

offered it—This may have been done by the priests at Samuel's request. The general opinion of commentators, however, is that Samuel performed the sacrifice himself and his doing so in violation of the strict letter of the law which permitted none to usurp this peculiar function of the descendants of Aaron is thus explained (Lev. 1: 11; Num. 17: 7). He offered this sacrifice, and others subsequently as the immediate messenger of God. By virtue of his office as prophet he is invested with the right to supersede the degenerate priests, and to assume their functions. The ark was "resting" at Kirjath-jearim and the sanctuary at Shiloh had lost that which gave it its sanctity. Religious affairs had reverted to their primitive patriarchal simplicity and the moral head of the nation assumes the leadership in religious functions. The divine approval is shewn by response to his prayer. Compare the case of Elijah at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). **For a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord**—R. V. "a whole burnt-offering," *'Olak* ("burnt-offering") means "that which ascends" and symbolized devotion and consecration to God. *Chalil* ("whole") intensified the signification, and shewed that all was God's, and no part whatsoever was reserved for the priest or the offerer. And thus then Samuel's burnt-offering meant that the people gave themselves unreservedly to Jehovah. (R. Payne Smith). (Rom. 12: 1). **And Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him**—R. V. "answered him." The next verse describes the manner in which God answered him.

10. "We have here a detailed and lively description of the whole event. The lamb is still burning upon the altar, and Samuel still kneeling before it, when the Philistine hosts appear upon the lofty plateau just below the hill of Mizpah, and marshal themselves for battle. It seemed as if Israel's case were hopeless, and many a heart, no doubt, was bravely struggling against its fears, and scarcely could keep them down. But as the enemy drew near the electric cloud formed in the heavens, and 'Jehovah thundered with a great voice on that day upon the Philistines.' Alarmed at so unusual a phenomenon, the Philistines hesitate in their advance, and Samuel, seeing their consternation, gives the signal for the charge, and Israel, inspired by the voice of Jehovah, rushes down the hill upon the foe. Full of enthusiasm, they forget the poorness of their weapons, and the weight of their impetuous rush breaks the opposing line. And now a panic seizes the Philistines; they attempt no further resistance, but flee in dismay from the pursuing Israelites. Their course would lead them down a huge valley 1000 feet deep, at the bottom of which was a torrent rushing over a rocky bed; nor was their flight stayed 'until they came under Beth-car.' Of this place we know nothing, but probably it was a fastness where the Philistines could protect themselves from further attack." (R. Payne Smith). **And as Samuel was offer-**

ing up the burnt-offering—God's answers are not delayed in the time of his people's need (Isa. 65: 24; Ps. 32: 5; Dan. 9: 20, 21). **The Philistines drew near to battle against Israel, but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines**—lit. "with a great voice." Thunder is the voice of God (Ps. 29: 3, 4; 1 Sam. 2: 10; 2 Sam. 22: 14, 15). **And discomfited them**—The Hebrew word expresses the confusion of a sudden panic, and is especially used of supernatural defeats. Compare Ex. 14: 24; Joshua 10: 10; Judg. 4: 15; 15: 20; 2 Sam. 22: 15. (Kirpatrick). **And they were smitten before Israel**—R. V. "Smitten down." The word is specially used of divine judgments. See ch. 4: 3, 10, where the same word is used. The word "smote" in the next verse describes the blows given in battle.

11. **And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car**—(*House of a lamb*). Probably on some commanding height overlooking the road to Philistia. Its site is unknown.

12. **Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shën, and called the name of it Ebenezer**—(*The stone of help*).—The exact spot is unknown, but it was here that the Philistines gained their great victory 20 years before (ch. 4: 1). Other examples of memorial stones will be found in Gen. 28: 18; 31: 45; 35: 14; Josh. 4: 9; 24: 26. **Saying, hitherto hath the Lord helped us**—The deliverances of the past are a pledge of continued help for the future, on this they built their confident hopes.

III. ISRAEL PROSPEROUS. 13. **So the Philistines were subdued**—lit. "were brought low," humbled. They were not conquered nor indeed entirely driven out of the country for they had garrisons there when Saul was made king, but the forty years oppression was at an end (Judges 13: 1). **And they came no more into the coast of Israel**—Their invasions ceased for the time being. **And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel**—This, of course, includes the reign of Saul, till within four years of his death, for Samuel continued to be prophet, and to a certain extent judge, even when Saul was king. The words, moreover, imply a struggle, during which there was a gradual growth in strength on Israel's part, and a gradual enfeeblement on the part of the Philistines, until David completely vanquished them. Israel's freedom and the final subjugation of the Philistines were both contained in Samuel's victory at Mizpah. (R. Payne Smith).

14. **And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath**—These cities themselves do not seem to have been captured, but the towns and villages lying among the western foothills on the borders between Israel and Philistia were recon-