

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 9

This chapter gives an account of Saul, the person the Lord had appointed to be king of Israel; it relates his descent, and describes his person, (^{<0001>}1 Samuel 9:1,2) and how seeking his father's asses, which were lost, he providentially came to the place where Samuel dwelt, (^{<0003>}1 Samuel 9:3-5) and being advised by his servant, and approving of his advice, he concluded to go to him, and inquire the way he should go, (^{<0006>}1 Samuel 9:6-10) and being directed by some young maidens, they found him presently in the street going to a feast, (^{<0011>}1 Samuel 9:11-14) and Samuel having some previous notice from the Lord of such a person's coming to him that day, when he met him invited him to dine with him, and obliged him to stay with him that day, (^{<0015>}1 Samuel 9:15-19) satisfied him about his asses, and gave him a hint of the grandeur he was to be raised to, to which Saul made a modest reply, (^{<0020>}1 Samuel 9:20,21) and Samuel treated him at the feast in a very respectable manner, (^{<0022>}1 Samuel 9:22-24) and privately communed with him of things preparatory to what he was about to make known unto him, (^{<0025>}1 Samuel 9:25-27).

Ver. 1. *Now there was a man of Benjamin*, etc.] Of the tribe of Benjamin, which had its name from the youngest son of Jacob, and one of this tribe was the first king of Israel:

whose name was Kish: whom the apostle calls Cis, (^{<4121>}Acts 13:21), and Josephus^{f162} Cises; his name, according to Hillerus^{f163}, signifies "ensnared"; for what reason it was given him is not certain:

the son of Abiel; in (^{<3333>}1 Chronicles 8:33 9:39), he is called Ner that begat Kish; and in this book, (^{<0451>}1 Samuel 14:50,51) Ner and Kish are represented as brethren, the sons of Abiel: to reconcile this, it may be observed, that Ner being the elder brother, on the death of his father Abiel, had the care and bringing up of his younger brother Kish; and therefore when he is said to beget him, the meaning is, not that he was the parent of him, but the bringer up of him; or rather, as Kimchi thinks, Abiel had two sons, one of which was Ner; and that he had two sons, one that was called

after his own name Ner, who was the father of Abner; and the other Kish, the father of Saul:

the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite; of these persons we nowhere else read:

a mighty man of power; not a man of riches, or of authority, neither a wealthy man, nor a magistrate, for his family was mean and contemptible, (^{<002>}1 Samuel 9:21 10:27) but a man of great strength, an able bodied man, and of great natural fortitude, and courage of mind.

Ver. 2. *And he had a son whose name was Saul,* etc.] Of this name was the great apostle of the Gentiles before his conversion, and was of the same tribe also; but very different in stature; he was a little man, this a large tall man, like his father perhaps;

a choice young man, and a goodly; (^{<003>}1 Samuel 2:1-10) of a goodly aspect, a comely man, tall and well shaped, in the prime of his age, a very agreeable person, one among a thousand:

and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; meaning not for the endowments of his mind, or his moral character and behaviour. There might be as good, or better men than he, on such accounts, but for his outward appearance, his bodily shape, and the dignity of his person:

from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people; this description of him is enlarged upon and explained, to show that he was just such a person the people were desirous of having king over them, such an one as the nations about them had; and it was usual with the eastern people, and so with the Greeks and Romans, to choose persons to the highest offices of magistracy that made a personable appearance superior to others, and is what they often take notice of, as a recommendation of them as princes. Herodotus^{f164} reports of the Ethiopians, that they judged the largest of the people, and him who had strength according to his size, most worthy to be king. And the same writer observes^{f165}, that among the many thousands of men of the army of Xerxes, there was not one who for comeliness and largeness was so worthy of the empire as Xerxes himself; so Ulysses, because of his height, was the more acceptable to the people of Corfu^{f166}; so Alexander's captains, it is said^{f167}, might be thought to be kings for their beautiful form, height of body, and greatness of strength and wisdom. Julius Caesar is said to be of high stature; and so Domitian^{f168};

Virgil ^{f169} represents Turnus as in body more excellent than others, and by the entire head above them; and Anchises as walking statelier and higher than the rest ^{f170}; among the many encomiums Pliny ^{f171} gives of Trajan, as to his outward form and appearance, this is one, “proceritas corporis”, height of body, being higher than others; the Gentiles had a notion that such men came nearer to the deities, and looked more like them; so Diana is described as taller than any of the nymphs and goddesses ^{f172}. Solomon, according to Josephus ^{f173}, chose such young men to ride horses, and attend his person, when he himself rode, who were conspicuous for their height, and greatly above others.

