

my transgressions to the Lord.' They humbled themselves before God in deep convictions of their unworthiness, and being thus emptied of self they were in a better state to receive the gracious visitation of love and mercy." (Blaikie). "It may be supposed to represent the pouring out of their penitential sorrow, with which some have thought should be combined an allusion to the weakness resulting from dejection and grief (Josh. 7: 5), or to shedding floods of tears (Jer. 9: 1), or to cleansing of sin (2 Sam. 14: 14)." (Greene). In other cases the pouring out of water is represented as a joyful act (Isa. 12: 3; John 7: 37, 38). The pouring of it on the ground and not on the altar clearly marks it as an act of sorrow and not of rejoicing. **And fasted on that day**—Fasting was enjoined "for the afflicting of their souls" on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16: 29, 31; 23: 27, 32; Num. 29: 7). It has its rational explanation in the fact that deep sorrow takes away the desire for food as well as for gay clothing. Hence the wearing of sackcloth generally accompanied it. It is doubtless an aid to devotion and a wholesome exercise of the authority of the spiritual nature over the bodily. Instances of private fasting on special occasions are Judges 20: 26; 1 Sam. 31: 13; 2 Sam. 1: 12; 12: 16; Ezra 8: 23. See also Neh. 9: 1; Dan. 9: 3-5; Joel 2: 12. **And said there we have sinned against the Lord**—To these symbolical acts they added audible confession (Judges 10: 10; 1 Kings 8: 47; Prov. 28: 13; 1 John 1: 9). **And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah**—That is, he now became the acknowledged ruler of Israel in things temporal, both civil and military, as he had previously been in things spiritual by virtue of his office as prophet. The words strongly suggest that there was some direct appointment or at the very least a national acknowledgement of Samuel's authority. (R. Payne Smith). "The people recognized his authority; they saw in him one who was well fitted to be their ruler in things temporal, and here in full convention they by universal acclamation elected him as judge. A worthier choice could not have been made. It is true he was no warrior, no sagacious general who could lead them forth to victory having the experience of many a well-fought battle to guide him; but he was strong in prayer, strong in faith; he had the prudence of calm wisdom; he knew his countrymen thoroughly, and understood exactly how far they could be trusted, and what they could be expected to effect. In his capacity as judge, he marshalled them and reduced them to discipline and order so that they might resist the attack which he foresaw." (Deane). The next verse clearly implies that the assembly at Mizpah continued for some time during which Samuel was organizing the civil and military affairs of the nation.

7. **And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpah, the lords of the**

Philistines went up against Israel—The chiefs of the five confederated cities of Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath (ch. 6; 16, 17). They acted with promptness and vigor. They knew that a revival of the national worship meant a revival of the old spirit of independence under the protection of Jehovah. They were determined to nip the rebellion in the bud. "It is not rare for steps taken with the best of intentions to become for a time the occasion of a great increase of evil,—just as the remonstrances of Moses with Pharaoh led at first to the increase of the people's burdens; or just as the coming of Christ into the world caused the massacre of the babes of Bethlehem. So here the first public step taken by Samuel for the people's welfare was the occasion of an alarming invasion by their cruel enemies. This should not dismay but stimulate faith and patience." (Blaikie). When the church and Christian people are doing their duty they may expect attacks from evil men. Try to pass and enforce Sabbath observance laws, or to repress the liquor traffic and the "lords of the Philistines" are as prompt and powerful as ever. **And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines**—As they might well be. They were doubtless as poorly armed as during other oppressions (1 Sam. 13: 19-22). Nevertheless they were not cowards but went forth bravely to meet the hosts of Philistia in the name of Jehovah.

8. **And the children of Israel said to Samuel, cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines**—Margin "Be not silent from us from crying." On this Dr. Maclaren remarks, "They are afraid but they mean to fight all the same, and, because they are afraid they long for God's help. That is the right temper, which, if a man cherish, he will not be defeated, however many Philistines rush at him. Twenty years of slavery had naturally bred fear in them, but it is a wise fear which breeds reliance upon God. Our enemy is strong, and no fault is more fatal than an underestimate of his power. If we go into battle singing, we shall probably come out of it weeping, or never come out at all. If we begin bragging, we shall end bleeding. It is only he who looks on the advancing foe, and feels 'They are too strong for me,' who will have to say, as he watches them retreating, 'He delivered me from my strong enemy.' We should think much of our foes and little of ourselves. Such a temper will lead to caution, watchfulness, wise suspicion, vigorous strain of all our little power, and, above all, it will send us to our knees to plead with our great Captain and Advocate."

II. ISRAEL PROTECTED. 9. **And Samuel took a sucking lamb**—Not less than seven days old (Ex. 22: 30; Lev. 22: 27). Such a young animal suitably represented the nation that had awakened to new life and was, as it were, new-born. (K. and D.) **And**