Israel, to describe God himself. Many different names are given to God throughout the Old Testament. Abraham described him as the Judge of the whole earth (Genesis 18:25). God told Moses to tell the people of Israel that his title was "I Am" (Exodus 3:14). The everlasting God is the strength of His people.

20. *Why did Samuel finally yield to Saul's entreaty? 15:31*

Samuel did turn again with Saul, and Saul worshipped the Lord. Samuel did not do it for Saul's sake. When Saul asked him to honor him before the elders of his people and before all the people of Israel, Samuel acquiesced. Samuel yielded, but not for the personal entreaty of Saul himself.

21. *Why did Samuel slay Agag? 15:32*

Agag came into Samuel's presence "delicately." Agag thought that he had been spared for good. He evidently thought that he was safe and the danger of dying was past. He walked with a spring in his step. His gait was mincing. He may have even been flippant, but Samuel brought upon Agag's head a punishment similar to that which he had brought upon others. He hewed him in pieces. Some critics of the Bible accuse Samuel of being sadistic and unnecessarily cruel. If Samuel took only one swing of the sword and decapitated Agag, the Amalekite's body was

hewed into pieces—two pieces at least. Samuel at least showed alacrity and thoroughness in executing God's command, qualities which Saul did not demonstrate.

22. *What prompted God's repentance? 15:34, 35*

The action of Samuel in slaying Agag did not stimulate this feeling on the part of God. Because of his extreme wickedness, Agag was slain by the prophet. Samuel thereafter looked upon Saul as one in whom God had found only that which was displeasing and visited him no more. We understand that it repented God that He had made Saul king when we look upon the act as man would look upon it. This is what we call an anthropomorphism—putting things in the form that man can understand. Most certainly we do not look upon the occurrence as a mistake on God's part. God was grieved on account of Saul's failure. Inasmuch as grief is a part of our repentance, God's attitude resembles this part of repentance.

CHAPTER 15 IN REVIEW

1. What people was Saul sent to destroy? _____
2. What people lived among them? _____
3. To what place did Saul gather Israel? _____
4. How many men did Saul have with him? _____
5. How many men were from Judah? _____
6. Who was the king of the people Saul attacked? _____
7. Where did Saul meet Samuel? _____
8. With what sin did Samuel compare rebellion? _____
9. With what sins did he compare stubbornness? _____
10. What title did Samuel give to God? _____