Ver. 3. *And the asses of Kish, Saul’s father, were lost*, etc.] Had got out of the stables or fields, in which they were kept, and strayed from thence:

and Kish said to Saul his son, take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses; he chose not to send his servants only, who might not be so careful and diligent in searching for them, but his son, and not him alone, but a servant with him to wait upon him, and assist him. And it was quite agreeable to the simplicity of those times for persons of equal or greater substance to be employed in such an affair; asses made a considerable part of the wealth and riches of men, were rode upon by persons of quality, and were fed and taken care of by the sons of dukes and princes; (see ^{<800>}Job 1:3 ^{<060>}Judges 5:10 ^{<034>}Genesis 36:24). The Jews ¹⁷⁴ have a tradition, that this servant was Doeg the Edomite.

Ver. 4. *And they passed through Mount Ephraim*, etc.] The mountainous part of that tribe, which lay contiguous to the tribe of Benjamin, where it might be supposed the asses had strayed to:

and passed through the land of Shalisha; a tract in the tribe of Benjamin, so called from some illustrious person, prince, and duke of it; in it very probably was the place called Baalshalisha; (^{<042>}2 Kings 4:42) and which perhaps is the same Jerom calls ^{f175} Bethshalisha; and says there was a village of this name in the borders of Diospolis, almost fifteen miles distance from it to the north, in the Tamnitic country; though Bunting ^{f176} says it was situated in Mount Ephraim, eight miles from Jerusalem to the northwest:

but they found them not; the asses, neither in Mount Ephraim, nor in the land of Shalisha:

then they passed through the land of Shalim which some take to be the same with Salim, where John was baptizing, (~~ERR~~John 3:23) but Jerom says ^{f177} it was a village on the borders of Eleutheropolis, to the west, seven miles distant from it:

and [there they] were not; the asses could not be found there:

and he passed through the land of the Benjamites; or rather of Jemini, which was in Benjamin, so called from a famous man of that name; for it cannot be thought they should pass through the whole tribe of Benjamin in one day. And, according to Bunting ^{f178}, from Gibeah, the native place of Saul, through the mountain of Ephraim, and the land of Shalisha, to the borders of Shalim, were sixteen miles; and from thence to Jemini, in the tribe of Benjamin, sixteen more:

but they found them not; the asses.

Ver. 5. *And when they were come to the land of Zuph*, etc.] In which was Ramathaimzophim, the native place of Samuel, (~~BOOK~~1 Samuel 1:1) and so the Targum here,

“the land in which was the prophet”

Saul said to the servant that was with him, come, and let us return; home, despairing of finding the asses after so long a search in divers places:

lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us; fearing some evil should have befallen his son and his servant, in comparison of whom, and especially his son, the asses would be of no account, and so give himself no concern for them, but be in great care and uneasiness for his son and servant; wherefore Saul thought it most advisable to return home as soon as possible, lest his father should be overwhelmed with grief and trouble.

Ver. 6. *And he said unto him*, etc.] That is, the servant of Saul:

behold, now, there is in this city a man of God; a prophet of the Lord, as the Targum; such were called men of God, because not only partakers of the grace of God, but of extraordinary gifts, which qualified them for the office of prophets. The city near to which they now were was Ramah, the place where Samuel lived, and he is the man of God here meant:

and he is an honourable man; of great esteem among men for his wisdom and knowledge, integrity and faithfulness, and particularly for his gift of prophecy, being a true prophet of the Lord; so the Targum,

“and he is a man that prophesies truth,”

and that made him honourable, and gave him great credit:

all that he saith cometh surely to pass; as his prophecies concerning Eli’s family, and other things, which were well known to have had their accomplishment, and this had gained him universal esteem, (see ^{<088>}1 Samuel 3:19),

now let us go thither; being very near it, within sight of it, insomuch that the servant could point at it, and say “this city”, as in the preceding part of the verse:

peradventure he can show us our way that we should go; to find the asses; he was not certain he could or would, but thought it possible and probable he might.

