

SAMUEL ADMINISTERS JUSTICE

BIBLE BASIS: 1 Samuel 7:3-11, 15-17

BIBLE TRUTH: God hears the prayers of the righteous.

MEMORY VERSE: And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel: and the LORD heard him (1 Samuel 7:9,KJV).

LESSON AIM: By the end of the lesson, we will: **KNOW** the power of prayer and the purpose of praying for justice; **SENSE** God's call for justice in our community; and **PRAY** for justice in our community (the country).

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 1 Samuel 7:3-17-Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

1 SAMUEL 7:3-11, 15-17 KJV

3. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

4. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

5. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

6. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

7. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

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 hand of the Philistines.

9. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

10. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

11. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.

7:15. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

16. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

17. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

A. **Pray (1 Samuel 7:5)** *palal* (Heb.)—To plead, to intervene, to interpose, to arbitrate, or even judge.

B. **Sinned (v. 6)** *chata'* (Heb.)—Missed the mark; erred.

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: Students will see through Israel why they must repent from sin and walk in obedience to God's Word.

INTRODUCTION

Samuel

Samuel was the son of Elkanah and Hannah. He served as a prophet, judge, and priest. He was born in answer to the prayers of his barren mother, Hannah. Hannah gave Samuel to Eli, the high priest at Shiloh, for dedicated service to God. When Samuel was dedicated to God, he listened to God. Samuel was the last judge in Israel, and he encouraged the Israelites to commit themselves to God and serve Him only.

Mizpah

The name means "watchtower" or "lookout." Samuel called the Israelites to come to Mizpah to pray and fast in sorrow for their sins. Mizpah was the capital of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem. Later, Saul would be chosen at Mizpah as Israel's first king. Saul had the blessings but not the approval of God and Samuel.

Ashtaroth

The name of the Canaanite goddess of fertility, sexuality, and war, she was the companion of Baal. Ashtaroth worship usually involved prostitution. The ground was believed to be fertile when she was worshiped in sexual rituals.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will understand the importance of turning away from anything that does not please God.

I. A NATION IN SIN (1 Samuel 7:3-7)

Eleazar, whose name means "God is power" or "God is help," had been selected to take care of the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was taken to a city named Kirjath-jearim, which was near the battlefield because the Israelites wanted to be victorious in battle. Unfortunately, their faith was focused on the Ark of the Covenant, not on God. Therefore, they believed it would bring them victory if it was nearby when they fought the Philistines. In essence, the Ark had become an idol for them. God, Himself should have been the focus of their faith, not the Ark. Because God will not tolerate such misplaced faith, they were defeated. Because of this defeat, the Israelites realized that God was no longer

blessing them. They needed to repent and return to God. Samuel, who was judge, called the assembly at Mizpah. He directed the Israelites to pray and ask God for forgiveness.

**Samuel Leads Israel to Repent
(verses 3-7)**

3. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

The Ark of the Covenant was returned to Israel and brought to Kirjath-jearim, “and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD” (verse 2). Afterward, Samuel, functioning as judge, prophet, and priest (and king) over God’s chosen people, sets forth the condition for deliverance, whereby covenantal fellowship may be restored with the true and living God. That covenantal fellowship had been broken because of their sin. The phrase in verse 3 “with all your hearts” in Hebrew is meaning “seat of emotions and passions; the seat of courage” (Strong, 1994).

As judge, Samuel wants the Israelites to give their hearts back to the one true God. He guides the house of Israel through the prescription of consecrating themselves before God. As God’s chosen people, they must walk in obedience to the stipulations in order to receive His promise of mercy and favor (Exodus 19:5). First, then, they must repent and turn from worshipping their detestable idols. The word “Ashtaroth” is the plural in Hebrew

for Ashtoreth, the goddess of fertility and sexual union; consequently, there were sexual rites surrounding her worship at her many shrines in the land of Canaan.

4. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

God fashions, through tests and discipline, the hearts and minds of His people as they turn toward Him. After a period of estrangement because of their rebellion and apostasy, during which the promise of blessing and protection is deferred, the Israelites return to their God as prodigals—not just agreeing to abide by the dictates of God’s Law, but wholeheartedly committing themselves to have no other god and to serve Him only. They readily comply with Samuel’s call to repentance. “Baalim” is the plural form for the son of Dagon, the god of the sky who brought forth thunder and rain to fertilize the earth. Of the many strange gods, Baal and Ashtoreth were perhaps the most popular and therefore the most prevalent.

5. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

Samuel directs the people to gather at Mizpeh (“Mizpah” in other translations) that he might intercede for them before God. Mizpeh, several miles north of Jerusalem, is a familiar setting. It was the place of national assembly where the people of Israel conferred to bring the Benjamites to justice for the atrocity committed against the concubine of a Levite (see Judges 20:1). Mizpeh would also be the place for the national convention of all the tribes of Israel at which Saul would be elected king, and it

would become the capital of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem (1 Samuel 10:17; 2 Kings 25:21–24).

6. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

That the people would pour water on the ground is an acknowledgment that they deserved to be cursed for violating the terms of the covenant—they had sinned. In Hebrew, the word “sin” means “miss the mark; to bring into guilt or condemnation or punishment” (Strong, 1994).

