

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 15

In this chapter are recorded the order Saul had from the Lord to destroy Amalek utterly, (^{<0150>}1 Samuel 15:1-3) the preparation he made to put it in execution, and the success thereof, (^{<0150>}1 Samuel 15:4-9) the offence the Lord took at his not obeying his order thoroughly, with which Samuel was made acquainted, and which grieved him, (^{<0150>}1 Samuel 15:10,11), upon which he went out to meet Saul, and reprove him; and a long discourse upon the subject passed between them, the issue of which was, that by an irrevocable decree he was rejected from being king, (^{<0152>}1 Samuel 15:12-31) and the chapter is concluded with an account of Samuel's hewing in pieces Agag king of Amalek, and of his final departure from Saul, (^{<0152>}1 Samuel 15:32-35).

Ver. 1. *Samuel also said unto Saul*, etc.] When and where he said to him what follows, it is not easy to determine, perhaps at Gilgal, where they after met again:

the Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel; that is, he gave him orders to anoint him king of Israel, otherwise Saul was in providence sent to Samuel to be anointed, and not Samuel to Saul:

now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord; for so great a favour, and such high honour he had conferred on him, laid him under great obligation to obey the commands of the Lord; and whereas he had been deficient in one instance before, for which he had been reprov'd, he suggests, that now he should take care to observe and do, particularly and punctually, what should be enjoined him.

Ver. 2. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, etc.] Of the celestial host of angels, and of the army of Israel, yea, of all the armies of the earth: this is premised to engage the attention of Saul:

I remember that which Amalek did to Israel; four hundred years ago:

how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt; in the valley of Rephidim, just before they came to Mount Sinai, and fell upon the rear of them, and smote the feeble, and faint, and weary, (see ^{f1778}Exodus 17:8 ^{f1517}Deuteronomy 25:17-19

Ver. 3. *Now go and smite Amalek*, etc.] This was one of the three things the Israelites were obliged to do when they came into the land of Canaan, as Kimchi observes; one was, to appoint a king over them, another, to build the house of the sanctuary, and the third, to blot out the name and memory of Amalek, (see ^{f1519}Deuteronomy 25:19) and this work was reserved for Saul, their first king:

and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; all were to be devoted to destruction, and nothing remain to be made use of in any way, to any profit and advantage; living creatures were to be put to death, and everything else burnt and destroyed:

but slay both men and women, infant and suckling; neither sex nor age were to be regarded, no mercy and pity shown to any; they had shown none to Israel when weak and feeble, and by the law of retaliation none was to be exercised on them:

ox and sheep, camel and ass; though useful creatures, yet not to be spared; as not men, women, and children, through commiseration, so neither these through covetousness, and neither of them on any pretence whatsoever. Children suffered for their parents, and cattle because of their owners, and both were a punishment to their proprietors; an ox, or any other creature, might not be spared, lest it should be said, as Kimchi observes, this was the spoil of Amalek, and so the name and memory of Amalek would not be blotted out.

Ver. 4. *And Saul gathered the people together*, etc.] Or “made them to hear” ^{f296}, by the sound of a trumpet; or by sending heralds into all parts of the land to proclaim the above order of the Lord, and summon them to come to him, perhaps at Gilgal; so the Septuagint version, and Josephus ^{f297}.

and numbered them in Telaim; thought to be the same with Telem, a place in the tribe of Judah, (^{f1534}Joshua 15:24), the word signifies “lambs”; hence the Vulgate Latin version is,

“he numbered them as lambs;”

and the Jews ^{f298} say, because it was forbid to number the children of Israel, which was the sin of David; therefore every man had a lamb given him, and so the lambs were numbered, by which it was known what was the number of the people; and the Targum says, this was done with the passover lambs, it being now the time of the passover; but the numbering here made was not of the people of the land in general, and so there was no occasion of such a precaution, only a numbering and mustering of the army when got together and rendezvoused in one place: the sum of which is here given,

two hundred thousand footmen and ten thousand men of Judah; which last were reckoned separately, as distinct from the other tribes of Israel, to show their obedience to Saul, who was of another tribe, though the kingdom was promised to theirs; but R. Isaiah observes, that the reason why so few of the men of Judah came, in comparison of the other tribes, was, because they envied the government being in one of the tribe of Benjamin, when they thought it should have been in one of theirs; the number is greatly increased in the Septuagint version, which makes the whole to be 400,000, and 30,000 men of Judah; and so Josephus ^{f299}.