Ver. 7. *Then Saul said to his servant, but behold, if we go*, etc.] The Targum is,

“if he receives money,”

which it seems Saul was not clear in; some sort of persons that set up for prophets, and a sort of diviners and fortune tellers, did; but he could not tell whether so eminent and honourable a person as Samuel was, did; in as much he was not better known by him, who had been so many years a judge in Israel:

what shall we bring the man? it being usual, when persons addressed great men for a favour, to carry a present with them; or a man of God, a prophet of the Lord, to inquire of the Lord by him concerning any thing, (see ^{<114>}1 Kings 14:2,3 ^{<114>}2 Kings 4:42),

for the bread is spent in our vessels; the food they brought with them in their bags or scrips for their journey, this was all exhausted; not that he meant by it, that if they had had any quantity, they might present it to the man of God, though yet sometimes such things were done, as the instances before referred to show; but that since their stock of bread was gone, what

money they had, if they had any, must be spent in recruiting themselves, and therefore could have none to spare to give to the man;

and there is not a present to bring to the man of God; neither bread nor money, without which he seems to intimate it would be to no purpose to go to him:

what have we? Saul knew he had none, he had spent what he brought out, with him for the journey, and he put this question to try what his servant had; unless it can be supposed it was the custom now, as afterwards among the Romans^{f179}, for servants to carry the purse, and as it was with the Jews in Christ's time, (~~4816~~ John 12:6) though this may have respect not to a price of divination, but to the common custom in eastern countries, and which continues to this day with the Turks, who reckon it uncivil to visit any person, whether in authority, or an inferior person, without a present; and even the latter are seldom visited without presenting a flower, or an orange, and some token of respect to the person visited^{f180}.

Ver. 8. *And the servant answered Saul again, and said,* etc.] As he had answered him before, when Saul proposed to return home, by telling him there was an honourable man of God in the city near at hand, that might possibly be able to direct them which way they should go to find the asses: so he answers him again with respect to the present it was proper to carry with them, and what he had in his hands to make:

behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: a “zuz” of silver, as the Targum, four of which made a shekel, about seven pence halfpenny of our money, and scarce so much:

that will I give to the man of God to tell us our way; that they should go to find the asses: which he would give him very freely for that purpose: both Saul and his servant must entertain a mean opinion of prophets, and men of God, and especially of so great a man as Samuel, that he should be employed at any time in directing persons in such cases, and take money for so doing, and so small a gratuity as this before mentioned; though it seems as if, at some times, something of this kind was done by prophets, and men of God, which might be permitted to keep the people from going to diviners and soothsayers.

Ver. 9. *Before time in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God,* etc.] To ask doctrine of him, as the Targum, to be taught by him, to have his mind and will in any affair of moment and importance; which was usually done

by applying to some man of God, eminent for grace and piety, and a spirit of prophecy:

thus he spake, come, and let us go to the seer; a man used to say to his friend, when he wanted some instruction or direction, let us go together to such an one, the seer, and ask counsel of him what is proper to be done in such an affair:

for he that is now [called] a prophet was before called a seer; for though these names are used freely of the same persons, both before and after this time; yet now the more common appellation which obtained was that of a prophet; custom, and the use of language, varied at different times, though the same was meant by the one and the other; such men were called seers, because of the vision of prophecy, because they saw or foresaw things to come; and they were called prophets, because they foretold what they saw, or delivered out their predictions by word of mouth. This verse is put in a parenthesis, and is commonly supposed to be the words of the writer of this book: hence some draw an argument against Samuel being the writer of it, as Abarbinel does, who concludes from hence that it was written by Jeremiah, or some other person long after Samuel, or that this verse was added by Ezra; but as this book might be written by Samuel in the latter part of his life, he might with propriety observe this, that in his younger time, and quite down to the anointing of Saul king, both when there was no open vision, and afterwards when there was scarce any that had it but himself, he was used to be called the seer; but in his latter days, when there were many that had the vision of prophecy, and there were schools set up, it was more common to call them prophets; though perhaps these are the words of Saul's servant, spoken to encourage Saul to go to the man of God, and inquire of him, since in former times, as he could remember, being perhaps an old servant, or he had heard his parents so say, that such men used to be called seers, because they saw what others did not, and declared and made others to see what they did; and therefore there was a probability that this man of God, who was a seer, might show them the way they should go to find the asses.

