

**October 20**

**Scriptures:** Read 1 Samuel 7

**Key Verse:** “Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” (1 Samuel 7:8)

### **Overview**

Samuel’s first task as he entered into his new role as leader and judge was to call the people of Israel to repentance. They had once again fallen into the sin of idolatry by worshipping Canaanite deities (the Baals), and the “Ashtoreths” (fertility goddesses), as we read of so often in the book of Judges. As a result, God’s judgment was upon them with the oppression of the Philistines. Israel “lamented after the Lord” (7:2) and He answered. He raised up the prophet Samuel to be the strong leader they needed to unify the nation and accomplish His plan for their deliverance and salvation. The specific requirements before they would see deliverance from their enemies were: firstly, to wholeheartedly return to the Lord in humble repentance; secondly, to destroy any idols that were amongst them; thirdly, to prepare their hearts for the Lord; and fourthly, to serve Him only (7:3).

Samuel summoned all Israel to Mizpah, about five miles northwest of Jerusalem, to publicly repent and fast for a day, and renew their covenant with God. Although this gathering was only for spiritual reasons, it appears the Philistines understood it to be a military rally and a threat against them, so they in turn gathered themselves together for battle. This time Israel did the right thing; rather than relying on the ark, they called upon God and put their trust in Him (7:8). This was the response the Lord desired, for He is truly the only source of deliverance. When we, as Israel did on this occasion, cry out to the Lord to save us from our sins, we not only receive His forgiveness, but also His deliverance.

Samuel prayed the prayer of intercession and offered a whole lamb as a burnt offering, signifying complete consecration and dedication to God. He interceded on their behalf and God miraculously intervened, granting them a “thunderous” victory (7:10) in the very place where they had previously been defeated and lost the ark to the enemy (4:1; 7:12). It was there that Samuel set up a memorial stone, naming it “Ebenezer”, meaning “stone of help”, to remind Israel that it was with God’s help that they were victorious.

Samuel was a unique man of many gifts and talents. He served God and Israel in various capacities. He was a travelling circuit judge, evangelist, reformer, Levite/teacher, prophet, priest, and military leader. He had a very successful and peaceful judgeship during which the Philistines were no longer a threat to Israel (until the time of Saul; compare 9:16; 13:19-23). Rather, Israel became stronger and advanced upon the Philistines, regaining many Israelite cities that had been lost to them.

It must have been after the destruction of Shiloh that Samuel took up residence in his hometown of Ramah, the city of his birth, death, and burial (1:19; 7:17; 25:1). He was the last of the judges in Israel, and with this chapter seven of 1 Samuel, the period of the judges comes to an end. Samuel was considered one of the greatest men, after Moses, in Israel’s

history. God had chosen him for a purpose and he successfully fulfilled God's plan for his life. Because Samuel honoured the Lord, the Lord honoured him. The same principle holds true today.

### **Prayer**

Father God, may we “not cease to cry out” to you. Save us from the enemies around us by Your mighty hand. Keep us from giving worship to any so-called gods of this age. You alone are worthy!