Ver. 5. *And Saul came to a city of Amalek*, etc.] With his army, perhaps the nearest city of it to the land of Israel; though some think that Amalek was the name of the city, and was the metropolis of the nation, and had its name from thence: and laid wait in the valley; which was near the city, to intercept the inhabitants when they should come out against him: or “he contended” ^{f300} as some render it, he fought with them there; the Targum,

“he ordered his army,”

set them in battle array, or pitched his camp there.

Ver. 6. *And Saul said unto the Kenites*, etc.] Who were of the posterity of Jethro the father-in-law of Moses, or related to him; why Josephus ^{f301} calls them the nation of the Sicimites, who dwelt in the midst of the land of Midian, I know not:

go, depart, get ye down from among the Amalekites; for though some of these people came with Israel into the land of Canaan, and were first at Jericho, and then came into the wilderness of Judah, (^{f301b}Judges 1:16) and were in other tribes also; yet as they removed from place to place, and from country to country, for the convenience of their flocks and herds, they dwelling in tents, might come into the country of Amalek and pitch there, and as they chose to dwell in rocks, and the caverns of them, to be near

their flocks and herds in the valleys, they are called upon to get down from thence, (see ^{<0221>}Numbers 24:21)

lest I destroy you with them; they dwelling among the Amalekites, might perish with them; and especially as the Amalekites, upon their being routed, would naturally flee to the rocks, hills, and mountains, where these people had their tents, they would be in the greater danger of being destroyed with them, unless they removed:

for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt; as Jethro, by the advice he gave to Moses to appoint proper officers in Israel, and Hobab, by being eyes to the people, in conducting them through the wilderness, and accompanying them to the land of Canaan:

so the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites; took the advice of Saul, and removed and pitched their tents, elsewhere.

Ver. 7. *And Saul smote the Amalekites*, etc.] Engaging in battle with them, he overcame them, and beat them, and slew great numbers of them:

from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt; having routed them in the valley, or in whatsoever place the battle was fought, he pursued them from one end of their country to the other; from Havilah, which lay to the northeast, to Shur, which lay to the southwest, and destroyed all that came in his way between those two points, (see ^{<0258>}Genesis 25:18).

Ver. 8. *And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive*, etc.] This name seems to be a common name of the kings of these people, as Pharaoh was of the Egyptians, (see ^{<0242>}Numbers 24:2). When this king fell into the hands of Saul, he did not put him to death, as he should have done, but preserved him; for what reasons, see in the following verse:

and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword; that is, all that came in his way, or fell into his hands; all between Havilah and Shur; all excepting those that made their escape, for we after read of Amalekites, and that in large bodies, (^{<0278>}1 Samuel 27:8 30:1).

Ver. 9. *And Saul and all the people spared Agag*, etc.] Perhaps Saul made the motion to spare him, and the people agreed to it; it may be, out of respect to him as a king; or because of the comeliness of his person, the

height of his stature, and the largeness of his body, as Josephus ^{f302} notes; or to carry him in triumph in a public show, (see ^{<OR52>}1 Samuel 15:12)

and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings; or “of the second sort”, as in the margin, the second best; or rather which shed their two long teeth, as sheep at two years old did when reckoned at their full strength, and fittest for sacrifice ^{f303}:

and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; as they were commanded, but kept them for their own private use and advantage, and this not only the best and fattest of the flocks and herds, but of their household goods:

but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly: such of the cattle that were poor and lean, lame or blind, or had any defect in them, and household goods that were mere rubbish and lumber; such they entirely destroyed, killed the creatures, and burnt the goods; in doing which they thought they fulfilled the will of God.

Ver. 10. *Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel*, etc.] The word of prophecy, as the Targum; this came to him in a dream or vision, or by an articulate voice:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 11. *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king*, etc.] Which is not to be understood of any change of mind, counsel, purpose, or decree in God, which is not consistent with his unchangeable nature; but of a change of dispensation, and outward dealings, and is spoken after the manner of men, who, when they repent of anything, change the course of their conduct and behaviour; and so the Lord does without any change of his mind and will, which alters not; and though he changes the outward dispensations of his providence, yet he never changes and alters in the matters and methods of his grace; though he repented he made Saul king, he never repents of his making his saints kings and priests for himself; his outward gifts he sometimes takes away, as an earthly crown and kingdom; but his gifts and calling, which are of special grace, are without repentance, (see Gill on “^{<OR66>}Genesis 6:6”).

