

STUDIES IN SAMUEL
A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 7

- Vv. 1- 2 *The Ark in the house of Abinadab.* After the men of Beth-shemesh were punished for their lack of respect, they besought the men of Kirjath-jearim to come and get the Ark. This they did. They brought it into the hill country of Judah and placed it in the house of Abinadab. One of the sons of Abinadab, Eleazar by name, was appointed to take care of the Ark.
- Vv. 3- 8 *Israel purged at Mizpeh.* Periodically throughout their history the children of Israel found it necessary to take stock of themselves and give better direction to their lives. Even the patriarch Jacob himself found it necessary to purge his house of idols when he was returning from his sojourn with Laban in Haran (Genesis 35:2-5). When Joshua was bidding farewell to his people, he urged them to choose whether they would serve Jehovah or the false gods that they had learned about in other communities (Joshua 24:23). This same action was necessary before the people could be united behind the leadership of Samuel.
- Vv. 9-17 *Israel delivered under Samuel.* The judges were not mere interpreters and administrators of the law. They were men upon whom the Spirit of God came when the occasion demanded it. Quite often they were great military leaders who delivered the people when they were attacked by foreign nations. One of Samuel's first acts was to lead the people of Israel in a successful military campaign against the Philistines. When peace and quiet

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were restored to the land, Samuel went from place to place to assist the people in living in peace in the land.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Making peace with God precedes going to war for God.* Before Israel was ready to do battle for the Lord, her inhabitants needed to purge themselves of the graven images and molten idols which had crept into their society. Just as Isaiah did not feel that he was ready to deliver the Lord's message until after his unclean lips had been seared with coals from the altar (Isaiah 6), the soldiers of Israel were not strong enough to carry the battle for God until their weak faith had been bolstered. The individual Christian today feels that he is impotent when the besetting sins of his life have not been ferreted out and forgiven by the grace of God and the advocacy of the Son of God.
2. *God helps His followers to fight their battles.* God fought for Israel. He "thundered with a great thunder on the day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them" (v. 10). In a very real way, the abiding presence of God assists those who wrestle against "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

The Ark in the House of Abinadab. 7-1, 2

And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord.

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

1. *Who was Abinadab?* 7:1

Abinadab was a very interesting name. It signified "father of generosity." He was evidently a Levite of Kirjath-jearim. It was in his house that the Ark was deposited. Although the Israelites themselves did not gather together to anoint a new priest, the people of the community appointed Eleazar to take care of the Ark. This was not a change of the priesthood as prophesied by God (I Samuel 2:35), but it was the temporary arrangement made by the people to care for the Ark.

2. *Why did the people leave it there for such a long time?*
7:2

The people of Israel were not very punctual about performing the Lord's duties. The fact that they left the Ark in this strange location for 20 years is an indication of how they failed to do the Lord's bidding. Such an arrangement left the tabernacle itself still at Shiloh, but the main part of the tabernacle furniture at this distant location. It was only when David came to the throne that he began to take care of such neglected matters.

Israel Purged at Mizpeh. 7:3-8

3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.

6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured *it* out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *it*, they were afraid of the Philistines.

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

3. *Why did Samuel exhort the people to return to the Lord? 7:3*

God's people had strayed very far from the road that He wanted them to walk. The wicked priests, Hophni and Phineas, had been allowed to lead the people astray. Their defection ultimately resulted in the capture of the Ark. Once the Ark was back in the borders of Israel, Samuel began a campaign to lead the people back to God. Samuel was addressing the leaders who were in return responsible for spreading his borders throughout the length and breadth of the land.

4. *Who were Baalim and Ashtaroth? 7:4*

They were Mr. and Mrs. Baalim. Baalim is the plural of Baal. Ashtaroth is the plural of Ashtarah. The plural *Baalim* is a general term employed to denote all the false deities, and is synonymous with the expression "other gods." Baal was the chief male deity of the Canaanites and all the nations of Hither Asia and was worshipped by the different nations with peculiar modifications. Therefore, he was designated by various distinctive epithets. Baal was a sun-god, and as such, the vehicle and source of physical life. Ashtaroth is derived from the singular *Ashtoreth* (see I Kings 11:5, 33; II Kings 23:13). In connection with the Sidonian Astharte, this was the general name used to denote the leading female deity of the Canaanitish tribes, a moon-goddess, who was worshipped

as the feminine principle of nature, embodied in the pure moonlight, and its influence upon terrestrial life. It corresponded to the Greek Aphrodite.

5. *In what way did Samuel judge?* 7:6

The judges who governed Israel were strictly God's vice-regents in the government of the people. God himself was the supreme ruler. Those who were thus elevated to the office of judgeship retained the dignity as long as they lived, although no family enjoyed regular unbroken succession to the office. Individuals prompted by the impulse of God's spirit when they witnessed the depressed state of their country were aroused to achieve deliverance. They continued in their office as defenders of religion and avengers of all crimes, particularly idolatry and its attended vices. Edersheim in his work, *Israel and Canaan*, (p. 107), says that the judges ruled only over one or several of the tribes. In such cases as the instance of Samuel it is apparent that he had jurisdiction in all the tribes. The Hebrew word for *judge* signified the effort necessary to settle a dispute and to maintain justice both for the individual and for the people. In the case of the Biblical judges, it has the added idea of liberating or delivering. The judges might be considered to be akin to the Roman consuls. In this particular case Samuel was interested in cleaning idolatry out of Israelite society.

