

1SAMUEL 15: 1 Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you to be king over his people, over Israel. Now therefore listen to the voice of the LORD's words."

Samuel sends Saul to destroy the Amalekites, and all their substance, 1Sam 15:1-3. Saul collects an immense army and comes against their city, 1Sam 15:4, 1Sam 15:5. He desires the Kenites to remove from among the Amalekites, 1Sam 15:6. He smites the Amalekites, and takes their king, Agag, prisoner, and saves the best of the spoil, 1Sam 15:7-9. The Lord is displeased, and sends Samuel to reprove him, 1Sam 15:10, 1Sam 15:11. The conversation between Samuel and Saul, in which the latter endeavors to justify his conduct, 1Sam 15:12-23. He is convinced that he has done wrong, and asks pardon, 1Sam 15:24-31. Samuel causes Agag to be slain; for which he assigns the reasons, 1Sam 15:32-35.

Verse 1

The Lord sent me to anoint thee - This gave him a right to say what immediately follows.

1SAMUEL 15: 2 Thus says the LORD of Armies, 'I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way, when he came up out of Egypt.'

Verse 2

I remember that which Amalek did - The Amalekites were a people of Arabia Petraea, who had occupied a tract of country on the frontiers of Egypt and Palestine. They had acted with great cruelty towards the Israelites on their coming out of Egypt. (See Exo 17:8 (note), and the notes there). They came upon them when they were faint and weary, and smote the hindermost of the people - those who were too weak to keep up with the rest. (See Deu 25:18). And God then purposed that Amalek, as a nation, should be blotted out from under heaven; which purpose was now fulfilled by Saul upwards of four hundred years afterwards!

1SAMUEL 15: 3 Now go and strike Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and don't spare them; but kill both man and woman, infant and nursing baby, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."

Verse 3

Slay both man and woman - Nothing could justify such an exterminating decree but the absolute authority of God. This was given: all the reasons of it we do not know; but this we know well, The Judge of all the earth doth right. This war was not for plunder, for God commanded that all the property as well as all the people should be destroyed.

1SAMUEL 15: 4 Saul summoned the people, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

Verse 4

Two hundred thousand - and ten thousand - The Septuagint, in the London Polyglot, have Four Hundred thousand companies of Israel, and Thirty thousand companies of Judah. The Codex Alexandrinus has Ten thousand of each. The Complutensian Polyglot has Two Hundred thousand companies of Israel, and Ten thousand of Judah. And Josephus has Four Hundred thousand of Israel, and Thirty thousand of Judah. All the other versions are the same with the Hebrew text; and there is no difference in the MSS.

1SAMUEL 15: 5 Saul came to the city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

Verse 5

Saul came to a city of Amalek - I believe the original should be translated, and Saul came to the city Amalek; their capital being called by the name of their tribe.

1SAMUEL 15: 6 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 children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

Verse 6

Said unto the Kenites - The Kenites were an ancient people. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was a Kenite. Hobab his son (if the same person be not meant) was guide to the Hebrews through the wilderness. They had a portion of the promised land, near to the city Arad. See Jdg 1:16; and for more particulars concerning them and the Amalekites, see the notes on Num 26:20-21 (note).

1SAMUEL 15: 7 Saul struck the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, that is before Egypt.

Verse 7

From Havilah - to Shur - From Pelusium in Egypt, unto the Red Sea. - Josephus. But Havilah lay eastward from the Red Sea; the Amalekites lay between this and the way to Egypt towards Shur.

1SAMUEL 15: 8 He took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

1SAMUEL 15: 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the cattle, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and wouldn't utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

1SAMUEL 15: 10 Then the LORD's word came to Samuel, saying,

1SAMUEL 15: 11 "It grieves me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments." Samuel was angry; and he cried to the LORD all night.

Verse 11

It repenteth me that I have set up Saul - That is, I placed him on the throne; I intended, if he had been obedient, to have established his kingdom. He has been disobedient; I change my purpose, and the kingdom shall not be established in his family. This is what is meant by God's repenting - changing a purpose according to conditions already laid down or mentally determined.

1SAMUEL 15: 12 Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning; and it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, and turned, and passed on, and went down to Gilgal."

Verse 12

He set him up a place - Literally, a hand, *T' yad*. Some say it was a monument; others, a triumphal arch: probably it was no more than a hand, pointing out the place where Saul had gained the victory. Absalom's pillar is called the hand of Absalom, 2Sam 18:18.

1SAMUEL 15: 13 Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said to him, "You are blessed by the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

1SAMUEL 15: 14 Samuel said, "Then what does this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the cattle which I hear mean?"

1SAMUEL 15: 15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God. We have utterly destroyed the rest."

Verse 15

The people spared the best of the sheep - It is very likely that the people did spare the best of the prey; and it is as likely that Saul might have restrained them if he would. That they might not love war, God had interdicted spoil and plunder, so the war was undertaken merely from a sense of duty, without any hope of enriching themselves by it.