for he is turned back from following me; from after my worship, as the Targum, from doing his will and work:

and hath not performed my commandments: particularly in this affair relating to Amalek:

and it grieved Samuel; that Saul should so soon be rejected from being king, and that he should do anything to deserve it; and whom Samuel had anointed king, and for whom he had a cordial respect, and to whom he wished well, both for his own personal good, and for the good of the people of Israel; so far was he from rejoicing at his fall, who came in his stead, and to whom he gave way in the affair of government:

and he cried unto the Lord all night; or prayed, as the Targum; either that the Lord would inform him of the particulars wherein Saul had done amiss, or that he would forgive his sin, and not reject him from the kingdom.

Ver. 12. *And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning*, etc.] Having had no sleep since the revelation of the will of God was made unto him, and therefore rose early, being in haste to converse with Saul about it:

it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel; not to Carmel where Elijah offered sacrifice, for that was very remote from hence; but to Carmel, a city in the tribe of Judah, which lay in the way of Saul's return from Amalek, (^{<0655>}Joshua 15:55)

and, behold, he set him up a place; to divide his spoil in, as the Targum; or to encamp in, as Kimchi; or to build an altar on, as Jarchi, who takes it to be the same that Elisha after repaired; but, as before observed, this place was at a great distance from Mount Carmel where Elijah sacrificed. The word for a "place" signifies a hand; and, according to the Vulgate Latin version, it was a triumphal arch, and was perhaps an obelisk or pillar, a trophy or monument erected in memory of the victory he had obtained over the Amalekites. So Jerom says ^{f304}, when a victory was obtained, they used to make an arch of myrtle, palm, and olive branches, a sign of it; these trophies were sometimes of brass, sometimes of marble; some were only heaps of stones, others a remarkable tree with the branches cut off ^{f305} so the pillar Absalom erected is called his hand, (^{<0655>}2 Samuel 18:18)

and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal; he took a circuit, and moved in great pomp and parade, carrying the king of the Amalekites in triumph with him, and the spoil he had taken and reserves. To Gilgal he went, expecting to meet Samuel there, and offer up peace offerings to the Lord for the victory he had got.

Ver. 13. *And Samuel came to Saul, etc.]* At Gilgal:

and Saul said unto him, blessed be thou of the Lord; signifying that he had abundant reason to bless the Lord on his account, not only that he had anointed him king, but had sent him on such an errand, in which he had succeeded so well, and it was a pleasure to him that he might report it to him:

I have performed the commandment of the Lord; either he was really ignorant that he had done amiss; and thought that his sparing Agag, when he had destroyed all the rest, and reserving some of the best of the cattle for sacrifice, could not be interpreted a breach of the orders given him; or if he was conscious he had broken the commandment of the Lord, this he said to prevent Samuel's reproof of him, and to sooth him with flattering words.

Ver. 14. *And Samuel said, what meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, etc.]* For the orders were to destroy all living creatures belonging to the Amalekites, (^(915B)1 Samuel 15:3) if therefore Saul had performed the commandment of the Lord, as he said he had, from whence were these sheep Samuel heard bleating?

and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? where do they come from? these questions he put to convict him of the falsehood he had delivered; the bleating and lowing of these creatures proved him a liar, and were witnesses of his breach of the divine command; and one would think every bleating and lowing of these must alarm his conscience, unless dreadfully stupefied.

Ver. 15. *And Saul said, they have brought them from the Amalekites, etc.]* That is, the people, laying the blame upon them, as Adam did on his wife, as if he had no concern at all in it, when it is clear from (^(915B)1 Samuel 15:9) he was the principal one; nor is it probable the people should do this of themselves, without his consent and authority, which was so directly contrary to the express order of God; and then to excuse the people as well as he could, on whom he laid the blame, he observes this was not done for their own private profit and advantage, but for the service and worship of God:

for the people spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; by way of gratitude and thankfulness for the victory they had obtained; and therefore, since they had so good an end

and design in sparing what they had, and those the best and fittest for sacrifice, he hoped they would easily be excused; and that the prophet would use his best interest with the Lord, who was his God, to whom they designed to do honour, that he would overlook what was amiss in them:

and the rest we have utterly destroyed; as they were commanded; but then it was only the vile and the refuse, the best they had reserved for their own use; though he now coloured it with this specious pretence of sacrificing to God, when he found it was taken notice of, and was resented.