Ver. 10. *Then said Saul to his servant, well said*, etc.] Or “good is thy word”^{f181}, thou hast well spoken; it is a good proposal thou hast made, and thou art very generous to give all thou hast to the man; and very promising it is, that since he is a seer he may inform us where the asses are, or which way we must take to find them. Things look feasible enough:

come, let us go: to the city, and to the man of God there, and hear what he will say to us, and what information he will give us:

so they went unto the city where the man of God [was]; to Ramah, where Samuel dwelt.

Ver. 11. *And as they went up the hill to the city*, etc.] For the city was built upon an hill, from whence it had the name of Ramah, which signifies high and lifted up:

they found young maidens going out to draw water: going out of the city, to a fountain which was at the bottom of the hill; and this was the usual business of maidens in those countries to fetch water for the service of the family, (see Gill on “^{<0241>}Genesis 24:11, 15, 16”). R. Akiba^{f182} makes this observation, that whenever a man meets maidens coming out of a city before he goes into it, it is a token of prosperity to him; and instances in the cases of Abraham’s servant, of Jacob, and of Moses, and here of Saul, who was informed of a kingdom, and anointed for it, (see ^{<0244>}Genesis 24:14,21 29:10,11) (^{<0216>}Exodus 2:16),

and said unto them, is the seer here? meaning, is he in the city? or is he at home? or is he in the country?

Ver. 12. *And they answered them, and said, he is*, etc.] That is, he is in the city, at home, and to be spoken with:

behold, he is before you; his house is straight before you as you go along, you cannot miss of it. Some Jewish writers say^{f183} they gave a token to know it by, that there was a cloud at the door, and when they saw that, they might know it was the seer’s house:

haste now, for he came today to the city; from the suburbs to it, or from his country house, or from the other Ramah, for there were two of them, one over against the other, (see ^{<000>}1 Samuel 1:1), for that he was just now come off a circuit, is not so probable, since he was now old, and past riding his circuits; and indeed the meaning may be no more than as it may be rendered, “today he comes into the city”^{f184}; that is, he comes out of his own house into the city, and was then just coming out; so that, if they made haste, they might meet him in the street before he got to the place of sacrifice and feasting:

for there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place; whether it was the new moon, or some festival they observed, though the tabernacle was not there, is not certain; at which, besides the offerings required, freewill offerings and peace offerings were brought by the people, on part of which they feasted with their friends; and very probably, as Samuel was acquainted by the Lord that he who was to be king of Israel would be with him that day, he might add to the sacrifices of the people, to make the entertainment the more grand and liberal; since he had a principal concern in ordering the guests, and dividing the portions, as well as blessing the food, which indeed he might take upon him, as being judge, priest, and prophet: this was an high place where this sacrifice or feast was; for Shiloh being destroyed, and the tabernacle removed elsewhere, and that being in one place, and the ark in another, and they not together, no distinction of places was made, none being yet chosen, all were fit; and particularly high places, which were always reckoned the most proper for divine service and sacrifice.

Ver. 13. *As soon as ye come into the city, ye shall straightway find him*, etc.] By which it seems that the house of Samuel was at that end of it at which they entered; and with which agrees what is observed in the preceding verse, that “he was before them”, his house was in sight of them:

before he go up to the high place to eat; intimating they would, if they made haste, come up to him before he got thither to sit down and eat with the people; for if they did not, they would not be able to see him and speak with him for some time, if on that day:

for the people will not eat until he come; partly out of affection and veneration for him, being their chief magistrate, as well as seer or prophet, and partly for the reason following:

because he doth bless the sacrifice; ask a blessing upon it, upon the meat of the peace offerings before it was eaten; for as this was usually done at every common meal, then much more at such a solemn festival as this. Jarchi gives us the form of blessing used on such an occasion,

“blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hath sanctified us by his commandments, and hath commanded us to eat the sacrifice:”

and “afterwards they eat that be bidden”; for when a man offered his peace offerings, he not only had his family with him, but invited his friends, and

the poor, and the fatherless, the strangers, and the Levites, to partake with him, (see ^{f128}Deuteronomy 12:18 14:29 16:11), the number of the guests at this time, see in (^{f182}1 Samuel 9:22).

Now therefore get ye up; ascend the hill as fast as ye can:

for about this time ye shall find him; that is, by the time they could get up the hill into the city they would find him coming out of his house to go to the sacrifice: or “as this day” ^{f185}; so sure as the day is, so sure shall ye find him.

