

1 Samuel 7 : 2-13—Memory Verses, 8-10.

**Golden Text**—Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only.—1 Sam. 7 : 3.**THE LESSON RETOLD**

Soon the word of the Lord which He had spoken to Samuel came true. And the punishment that came upon Israel through Eli and His two sons began in this way : The heathen Philistines, who had been enemies of God's people for many years, met the men of Israel and defeated them in battle.

Then the Israelites, thinking the presence of the holy ark of God might bring them the victory, wickedly sent and without God's leave took it from the temple at Shiloh, the two sons of Eli carrying it into the midst of the battle camp.

Now when the Philistines heard what had been done, they put forth an extra effort to overcome the soldiers of Israel. And they again defeated them, killing the two sons of Eli and carrying the ark into their own camp.

For a long time the ark remained with the heathen Philistines, but it brought only plague and sickness to them : so that in course of time they gladly sent it back to the Israelites, who now had no place to keep it, for the temple at Shiloh had been destroyed in the war. Then for twenty years the ark stayed in the house of a man called Abinadab, whose son, Eleazar, saw that no harm came to it. God greatly blessed Abinadab's house, because the ark was there.

But the Philistines still troubled Israel, until the people cried out unto the Lord to have mercy upon them.

Then the Lord called Samuel, who had now grown to be a wise and good man, to help in bringing the great war to an end.

Samuel gathered the people of Israel together, asking them first of all if they were willing to give up the sin which had brought them into so much trouble and to serve the Lord only ; and they all agreed.

Samuel then commanded them to gather together at Mizpeh. Here he prayed to the Lord to forgive the sins of his people ; and after they had fasted and poured water on the ground as a sign of repentance, and had cried out together, "We have sinned against the Lord," they appointed Samuel to be their leader and judge.

When the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered at Mizpeh, they again marched their soldiers against the terrified Israelites, who ran to Samuel saying, "Cease not to cry for us unto God that He may save us from our enemies." Then Samuel took a lamb and, while the Philistines drew near to fight, he offered a sacrifice and prayed unto the Lord in the battlefield. And God heard him and sent a great thunderstorm, which so confused the Philistines that they all turned and fled before the men of Israel.

Then Samuel took a stone and set it to mark the place of the Lord's victory, calling it "Ebenezer," or the "Stone of Help." From that day, so long as Samuel was judge, the Philistines came no more into the coasts of Israel, for the Lord was now with His people, and the Philistines were afraid to fight against them.