Ver. 16. *Then Samuel said unto Saul, stay*, etc.] Stop a little, do not be in haste to be gone, as he might seem to be, fearing a reproof, and that something would be said to him not very agreeable; or “suffer”^{f306} me, that is, to speak, give me leave to say a few words; for Saul being a king, Samuel treats him as such, and asks audience of him, or leave of him to deliver what he had to say to him:

and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night; and since it was not anything from himself, but from the Lord, he had to say, he might expect the rather to be heard, and especially since it was what had lately, even that very night, been told him:

and he said unto him, say on; he gave him leave, perhaps hoping he should hear something said in his praise, commending him for what he had done in destroying the nation of Amalek, (see ^{<B74>}Luke 7:40). There is a double reading of this clause, the Cetib or textural reading is, “and they said unto him”; meaning Saul, and the elders with him; the Keri, or marginal reading is, which we follow, “and he said unto him”; meaning Saul, as Kimchi notes.

Ver. 17. *And Samuel said, when thou [wast] little in thine own sight*, etc.] Humble and lowly, and had a mean opinion of himself, his family and tribe, and judged himself unworthy of the kingdom; (see ^{<002>}1 Samuel 9:21) suggesting, that now he was proud and haughty, and would have his own will and way:

wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel; not of his own tribe only, which was the least, but of all the tribes, and so they were all subject to him, and at his command:

and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel; all which is observed, partly to point out unto him the high honour he was raised unto, from a low

estate, which laid him under obligation to serve the Lord, and obey him; and partly as an answer to him, excusing himself, and laying the blame upon the people; whereas seeing he was made king over them, his business was to rule and govern them, guide and direct them in the right way, and restrain them from that which was evil; and since he was anointed by the Lord, and not by the people, he ought to have obeyed him, and not regarded the pleasure of them.

Ver. 18. *And the Lord sent thee on a journey*, etc.] And therefore he ought to have attended to the errand sent upon, and executed the orders given; in vain, therefore, was it to lay the blame on the people:

and said, go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites; those notorious sinners, who deserve no mercy at the hands of God or men; who had so highly offended the Lord, and had been so injurious to his people at their first coming out of Egypt. The orders were plain, not to be mistaken, and full and strong for the utter destruction of them without any exception, and therefore nothing could be pleaded in excuse for the violation of them:

and fight against them until they be consumed; entirely; they were not to be left until an end was made of them; or “until they had consumed them”^{f307}, the people of Israel, or the soldiers with Saul.

Ver. 19. *Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord*, etc.] Who had made him king, and sent him on this errand, and gave him such plain directions, and such strong orders to make an entire consumption of Amalek:

but didst fly upon the spoil; like a bird of prey, such as an eagle or vulture, not to devote it to the Lord, by an entire destruction of it, but to seize it for his own use, as being greedily desirous and covetous of it:

and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? by disobeying his commands, from whose sight nothing can be hid.

Ver. 20. *And Saul said to Samuel, yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord*, etc.] Here Saul breaks in upon Samuel before he had declared all that the Lord had said unto him; for having expostulated with him for not obeying the voice of the Lord, he could not forbear interrupting him, but with the utmost assurance affirms he had obeyed the voice of the Lord; but then it was very imperfectly, and poor proof does he give of it:

and have gone the way which the Lord sent me; it is very true he went into the country of Amalek, but he did not do there all the Lord commanded him:

and have brought Agag the king of Amalek; took him alive, and brought him captive; whereas he ought to have destroyed him at once, and not have reserved him for triumph; a sad proof this of his obeying the voice of the Lord:

and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites; all that came in his way, in which he did right; but then he had not destroyed the principal of them, their king.

Ver. 21. *But the people took the spoil, the sheep and oxen*, etc.] Still he continues to lay the blame on the people, when he, as king, ought to have restrained them:

the chief of the things, which should have been utterly destroyed; this betrays him, and is an evidence against him; he could not plead ignorance, he knew and he owns, that according to the command of God they were all devoted to destruction; and therefore he ought not to have suffered the people to have spared any on whatsoever pretence, but to have seen all destroyed; but he was as deeply in it as they, and therefore palliates the thing, and endeavours to excuse them by observing, that their end was good, the service and glory of God, which perhaps were never thought of till now: namely,

to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal; as peace offerings, by way of thanksgiving for the victory obtained, (^{<0915>}1 Samuel 15:15).