Ver. 14. *And they went up into the city*, etc.] Saul and his servant went up the hill to the city of Ramah: and

when they were come into the city; were within it, within the walls of it;

behold, Samuel came out against them; came out of a door of his house upon them, just as they came up: or “to meet them” ^{f186}; his way to the high place lay where they were coming; unless it can be thought he went out purposely to meet them, having, as in the following verse, an intimation, that about that time one from the tribe of Benjamin, who should be king, would come to him, and so made this his way, knowing that one coming from that tribe must come that way; but it seems most likely that this was his readiest way:

for to go up to the high place; or place of sitting down, or feasting, as the Targum, (see Gill on “^{f187}1 Samuel 9:12”).

Ver. 15. *Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear*, etc.] In a private manner, whispering in his ear, telling him in a free, familiar, friendly way, as a secret:

a day before Saul came; that he might prepare for the entertainment of him, and not be surprised at his coming, as well as hereby be assured he was the person designed to be king of Israel, when he should come:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 16. *Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin*, etc.] Who without any thought or design of his own, but merely directed by the providence of God, should come to him, not expecting a kingdom; at most only to hear of his father’s asses, and which

way he should take to find them; missing the finding of which would and did bring him thither:

and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel; the leader, ruler, and governor of them; to which high office he was to be appointed by pouring oil upon him, and was the first king on whom this ceremony was performed, and from whence he was called the Lord's anointed:

that he may save my people out of the hands of the Philistines; who, since Samuel was grown old, made encroachments upon them, built garrisons on their borders, and made, it is very probable, incursions upon them, and ravages and oppressions of them:

for I have looked upon my people; with an eye of pity and compassion:

because their cry is come unto me; by reason of the oppressions of the Philistines, and the war they were threatened with by the Ammonites; though Abarbinel thinks this refers to their importunate cry, supplication, and request to have a king set over them.

Ver. 17. *And when Samuel saw Saul*, etc.] Who could not but take notice of him for his height, and which might give him a suspicion he was the man the Lord had spoken of to him; and the rather, because this was the exact time in which he was to be sent to him, and therefore he fixed his eyes upon him: and that he might be assured it was he, and be left at no uncertainty about it,

the Lord said unto him; by a still small voice, or by an impulse upon his mind:

behold the man whom I spake to thee of; yesterday, this is he:

this same shall reign over my people; be their king, as they have desired: or "shall restrain"¹⁸⁷ them, keep them in due bounds, in the discharge of their duty to God and man; and keep them from doing that which is evil, or walking in evil ways, which is the business of a good king; or who shall restrain them from having their own will, but shall rule over them in an absolute manner, according to his own arbitrary will and pleasure.

Ver. 18. *Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate*, etc.] Either at the door of his own house, just as he was coming out of it, or within the gate of the city as Saul entered that, Samuel came to it, in order to go through it

to the high place, which it is probable was without the city; wherefore it is very properly said that Samuel came out to meet them, (~~004~~ 1 Samuel 9:14)

and said, tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is; one knows not which to wonder at most, the simplicity and humility of Samuel to be in so plain an habit, unattended by servants, and yet going to a public festival, so that he seemed to be no other than a common man, to be inquired of whereabouts his house was; or the ignorance of Saul, who had lived so long in the world, and so near Samuel, and yet had never seen and knew not the chief magistrate in the nation, so famous both for his civil and religious character.

Ver. 19. *And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer*, etc.] For he supposed, by inquiring for his house, that his business was with him; wherefore this he said, not as boasting of his character and office, or in the pride and vanity of his mind, but merely for information sake:

go up before me unto the high place; instead of returning home with him, he invited him to go to the place of feasting, as the Targum, whither he was going to partake of the entertainment there; and he bids him go before him, either because he was an old man, and could not go his pace, or he had business to do by the way, or this was in honour to Saul, whom he knew was to be king of Israel:

for ye shall eat with me today; he and his servant, at the public feast: he insisted upon his dining, or it may be rather supping with him:

and tomorrow I will let thee go; for it being in the evening when this feast was, he could not depart that night, but must stay till morning, and then he promised to dismiss him:

and will tell thee all that is in thine heart; answer all questions he had in his mind to ask him, for which he came into the city, and inquired for his house. The Jews^{f188} have a tradition that it was in the heart of Saul that he should be a king, having in a vision seen himself placed on the top of a palm tree, which was a sign of royalty, and this Samuel told him.