But underlying this act is the appeal for mercy and the knowledge that God honors a contrite heart that knows its bankruptcy. He is a merciful God who says that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). But He also provides a legal refuge—with Samuel as His leader and judge of Israel at Mizpeh—whereby He remains true to His word; some transgressors find refuge by the means of grace He provides. Thus, the people fasted and confessed their sin. The word “fasted” means “abstain(ed) from food” (Strong, 1994). The Israelites felt compelled to also abstain from food in acknowledgment of their sin and repentance.

7. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

Perhaps the Philistines sensed an opportunity, now that all the Israelites have gathered at Mizpeh, to decimate the Israelites once and for all; or perhaps they felt threatened and mobilized their army. Certainly, the reality of the attack of the enemy becomes more evident when God’s people turn away from and against the evil influence of the world. God’s way is never without opposition and challenge. In any case, the people are afraid. (Fear is the potential enemy within because it tempts us with getting momentary expediency of relief without waiting on God.)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 1

What did Samuel call the people to do in order to receive deliverance from the Philistines?

II. GOD EXECUTED JUSTICE (1 Samuel 7:8-11, 15-17)

The Philistines had endured a final defeat at the hands of God. There were no other battles between the Israelites and the Philistines when Samuel was judge. Because of the Israelites’ obedience, then, God executed justice through Samuel.

Like the Philistines, we may need to remember the personal victories that God has given us. When we are experiencing difficult moments, the memories will help us to endure. When we remember the victories that God has given us, we can endure the present suffering with confidence. We have faith that God has already given us the victory if we endure.

Samuel Leads Israel to Victory
(verses 8-11, 15-17)

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 hand of the Philistines.

The people look to and beseech Samuel, God's provision and chosen instrument, as mediator on their behalf. Samuel, in this sense, is a type of Christ, and the deliverance sought from the Philistines foreshadows the greater deliverance and salvation affected in the Person of Christ.

9. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

Acting as priest, Samuel sacrifices a lamb. The stage is set. The Lord's face and the promise of His mercies are no longer eclipsed by the iniquity of His people. When Samuel cries out, God accepts and answers his prayer.

10. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

The Philistines are poised for attack, but the Lord's hand against the Philistines is sure, swift, and unmistakable—they were smitten before Israel. The Israelites—as they had done so many times before, from the day of their liberation from the hand of Pharaoh—see the miracle of what the Lord has done.

11. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.

“Who is this King of glory? the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle” (Psalm 24:8). So it is when the battle is the Lord's, and all that is left for the Israelites to do is to pursue the scattered Philistines and slay them.

1 Samuel 7:15-17. Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

God won the battle for the Israelites and He used Samuel until Samuel's death to continue to judge the Israelites. In Hebrew, the word “judged” means ruled, governed; decided about a controversy; exercised judgment. Therefore, Samuel administered justice when he helped the people to repent and turn their hearts back to the true and living God.

QUESTION 2

What did God do in response to Samuel's prayer and sacrifice and what was the result?

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: Students will recognize God's love and respond by living a life that pleases Him.

As humans, we live in a world of sin. As believers, we serve a loving God, who hears our prayers and knows our need for

help. When we are disobedient, we cannot stay in our current state. We must make a change. We must repent—turn from our sin, and return to God. If you know someone who has stopped seeking God's guidance, pray for that person. Encourage him or her to return to God.

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

AIM: Students will seek God at all times and encourage others through prayer.

Seek God at all times. The standards of the world are different from God's standards. Remember that God has complete control; therefore, we can be victorious in all situations. Success defined by the world's standards cannot compare with success as a child of God. While we live in the world, we can be strengthened to endure difficult situations by associating with others who will encourage and pray for us.

Seek out a Christian group that has community involvement, or support a community group that encourages those who are alone or homeless. We receive strength when we pray for others and encourage them with our actions and lifestyles. Seek to help those in need; by so doing, you are serving God. When you join a group that prays and seeks to help those in need, you will stay encouraged to do God's will.

PRAYER

Father in heaven, I pray to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. I pray to be more fervent and strategic in prayers for myself and others, and quick to repent of my sins or anything that does not please You. I seek to have a heart that is tender to You, and that I walk

in obedience to Your commands. I also pray for my community and our country, to put away our idols and turn our faces back to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

Racial justice became a catch phrase even in evangelical churches in 2020, and many believers awoke to the evidence of police violence against communities of color. The Church wanted to pray about the issue but found it difficult to articulate the godly position. For this purpose the American Bible Society released a prayer guide, directing readers to a comprehensive list of scriptures that reveal God's heart regarding racial justice. If we base our intercessory prayer on these expressions of God's concern for righteousness, we will find our words seasoned with wisdom and relevance. You will find the list of scriptures at the American Bible Society's blogsite (<https://news.americanbible.org>); download it and meditate over it. Then pray for justice with newfound power and urgency.

Ref.:

Podbury, Nena. "20 Scriptures that Teach Us How to Pray for Justice." American Bible Society News (blog). September 29, 2020. <https://news.americanbible.org/blog/entry/prayer-blog/20-scriptures-that-teach-us-how-to-pray-for-justice>.