Ver. 22. *And Samuel said*, etc.] In reply to Saul:

hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? no, certainly, the one being merely ceremonial, the other moral; the one supposes sin committed, for which sacrifice is offered; the other moral, and is a compliance with the will of God, and is neither sinful, nor supposes anything sinful, and therefore must be the more acceptable:

behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; which always was claimed by the Lord as his right and due; or the fattest rams or best sacrifices, of whatever sort, whether burnt offerings, or

sin offerings, or peace offerings; for had man obeyed the will of God, and not sinned, there would have been no need of sacrifice; and that was only acceptable to God when offered with a heart truly sensible of sin, and penitent for it, and in the faith of the great sacrifice of Christ, of which all sacrifices under the law were typical, and led unto.

Ver. 23. *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft*, etc.] Or divination ^{f308}, in whatsoever way it was exercised; for there were various sorts of it among the Heathens, and all condemned by the law of God, (^{<f580>}Deuteronomy 18:10). Now rebellion against God, or disobeying his commands, though in things otherwise, were they not forbidden by him, lawful to be done, is as heinous a sin as to be guilty of witchcraft, or any kind of divination forbidden by the law of God, and deserves as sore a punishment:

and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry: for a man, when he has committed a sin, to persist in it obstinately, or to vindicate himself in it, and insist on his innocence, which was Saul's case, is as hateful to God as any iniquity whatever; yea, as bad as idolatry, or making use of the teraphim, as is the word here; of which (see ^{<2804>}Hosea 3:4) than which nothing is more abominable to the Lord:

because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord; disregarded his command, treated it with contempt and abhorrence:

he hath rejected thee from being king; not actually, for he continued to exercise kingly power and authority to his death, and was treated as a king by his subjects, and even by David, though anointed by the Lord; but the sentence of rejection was pronounced upon him, and the bestowal of the government on his posterity was cut off.

Ver. 24. *And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned*, etc.] This confession of his sin does not appear to be ingenuous, cordial, and sincere, and was made chiefly for the sake of getting the sentence of rejecting him from being king reversed:

for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words; which last seems to be added to colloque with Samuel, and to ingratiate himself with him; and Abarbinel thinks that Saul suspected that Samuel had aggravated the matter of himself, and that he did not really transgress the words of the Lord, but as the words of Samuel; and therefore according to the words of Samuel he had sinned, but not according to the words of the Lord only;

because I feared the people; Doeg the Edomite, who was reckoned as all of them, Jarchi says: this was a mere excuse of Saul's, he stood in no fear of the people, he kept them in awe, and did as he would with them, as a sovereign prince:

and obeyed their voice; in sparing the best of the cattle; so he pretended, when it was his own will, and the effect of his covetousness.

Ver. 25. *Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin*, etc.] It can hardly be thought that Saul was so ignorant as to imagine that Samuel could pardon his sin, as committed against God, which none but God can do, but that he would forgive it, so far as he had offended him; or rather his meaning is, that as he was a prophet of the Lord, and had great interest in him, that he would make use of it on his behalf, and pray to God that his sin might be forgiven him, and the sentence reversed concerning his rejection from the kingdom; which perhaps is the chief thing he means by the pardon of his sin, which sometimes means no more than averting a threatened judgment, or freedom from punishment:

and turn again with me; to Gilgal, for he was come out from thence to meet Samuel, having heard that he was coming:

that I may worship the Lord: by offering sacrifice, either in thankfulness for the victory obtained, or to atone for his sin, and seek pardon for it, or both; this he thought would be a motive and inducement to Samuel to go along with him.

Ver. 26. *And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee*, etc.] Not being satisfied with his repentance and confession, he still extenuating his sin, and laying the blame of it on the people. This he said by way of resentment, and as expressing his indignation at him, though he afterwards did return with him on a change of his mind; which a good man may be allowed to make, without any imputation of falsehood or a lie unto him:

for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel; which is repeated from (⁴⁰¹⁵²³1 Samuel 15:23) for the confirmation of it, and to let Saul know that his pretended confession and repentance had made no alteration in the decree and sentence of God respecting the kingdom.