Ver. 20. *And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago*, etc.] Which, according to Kimchi, is to be understood not of the time from whence they were lost, but to be reckoned from the time that Saul had been seeking of them; so the Targum,

“as to the business of the asses, which are lost to thee, and thou art come to seek them today, these three days:”

though it is probable enough that the same day they were lost Saul set out to seek them, Now Samuel telling him of the asses that were lost, and of the time of their being lost, or of his seeking them, so exactly, before ever he said a word to him about them, must at once convince him that he was a true prophet, and which must prepare him to give credit to all that he should hereafter say to him:

set not thy mind on them, for they are found; of the truth of which he could not doubt, after he had said the above words; and which he said to make his mind easy, that he might the more cheerfully attend the feast, and be the more willing to stay all night:

and on whom is all the desire of Israel? which was to have a king; in this they were unanimous, and who so fit and proper as Saul, it is intimated, whom Samuel knew God had chosen and appointed to be king over them?

is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? not that the Israelites had their eye on Saul, and their desire after him to be their king, though he was such an one as they wished for; but that as this desire of theirs was granted, it would issue and terminate in him and his family; he should be advanced to the throne, which would be attended with the promotion of his father's house, as Abner particularly, who was his uncle's son, and was made the general of the army.

Ver. 21. *And Saul answered and said, am not I a Benjamite,* etc.] Or the son of Jemini, the name of one of his ancestors, (see ^{<000>}1 Samuel 9:1) or rather, as the Targum, a son of the tribe of Benjamin:

of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? having been greatly reduced, even to the number of six hundred men, by the fatal war between that tribe and the rest, on account of the Levite's concubine, and is called little Benjamin, (^{<087>}Psalm 68:27).

and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? the smallest in number, had the least share of authority in the tribe, and of land and cattle, wealth and substance:

wherefore then speakest thou so to me? Saul presently understood Samuel's meaning, that he should be chosen king of Israel, the affair of a

king being at this time in everyone's mind and mouth; but could not believe that one of so small a tribe, and which sprung from the youngest son of Jacob, and of so mean a family, would be raised to such dignity, but that a person of great figure and character would be settled upon; and, therefore he took Samuel to be in joke, as Josephus^{f189} says, and not in earnest.

Ver. 22. *And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour*, etc.] The dining room of the house, which belonged to the high place:

and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden; and who very probably were the principal persons in the city; and yet Saul was placed at the head of them by Samuel, to convince him that what he had said to him was in earnest, and to do him honour before all the people; and for the sake of him, and to show his respect to him, he placed his servant; his minister, also in the chief place with him; what was reckoned the highest and most honourable places at table, (see Gill on "~~4236~~ Matthew 23:6"). The guests were placed by the master of the feast according to their rank; and the dignity of the person, as Jarchi observes, was known by his manners and place of sitting:

which were about thirty persons; more or less; Josephus^{f190} says seventy, disagreeing with the text, the Targum, Syriac and Arabic versions, but agreeing with the Septuagint.

Ver. 23. *And Samuel said unto the cook*, etc.] That dressed and prepared the food for the entertainment of the guests:

bring the portion which I gave thee; to dress; for part of the provisions of the feast was Samuel's, and the other part the people's that brought the peace offerings:

of which I said unto thee, set it by thee; do not bring it in with the rest, but keep it in the kitchen till called for.

Ver. 24. *And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it*, etc.] Meaning either, as some think, some sauce that was poured on it, or garnish about it; or the thigh, as the Targum, and so Jarchi, Kimchi, and others; or rather the breast, as a more ancient Jew^{f191}; since this joined to the shoulder before separated, and in sacrifices went along with it; though most think this was the left shoulder and breast, because the right shoulder and breast of the peace offerings were given to the priest, to be eaten by

him and his sons, (^{f193}Leviticus 7:34) but in those unsettled times, with respect to sacrifices, many things were dispensed with; and Samuel, though a Levite, might officiate as a priest, and so the right shoulder and breast belonged to him as such; and this best accounts for his having the disposal of it; and upon this extraordinary occasion, Saul, though not the son of a priest, might be admitted to eat of it, it being the choicest part, and fit to be set before one designed to be king; and to show that he was to live in friendship with the priests of the Lord, and to take care of and protect the ministerial function:

and set it before Saul; by the direction of Samuel no doubt, as a token of honour and respect unto him; it being usual in other countries to commend the best dishes, or best pieces of flesh, to the more excellent and worthy persons at table ^{f192}; and this was, as Josephus ^{f193} calls it, a royal portion: the arm or shoulder, especially the right arm, being a symbol of strength, may denote that strength which was necessary for him to bear the burden of government, to protect his people, and fight in defence of them; and the breast being the seat of wisdom and prudence, of affection and love, may signify how necessary such qualities were for kingly government, to know how to go in and out before the people, and be heartily concerned for their good: and Samuel said,

behold that which is left; not by the guests, and what they could not eat; for till Samuel came they did not begin to eat; and as for this part, it was but just brought in, and was never set before the guests, but it was left by Samuel in the hands of the cook, and reserved for the use of Saul:

set it before thee, and eat; it was already set before him, but he would have him keep it by him, and eat of it, and make his meal of it, it being the best dish at the table:

for unto this time hath it been kept for thee; by which he gave him to understand that he knew of his coming before hand, and therefore had made this provision for him; and which might serve to persuade him of the truth and certainty of what he had hinted to him:

since I said I have invited the people; not the thirty persons before mentioned, for it does not appear that they were invited by Samuel, but rather by those who brought the peace offerings, who had a right to invite any of their friends they thought fit; but by “the people” are meant Saul and his servant; for in the eastern languages two or three persons, and even

one, are called a people; and this Samuel had said to his cook, when he bid him set by the shoulder, and what was on it, because he had invited some, for whom he had designed it:

so Saul did eat with Samuel that day: they dined together.

Ver. 25. *And when they came down from the high place into the city,* etc.] After the feast was ended; and though Ramah itself was situated on an eminence, yet it seems this high place was higher than that, being without the city upon an hill, and therefore they are said to come down from the one to the other; or they came down from the high place, and then ascended the hill to the city:

Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house: of Samuel's house; when they were come thither, Samuel took Saul up to the roof of his house, which was flat, as the roofs of houses in this country were; (see ~~<628>~~Deuteronomy 22:8) on which they could walk to and fro, and converse together; hence you read of preaching and praying on housetops, (~~<402>~~Matthew 10:27 ~~<410>~~Acts 10:9) what they communed about is not said, but may be guessed at, that it was about Saul's being made king; of the certainty of it, by divine designation; of the manner of executing that office wisely and justly; about the objections Saul had made of the smallness of his tribe and family; and of Samuel's willingness to resign the government to him, with other things of the like kind.

Ver. 26. *And they arose early,* etc.] Neither of them being able to sleep, as Abarbinel supposes; not Samuel for thinking what he was to do the next morning, anoint Saul king over Israel; nor Saul for what Samuel had hinted to him about the desire of all Israel being upon him, and for the honour done him at the feast, and because of the conversation they had together afterwards:

and it came to pass about the spring of the day; or the "ascents of the morning"^{f194}, when day was about to break, before the sun was up:

that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house; where they had conversed together the evening before:

saying, up, that I may send thee away; meaning not rise from his bed, for he was risen; but that he would prepare to set out on his journey, that Samuel might take his leave of him for the present, when he had accompanied him some part of his way, as he intended; and he was the

more urgent upon him, because there was something to be done before people were stirring:

and Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad; out of Samuel's house, without doors, into the street.

Ver. 27. *And as they were going down to the end of the city,* etc.] That end of it that led the way to the place where Saul was going. As this city was built on an hill, going to the end of it was a declivity, a descent:

Samuel said to Saul, bid the servant pass on before us; being another man's servant, he did not choose of himself to bid him go on, but desired his master to order him to go before them, that he might not hear what Samuel had to say to Saul, or see what he did unto him; for as the choice of Saul to be king was to be declared by lot, as coming from the Lord, all those precautions were taken of rising early, and going abroad, and sending the servant before them, that it might not be thought that Samuel did this of himself:

and he passed on; his master bidding him:

but stand thou still a while; that he might hear the better, and more attentively than in walking; such a posture was most fitting also for what was to be done, anointing him with oil:

that I may show thee the word of God: tell him more of the mind of God concerning his being king, and declare more fully the word, will, and decree of God about that matter, by an action which would put it out of all doubt that he was the man God designed to be king, as in the following chapter.