6. *Why did the children of Israel ask Samuel to pray for them?* 7:8

The people knew that Samuel was a man of spiritual strength. Even when they rejected the Lord and Samuel's advice, they wanted Samuel to pray to God on their behalf. It is typical of the conduct of sinful people that they still want God's righteous leaders to pray on their behalf. Men who will not pray for themselves want somebody else to pray for them.

Israel Delivered Under Samuel. 7:9-17

9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered *it* for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him.

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

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until *they came* under Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

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

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

15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

17 And his return *was* to Ramah; for there *was* his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord.

7. *Where was Mizpeh? 7:9*

Mizpeh was five miles northwest of Jerusalem. The site is on a conical hill overlooking all the surrounding territory. The Philistines would be able to see the children of Israel as they gathered themselves together at this point. Since the Lords of the Philistines had recovered from their

afflictions they were able to come up to battle against Israel. As the children of Israel saw the Philistines, they were afraid. They knew that they had sinned in looking into the ark at Beth-shemesh, and they were afraid to go to battle against the enemy.

8. *Why did Samuel offer a sucking lamb? 7:9*

A whole burnt offering was to be a male without blemish. It could be of the flocks or of the herds, (Leviticus 1:10). It could also be out of the fowls (Leviticus 1:14). Such an offering would indicate the total dependence of the people of Israel on God's mercy.

9. *What was unusual about a great thunder? 7:10*

Palestine had little or no rain during the time of the wheat harvest. This was the time when the Ark was returned, and it would be a source of amazement to the people of Israel. Probably the great thunder would also have been accompanied with a storm which made it difficult for the Philistines to attack. As a matter of fact, the Scripture indicates that it did discomfit the Philistines. God himself fought for men and helped to overcome the attack of the Philistines. Thus the Philistines were stricken before Israel.

10. *Where is Beth-car? 7:11*

The name indicates a sheep house. The fact that it says they came "under Beth-car" indicates that the place itself was on a height with a road at its foot. The situation is not known. This is the only reference to the place to be found in the Scriptures. No doubt the Israelites chased the Philistines back down into their own territory.

11. *What is the meaning of Eben-ezer? 7:12*

This word means "the stone of help." Samuel said, "Hitherto the Lord has helped us." God had brought Israel a long way under Samuel's direction. They themselves were returning to the Lord. God had given them victory over the Philistines. The Ark was returned to

them. Samuel believed that God would help them further along their way. This is a good motto for Christians today.

12. *How was the hand of the Lord against the Philistines?*
7:13

God did not suffer the Philistines to gain the supremacy over Israel during the lifetime of Samuel. He brought such supernatural phenomenon upon them as the thunder which was a discomfiture in the battle at Mizpeh. On other occasions He indicated to the Israelites when it was time to go into battle. In every way by His good providence on the Israelites He was opposing the sinful ways of the Philistines.

13. *Who were the Amorites?* 7:14

The Amorites were the Canaanites. The two names are used rather interchangeably (Genesis 15:16; cf. Genesis 15:19-21). The word itself literally means "the high ones." It is generally supposed that these were the highlanders (Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 1:7). They were probably the most prominent of the Canaanite people and thus their name is sometimes used to signify the Canaanites in general. In the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, *amurri* is the name for Palestine-Phoenicia. This verse indicates that the people of Israel did not have any trouble from the Canaanite tribes dwelling in their land, but their war was against the Philistines who lived along the western border.

14. *How long was Samuel's judgeship?* 7:15

Samuel was a very young man when he came up to Eli at the tabernacle. He probably was not called until he had served some time as an apprentice to Eli. It took some time for him to become known among the Israelite people, but his judgeship was probably not very lengthy. The people soon rejected him, and they wanted a king. Samuel continued to live throughout most of the reign of Saul, and his death is not mentioned until near the end of Saul's reign (I Samuel 25:1).

15. *Where was Samuel's circuit? 7:16, 17*

Samuel did not make his home in Shiloh. He was evidently not a priest as such. He performed the function of a priest, but since Shiloh had lost the ark, Ramah became the center of his service as prophet and judge. The Ark of the Covenant was no longer the center of worship, and Samuel saw no reason to stay in Shiloh with the empty shell of the tabernacle. As has been indicated before, Samuel's home was in the highlands of Benjamin. He was centrally located to all the people of Israel at this point. From this home of his, he went out to Bethel on the north, Gilgal on the east, and Mizpeh on the west. His return was ever to his own home in Ramah.

CHAPTER 7 IN REVIEW

1. Who was appointed to take care of the ark? _____
2. How long was the ark left with him? _____
3. What two generic names are given to false gods? _____
4. What office did Samuel fulfill in Israel? _____
5. Where did Samuel assemble Israel? _____
6. Who attacked Israel while they were assembled? _____
7. What did the Israelites ask Samuel to do for them? _____
8. What did Samuel offer as a burnt offering? _____
9. What new name did Samuel give to the place? _____
10. At what places did Samuel judge Israel? _____