Ver. 27. *And as Samuel turned about to go away*, etc.] From Saul, a different way from Gilgal, perhaps towards his own city Ramah, with an

intention to have nothing more to say to Saul, or to do with him, or to see his face no more; so displeased was he with him:

he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle; in order to detain him, and prevent his departure from him, and his going a different way:

and it rent; Samuel twitching away from him with great vehemence and warmth. The Jewish ^{f309} Rabbins are divided about this, whose skirt was rent; some say it was Samuel that rent the skirt of Saul, and by this signified to him, that he that cut off the skirt of his garment should reign in his stead; whereby Saul knew that David would be king when he cut off the skirt of his robe, (^{<0204>}1 Samuel 24:4,20), others, that Samuel rent the skirt of his own mantle himself, which is the way of good men when things are not right; but the plain sense is, that Saul rent the skirt of Samuel's mantle, which, when Samuel saw, he understood what that rent was a sign of, as expressed in the following verse.

Ver. 28. *And Samuel said unto him, the Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day*, etc.] Seeing his mantle rent by Saul, he took occasion from thence to predict, and no doubt it was impressed on his mind by the Spirit of God, that his kingdom should be in a like manner rent from him, on account of his own evil conduct and behaviour; and from this day forward he might expect it; the sentence was gone forth from God, and it would not be reversed; and by a like sign was signified the rending of the ten tribes from the kingdom of Solomon in his son Rehoboam, (^{<4113>}1 Kings 11:30,31),

and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou; who was David, a man after God's own heart, that would fulfil his will, who was more holy, just, and wise than Saul; whose works were better and righter than his, as the Targum; who was an Israelite, of the same nation and religion as he, and so his neighbour; and though he was not of the same tribe, yet of a neighbouring tribe; Benjamin, and Judah, of which tribe David was, joining closely to one another. It is highly probable that at this time Samuel knew not personally who he was that was designed to be made king in his room, though under the direction of the Spirit of God he thus describes him; for after this he is bid to go to Jesse's family, from thence to anoint a king, and several passed before him ere the Lord pointed out the proper person to him.

Ver. 29. *And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent,* etc.]

Neither of the evil which he had threatened to Saul in taking away the kingdom from him; nor of the good which he had promised to David in giving it to him; nor of his purpose and promise to Israel to protect and defend them, save and deliver them from the Philistines, and continue them a nation and kingdom: and for the confirmation of all this, this title or character of the Lord is given, “the Strength of Israel”; hence he cannot lie, which is the effect of weakness; nor repent or change his mind, as men do, when something unforeseen arises, which hinders the execution of their first design, and which through weakness they cannot surmount: and hence God would support Israel as a nation, and strengthen them against their enemies, and work deliverance and salvation for them: or “the victory of Israel”, ^{f310}; the author of Israel’s victories, and to whom they are to be ascribed, and who is able to give them more, and would; and as he did especially by David, to whom the kingdom is promised: or “the eternity of Israel”, ^{f311}; that gives firmness, permanency, and duration to them; all which is true of Israel in a spiritual sense; he gives them spiritual strength, victory over their enemies, sin, Satan, and the world, permanent duration, everlasting salvation, immortality, and eternal life:

for he is not a man, that he should repent; men are weak and feeble, and cannot perform what they purpose or promise, and therefore repent; but God, the Strength of Israel, is able to perform whatever he has purposed or promised, and therefore repents not; men are changeable in their minds, and repent of their first thoughts and designs; but God is unchangeable, and never alters his counsels, breaks his covenant, reverses his blessings, repents of his gifts, nor changes his affections to his Israel. Abarbinel says this may be understood of Saul, and so be given as a reason why God would not repent of the evil he had threatened him with, because he was a man that repented not of his sin; but the first sense is best, and agrees with and is confirmed by (⁰²³⁹Numbers 23:19).

Ver. 30. *Then he said, I have sinned,* etc.] So he had said before, (⁰¹⁵⁴1 Samuel 15:24) but his confession there was attended with an extenuation of his sin, pleading in excuse of it that it was through fear of the people, but here it is without any; and yet by what follows it appears to be not ingenuous and sincere, but hypocritical:

yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel; with his company; since should he be slighted openly by the Lord,

and by his prophet, he would fall into contempt both with the principal men, and with the common people; wherefore he seemed more concerned for the loss of honour and reputation with the people, than for his sin against God, which is always the case of hypocrites:

and turn again with me, and worship the Lord thy God; (see Gill on “^{<-0152>}1 Samuel 15:25”).

