

1SAMUEL 7: 1 The men of Kiriath Jearim came, and took the LORD's ark, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the LORD's ark.

The men of Kirjah-jearim bring the ark from Beth-shemesh, and consecrate Eleazar, the son of Abinadab, to keep it; and there it continued twenty years, 1Sam 7:1, 1Sam 7:2. Samuel reproves and exhorts the people, and gathers them together at Mizpeh, where they fast and pray, and confess their sins, 1Sam 7:3-6. The Philistines go up against them; the Israelites cry unto the Lord for help; Samuel offers sacrifices; and the Lord confounds the Philistines with thunder; Israel discomfits and pursues them to Beth-car, 1Sam 7:7-11. Samuel erects a stone for a memorial, and calls it Eben-ezer, 1Sam 7:12. The Philistines are totally subdued, and Israel recovers all its lost cities, 1Sam 7:13, 1Sam 7:14. Samuel acts as an itinerant judge in Israel, 1Sam 7:15-17.

Verse 1

Fetches up the ark - When these people received the message of the Beth-shemites, they probably consulted Samuel, with whom was the counsel of the Lord, and he had encouraged them to go and bring it up, else they might have expected such destruction as happened to the Beth-shemites.

Sanctified Eleazar - Perhaps this sanctifying signifies no more than setting this man apart, simply to take care of the ark.

1SAMUEL 7: 2 From the day that the ark stayed in Kiriath Jearim, the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

Verse 2

It was twenty years - This chapter contains the transactions of at least twenty years, but we know not the date of each event.

1SAMUEL 7: 3 Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you do return to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts to the LORD, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

Verse 3

And Samuel spake - We have heard nothing of this judge since he served in the tabernacle. He was now grown up, and established for a prophet in the land of Israel.

If ye do return - From your backsliding and idolatry.

With all your hearts - For outward services and professions will avail nothing.

Put away the strange gods - Destroy their images, altars, and groves: they are strange; you do not know them as helpers, saviours, or defenders.

Prepare your hearts - Let your hearts be straight and steady.

And serve him only - Have no other religious service but his, and obey his laws.

He will deliver you - Vain are your own exertions; he will deliver you in such a way as to show that the excellence of the power is of himself alone.

1SAMUEL 7: 4 Then the children of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

Verse 4

Put away Baalim and Ashtaroth - These were not two particular deities, but two genera of idols; the one masculine, Baalim; the other feminine, Ashtaroth; both the words are in the plural number, and signify all their gods and goddesses.

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

Verse 5

Gather all Israel to Mizpah - This appears to have been an armed assembly, though probably collected principally for religious and political purposes; but Samuel knew that an unarmed multitude could not safely be convened in the vicinity of the Philistines.

1SAMUEL 7: 6 They gathered together 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." Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah.

Verse 6

Drew water, and poured it out - It is not easy to know what is meant by this; it is true that pouring out water, in the way of libation, was a religious ordinance among the Hebrews, (Isa 12:3), and among most other nations, particularly the Greeks and Romans, who used, not only water, but wine, milk, honey, and blood, as we find by Homer, Virgil, Euripides, Sophocles, Porphyry, and Lucian. Our Lord seems to allude to this ceremony, Joh 7:37-38 (note), where see the note.

The Chaldee Paraphrast understands the place differently, for he translates: "And they poured out their hearts in penitence, as Waters, before the Lord." That deep penitential sorrow was represented under the notion of pouring out water, we have a direct proof in the case of David, who says, Psa 22:14, I am Poured Out like Water, my heart is like wax; it is Melted in the midst of my bowels. And to repentance, under this very similitude, the prophet exhorts fallen Jerusalem: Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches Pour Out thine Heart Like Water before the face of the Lord; Lam 2:19. David uses the same image, Psa 62:8 : Trust in him at all times, ye people; Pour Out your hearts before him. The same figure is used by Hannah in 1Sam 1:15 of this book; I am

a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have Poured Out my soul before the Lord. Perhaps the drawing and pouring out of water mentioned in the text was done emblematically, to represent the contrition of their hearts.

And Samuel judged - He gave them ordinances, heard and redressed grievances, and taught them how to get reconciled to God. The assembly, therefore, was held for religio-politico-military purposes.

