

a constant source of alarm. This fact, as well as the hostile approach of the king of Ammon (chap. 12, 12), led the Israelites to call on Jehovah for help and to ask for a king to fight their battles. Chaps. 13 and 14, and also 17 show how the Philistines were defeated under Saul. **Their cry is come unto me.** Comp. Exod. 2, 23-25. The cry of Israel here has reference not only to their anxious fears of the Philistines, but also to their numerous oppressions from the heathen, of which we read so much in the Book of Judges.

**17. When Samuel saw.** Literally this reads, "And Samuel saw Saul, and Jehovah answered him, Behold the man," etc. The seer was evidently looking for the man of whom he had received the word related in verse 16. It was about the time designated, and as if in answer to his secret question when he saw Saul, he received a divine inward assurance that this young man was the one, **shall reign.** Or "restrain." He shall bind and hold the people in a more restricted way than had been common all through the age of the Judges, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

**18. Samuel in the gate.** The Hebrew reads, "In the midst of the gate;" but it is better to follow the Septuagint version, which reads here as in verse 14, "The midst of the city." For after Saul and the servant had entered into the midst of the city, as stated in verse 14, it is unnatural to speak of meeting Samuel in the midst of the gate. **Where the seer's house.** These words have been supposed to imply that the city was Ramah, Samuel's home (comp. chap. 1, 10; 7, 17), but they do not necessarily mean more than an inquiry for the house where the seer was to be found. According to verse 12 he had only arrived at this city that day in order to bless a sacrifice of the people there; but Saul may have supposed that he also had his home there.

**19. I am the seer.** This form of direct confession of himself reminds us of Jesus's words to the Samaritan woman (John 4, 26), and to the man born blind, John 9, 37. It must have thrilled Saul with a measure of awe. **Go up before me.** This, addressed to Saul, was a mark of particular esteem, and suggests the pre-eminence he would at once accord to the man who was destined to be Israel's ruler. **The high place.** The law ordained, and it was remembered in the days of Joshua, that all burnt-offerings must be offered at one common altar. Lev. 17, 3-9; Deut. 12, 5-14; Josh. 22, 29. But the habit of sacrificing in high places obtained among the people. After Shiloh had been desolated, and the ark had been captured and placed at Kirjath-jearim, there was no place recognized as having such exclusive sanction as the law assumes. Wherever God revealed himself, the place was recognized as sufficiently sacred to warrant the offering of sacrifices. But the habit of sacrificing on high places became, as the subsequent history of Israel shows, a source of manifold evil to the nation, and was a constant temptation to idolatry. **Ye shall eat.** This includes Saul's servant, whereas the previous word, "go up before me," was for Saul only. The offering of peace offerings was the occasion of a joyful feast. Lev. 7, 11-16. **To-morrow I will let thee go.** He speaks with authority, and when he adds, **I will tell thee all that is in thine heart,** he proclaims himself as Jehovah's prophet, intrusted with a revelation for Saul, and competent to reveal secret things of the heart.

**20. Thine asses... they are found.** This announcement must have impressed Saul with a conviction that Samuel was indeed a great seer. **All the desire of Israel.** These words of the seer were full of significance, but not clearly understood by Saul, nor designed to be understood at that time. The **desire of**

Israel is to be understood as that in which Israel would take special delight and glory. The prophet's words do not mean that Saul had already become the popular candidate for king, for the history that follows disproves such a supposition. They mean, rather, that the seer himself discerned in Saul the man who would first answer Israel's demand. **Thy father's house.** Saul's elevation to royalty would honor his father's house as well as his own person. Hence Kish, Saul's father, became immortal in Israelish history.

**21. Smallest... least.** Called in Ps. 68, 27, "little Benjamin." Benjamin was the youngest of Jacob's sons, and the tribe had been almost annihilated by the war described in Judg. 20. We note here how modest and humble Saul appears, when first hailed with words so full of honor. It was Samuel's painful lot, at a later day, to remind him of this, after his elevation had filled him with pride and a disposition to break away from the word of the Lord. Comp. chap. 15, 17. **Wherefore.** He does not yet comprehend the fullness of meaning in the words of Samuel.

**22. Parlor.** The Hebrew word for this is elsewhere translated "chamber," and here evidently means a large hall or room contiguous to the high place where a company of about thirty persons could dine together. The people who came together for a feast of thanksgiving were wont to divide themselves into companies to eat the flesh of the peace-offerings. **Them that were bidden.** Probably this group that ate with Samuel was composed of the principal citizens of the place—elders of the city. **Chiefest place.** Rather, "at the head of those who were bidden."

**23. Cook.** The one who slaughtered and prepared the animal for the feast. The same person had general oversight of the meal. **The portion which I gave thee.** Samuel, like a careful householder, had given specific orders about the meal beforehand. **Set it by thee.** That is, set it aside as a reserved portion. This portion, as appears from the next verse, was the shoulder.

**24. Took up.** Or, "lifted up." The word is used in Lev. 2, 9; 4, 8 in a sacrificial sense, and here implies that the **shoulder** was lifted up with formal ceremony, as a heave-offering, before it was set before Saul. Comp. Exod. 29, 27; Lev. 7, 32. The right shoulder was given to the priest as his portion of the peace-offerings, and as Samuel was the most distinguished person at this feast and a priest, this portion was appropriately reserved for him. He accordingly ordered it to be set before Saul as a token of honor. **That which was upon it.** Such appurtenances as usually were cut off with the shoulder. **Samuel said.** The word "Samuel" is here supplied by the translators. The words which follow may have been spoken by the cook, but the whole passage is obscure as it now stands in the Hebrew text, and some think it is corrupt. The Septuagint reads, "Because for a testimony has it been reserved for thee apart from the rest; cut it up." The Vulgate: "Because it was kept on purpose for thee when I invited the people." The Hebrew text reads, literally: "And he said, Behold the reserved portion set before thee; eat, for unto the appointed time it is kept for thee, saying, the people I have called." Whatever the precise import of this language, it is evident, on the whole, that this feast had been arranged for, and this portion reserved with special reference to Saul as the one of whom Jehovah had spoken to Samuel the day before. ver. 15.

**25. From the high place into the city.** Whence it is implied that the high place was outside of the city. **Communed with Saul.** If this be the true reading, we may imagine the prophet drawing out the young