Ver. 31. *So Samuel turned again after Saul,* etc.] Though he before said he would not, (^{<-0156>}1 Samuel 15:26) yet he did, changing his mind, as he might without being chargeable with a lie; and he also might have an impulse from the Lord so to do, and which he did not in order to worship with Saul, which it does not appear he did, but rather the contrary; but that Saul might not be despised by the people, and his authority lessened, while he continued king; and that he might do what Saul had neglected to do, destroy Agag: and Saul worshipped the Lord; alone, by offering sacrifice to him.

Ver. 32. *Then said Samuel, bring you hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites,* etc.] This he said very probably to some of Saul's officers, and in his presence, and before all the people met together for sacrifice:

and Agag came unto him delicately; fat and plump, as the Vulgate Latin version, and yet trembling, as that and the Septuagint; well dressed, in the garb and habit of a king, and with the air and majesty of one; or with pleasure and joy, as Kimchi, choosing rather to die than to be a captive, and live in such reproach as he did; though R. Isaiah and Ben Gersom give the sense of it, that he came bound in chains, and fetters of iron, according to the use of the word in (^{<-0331>}Job 38:31)

and Agag said, surely the bitterness of death is past; this he said, either as not expecting to die, that since he had been spared by Saul, the king of the nation, a fierce and warlike prince, he had nothing to fear from an ancient man and a prophet, and who now bore not the sword of justice; and especially when he came into his presence, and saw his form, which showed him to be a man of clemency and mercy, as Ben Gersom observes: or as expecting it, and so Kimchi interprets it to this sense, “the bitterness of death is come”; and is near at hand, and will be soon over; or suggesting that that which was bitter, to others grievous and terrible, was to him sweet and desirable; but the former sense seems best by what follows.

Ver. 33. *And Samuel said, as thy sword hath made women childless*, etc.] Or, “bereaved^{f312}” them, not of their children only, but of their husbands also, and so made them both childless and widows; by which it appears that he was a cruel prince, and justly died for his own barbarity and wickedness, as well as for the sins of his ancestors four hundred years ago:

so shall thy mother be childless among women; which was according to the law of retaliation, and what the Jews call measure for measure:

and Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal; either before the ark of the Lord, the symbol of the divine Presence; or before the altar, where Saul and the people had been sacrificing; this he did either himself, though an old man, or by others to whom he gave the orders; and which he did not as being the chief magistrate, and by virtue of his office, but acting as on a special occasion, at the command of God, and to show his zeal for him, and indignation at such a breach of his command. In what manner this was done, is not easy to say; he was not torn to pieces by the hand, without an instrument, as Baebius by the Romans^{f313}; or sawn asunder, as some by Caligula^{f314}; and as Isaiah the prophet is said to be by Manasseh, king of Judah, to which it is thought the apostle alludes, (^{<3813>}Hebrews 11:37). According to Ben Gersom, the word signifies he cleaved him, as wood is cleaved; or divided him into four parts, as Jarchi; perhaps he slew him with the sword, and then quartered him; that is, ordered it to be done.

Ver. 34. *Then Samuel went to Ramah*, etc.] His native place, and where was his usual residence:

and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul; which was also his birth place, and where was his father’s house, and where he had his palace, and kept his court; and took its name from him, to distinguish it from another Gibeah; and so Josephus^{f315} says it was called Gabathsaoule, and was about thirty furlongs or four miles from Jerusalem.

Ver. 35. *And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death*, etc.] Or “added not to see him”^{f316}; not that he saw him no more, he saw him afterwards, (^{<0924>}1 Samuel 19:24), but it was accidentally, he did not go to see him, but Saul came to him; and Abarbinel supposes he might not see him then, but hid his face from him; and he observes that it is said,

until the day of his death; which intimates, he thinks, that he saw him after his death, when raised up by the witch of Endor; but that Samuel was then really raised, and was seen, wants proof. The meaning of the expression

here is no more than this, that Samuel afterwards did not visit Saul as he used to do; he did not go to him, to give him his advice and counsel, as he wanted:

nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul; because of his sin, his impenitence, and hypocrisy; and because of the loss of the kingdom to him, and to his posterity; and he might be concerned also about his eternal welfare; for he appears to have a natural affection for him, and was far from envying him as his rival, and rejoicing at his fall:

and the Lord repented that he made Saul king over Israel; nor was his mind altered, neither by the hypocritical confession of Saul, nor by the cordial prayers and heart of Samuel; (see ~~Q151~~ 1 Samuel 15:11).