1SAMUEL 7: 7 When the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. When the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

Verse 7

The Philistines went up against Israel - They went to give them battle before that, by continual accessions of numbers, they should become too powerful.

1SAMUEL 7: 8 The children of Israel said to Samuel, "Don't cease to cry to the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines."

Verse 8

Cease not to cry unto the Lord - They had strong confidence in the intercession of Samuel, because they knew he was a holy man of God.

1SAMUEL 7: 9 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.

Verse 9

Samuel took a sucking lamb - This sucking lamb must have been eight days under its mother before it could be offered, as the law says, Lev 22:27.

Though Samuel was not a priest, yet he offered this sacrifice; or he might have ordered Eleazar to offer it, and still be said to have done it himself: Qui facit per alterum, facit per se; "He who procures a thing to be done, may be said to do it himself." His not sacrificing at the tabernacle was justified by the necessity of the case; neither tabernacle nor ark was at hand.

1SAMUEL 7: 10 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 on the Philistines, and confused them; and they were struck down before Israel.

Verse 10

The Lord thundered with a great thunder - Literally, The Lord thundered with a great voice - he confounded them with a mighty tempest of thunder and lightning, and no doubt slew many by the lightning.

1SAMUEL 7: 11 The men of Israel went out of Mizpah, and pursued the Philistines, and struck them, until they came under Beth Kar.

Verse 11

Under Beth-car - We know not where this place was; the Septuagint have Beth-chor; the Targum, Beth-saron; and the Syriac and Arabic, Beth-jasan.

1SAMUEL 7: 12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, "The LORD helped us until now."

Verse 12

Called the name of it Eben-ezer - אבן העזר Eben haezer, "The Stone of Help;" perhaps a pillar is meant by the word stone.

1SAMUEL 7: 13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Israel. The hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

Verse 13

They came no more into the coast of Israel - Perhaps a more signal victory was never gained by Israel; the Lord had brought them low, almost to extermination; and now, by his miraculous interference, he lifts them completely up, and humbles to the dust their proud oppressors. God often suffers nations and individuals to be brought to the lowest extremity, that he may show his mercy and goodness by suddenly rescuing them from destruction, when all human help has most evidently failed.

1SAMUEL 7: 14 The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel recovered its border out of the hand of the Philistines. There was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Verse 14

The cities which the Philistines had taken - We are not informed of the particulars of these reprisals, but we may rest assured all this was not done in one day: perhaps the retaking of the cities was by slow degrees, through the space of several years.

There was peace between Israel and the Amorites - That is, all the remaining Canaanites kept quiet, and did not attempt to molest the Israelites, when they found the Philistines, the most powerful of the ancient inhabitants of the land, broken and subdued before them.

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

Verse 15

Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life - Samuel is supposed to have lived one hundred years; he did not begin to judge Israel till he was about forty years of age; and if he was one hundred years of age when he died, he must have been a judge sixty years, and consequently filled that office during the whole of Saul's reign. But that he had been dead before Saul's last battle, is evident from the transactions of that king with the witch of En-dor, and probably not long before. Samuel was the prophet of that time; declared the will of the Lord, and frequently directed both the civil and military transactions of the kingdom. Samuel seems, in many respects, to have been considered the governor of the people, while Saul was only looked on as the general of the armies.

1SAMUEL 7: 16 He went from year to year in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all those places.

Verse 16

He went from year to year in circuit - When he was at Beth-el, the tribe of Ephraim, and all the northern parts of the country, could attend him; when at Gilgal, the tribe of Benjamin, and those beyond Jordan, might have easy access to him; and when at Mizpeh, he was within reach of Judah, Simeon, and Gad; but Ramah was the place of his ordinary abode; and there he held his court, for there he judged Israel; and, as it is probable that Shiloh was destroyed, it is said, 1Sam 7:17, that there (viz., at Ramah) he built an altar unto the Lord. This altar, being duly consecrated, the worship performed at it was strictly legal. Ramah, which is said to be about six miles from Jerusalem, was the seat of prophecy during the life of Samuel; and there it is probable all Israel came to consult him on matters of a spiritual nature, as there was the only altar of God in the land of Israel.

1SAMUEL 7: 17 His return was to Ramah, for there was his house; and there he judged Israel: and he built there an altar to the LORD.