1SAMUEL 15: 16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stay, and I will tell you what the LORD has said to me last night." He said to him, "Say on."

1SAMUEL 15: 17 Samuel said, "Though you were little in your own sight, weren't you made the head of the tribes of Israel? the LORD anointed you king over Israel;

Verse 17

Little in thine own sight - Who can bear prosperity? Is it not of the Lord's great goodness that the majority of the inhabitants of the earth are in comparative poverty?

1SAMUEL 15: 18 and the LORD sent you on a journey, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'

1SAMUEL 15: 19 Why then didn't you obey the voice of the LORD, but took the plunder, and did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD?"

1SAMUEL 15: 20 Saul said to Samuel, "But 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.

1SAMUEL 15: 21 But the people took of the plunder, sheep and cattle, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

Verse 21

To sacrifice unto the Lord - Thus he endeavors to excuse the people. They did not take the spoil in order to enrich themselves by it, but to sacrifice unto the Lord; and did not this motive justify their conduct?

1SAMUEL 15: 22 Samuel said, "Has 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 listen than the fat of rams.

Verse 22

Hath the Lord as great delight, etc. - This was a very proper answer to, and refutation of Saul's excuse. Is not obedience to the will of God the end of all religion, of its rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices?

1SAMUEL 15: 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because you have rejected the LORD's word, he has also rejected you from being king."

Verse 23

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry - This is no translation of those difficult words, **און ותרפים הפצר**, **און ותרפים הפצר** ki chattath kesem meri veaven utheraphim haphtsar. It appears to me that the three nouns which occur first in the text refer each to the three last in order. Thus, **חטאת** chattath, Transgression, refers to **און** aven, Iniquity, which is the principle whence transgression springs. **קסם** kesem, Divination, refers to **תרפים** teraphim, consecrated images or telesms, vulgarly talismans, used in incantations. And **מרי** meri, Rebellion, refers evidently to **הפצר** haphstar, Stubbornness, whence rebellion springs. The meaning therefore of this difficult place may be the following: As transgression comes from iniquity, divination from teraphim, and rebellion from stubbornness, so, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. All the versions are different.

1SAMUEL 15: 24 Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and your words, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

Verse 24

I have sinned - because I feared the people - This was the best excuse he could make for himself; but had he feared God more, he need have feared the People less.

1SAMUEL 15: 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD."

Verse 25

Pardon my sin - Literally, bear my sin; take it away; forgive what I have done against thee, and be my intercessor with God, that he may forgive my offense against him; turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord.

1SAMUEL 15: 26 Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the LORD's word, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."

Verse 26

I will not return with thee - I cannot acknowledge thee as king, seeing the Lord hath rejected thee.

1SAMUEL 15: 27 As Samuel turned about to go away, Saul grabbed the skirt of his robe, and it tore.

1SAMUEL 15: 28 Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbour of yours who is better than you.

1SAMUEL 15: 29 Also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent."

 Verse 29

The Strength of Israel will not lie - What God has purposed he will bring to pass, for he has all power in the heavens and in the earth; and he will not repent - change his purpose - concerning thee.

We may say it was some extenuation of Saul's fault that the people insisted on preserving the best of the prey; for who could resist the demands of a victorious mob? But his crime was in consenting; had he not, the crime would have been theirs alone.

1SAMUEL 15: 30 Then he said, "I have sinned: yet please honour me now before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and come back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God."

1SAMUEL 15: 31 So Samuel went back with Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.

1SAMUEL 15: 32 Then Samuel said, "Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites!" Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

 Verse 32

Agag came unto him delicately - The Septuagint have τρεμωσ, trembling; the original, מעדנות maadannoth, delicacies; probably איש ish, man, understood; a man of delights, a pleasure-taker: the Vulgate, pinguissimus et tremens, "very fat and trembling."

Surely the bitterness of death is past - Almost all the versions render this differently from ours. Surely death is bitter, is their general sense; and this seems to be the true meaning.

1SAMUEL 15: 33 Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so your mother will be childless among women!" Samuel cut Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

 Verse 33

As thy sword hath made women childless - It appears that Agag had forfeited his life by his own personal transgressions, and that his death now was the retribution of his cruelties.

And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces -

1. What Samuel did here he did in his magisterial capacity; and,
2. It is not likely he did it by his own sword, but by that of an executioner. What kings, magistrates, and generals do, in an official way, by their subjects, servants, or soldiers, they are said to do themselves; qui facit per alterum, facit per se.

1SAMUEL 15: 34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

1SAMUEL 15: 35 Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death; for Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Verse 35

And Samuel came no more to see Saul - But we read, 1Sam 19:22-24, that Saul went to see Samuel at Naioth, but this does not affect what is said here. From this time Samuel had no connection with Saul; he never more acknowledged him as king; he mourned and prayed for him, and continued to perform his prophetic functions at Ramah, and at Naioth, superintending the school of the prophets in that place.