

“The Long Way Home” (1 Samuel 7:2–17)

Have you ever walked away from God? Perhaps someone close to you died and you blamed God for your loved one’s passing. Over many months and years you struggled with anger and hurt because you didn’t want anything to do with a God who would seemingly prematurely take your loved one. Maybe you experienced a devastating divorce and felt deserted by God. You may have been the victim of adultery and your spouse left you for someone else. Now you’re left to raise your children as a single parent. Perhaps you walked away from God because you chose to live a life of sin. Sex, drugs, alcohol, gambling, greed, or laziness consumed you and turned your heart far from the Lord.

Sadly, walking away from God is common among Christians. Some of the top leaders in our church have spent many years as wayward believers far from God. Such men and women have recognized the absolute futility of walking away. The wasted years have brought about a greater resolve to serve the Lord with whatever time remains. These men and women would urge you not to make their same mistakes. Sin may be fun for a season (see Heb 11:25), but eventually its pleasures prove unsatisfying. Today, you may be far from God. If so, come home to your Father. The principal question of 1 Samuel 7¹ is: What does it take to return to the Lord? The brief answer is that believers need to turn back to the Lord. This text teaches that *God helps those who honor Him*.

1. Samuel calls Israel to repent (7:2–4).² Our account begins in 7:2: **“From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented³ after the LORD.”** Twenty years had passed since the ark came to Kiriath-jearim. During that time, the Israelites forgot their God. Nonetheless, over the course of two decades, God waited patiently and silently for Israel to feel their spiritual hunger and return to Him.⁴ This is typically how the Lord works with His people—He is astonishingly patient, gracious, and compassionate. I often wonder why the Lord doesn’t break me and bring me to my knees when I sin. The answer seems to be that God wants me to return to Him on my own volition, not because He forces my hand. We must continually recognize that God’s kindness is intended to lead us to repentance (Rom 2:4). Here, in 1 Sam 7:2 the author states that the Israelites “lamented after the Lord.” God used the pain and grief inflicted by the ruthless Philistines to accomplish His work. The Israelites were like a child who goes weeping after its mother that it may be relieved of its hurts. Now the nation was ready to listen and repent.

What brought about Israel’s repentance? Simply put, God’s Spirit worked through Samuel’s preaching. During Israel’s twenty years of rebellion, Samuel undoubtedly preached (3:19) but the people refused to respond because of their sin.⁵ In fact, 7:3 is the first mention of Samuel since 4:1a!⁶ But at last the Israelites are ready to respond to Samuel’s preaching: **“Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, ‘If you return⁷ to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.’ So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth⁸ and served the LORD alone” (7:3–4).** Samuel offers Israel a “new beginning.”⁹ They can be restored to fellowship with the Lord *and* experience deliverance from the Philistines. However, this promise of restoration is based upon Israel returning to the Lord with *all* their hearts.¹⁰ Their repentance will be gauged by three conditions: **First, Israel must remove their idols.** The Baals and Ashtaroth were male and female gods of fertility. These idols encouraged sexual immorality and were supposed to bring about a fruitful harvest of crops. Of course, we don’t worship the Baals and Ashtaroth, but we have our own contemporary idols. Our idols include: physical appearance, finances, spouse, children, jobs, and success in ministry. Satan is deceptive; he takes good things and turns them into god things. In other words, idols are good things that are used as substitutes for God. Here are some questions that can help you identify potential idols: (1) What makes me angry or depressed? (2) What do I think about all the time? (3) Where do I spend my time? Seek to identify your idols and then remove them from your life.

Secondly, Israel must direct their hearts to the Lord. The heart is the organ of commitment and loyalty.¹¹ This is why many people say, “I love you with all my heart.” This statement is the core of Mosaic covenantal faith (see Deut 6:4–5). It required that Israel look only to Yahweh in every circumstance.¹² Although this command is directed toward Israel it is incredibly applicable for you and me as well. God reads our inner disposition and motives. He holds us responsible for responding to Him with a total commitment of our inner beings.¹³ We, too, must look to the Lord in every need and in every circumstance. Where does your heart lie? Are you aggressively and intentionally directing your thoughts, energies, and resources toward the Lord? Or are you distracted by other people and pursuits in your life? How can you focus more of yourself on the Lord? Remember, *God helps those who honor Him.*

Thirdly, Israel must serve God alone. The focal point of this chapter seems to be located in this last command where the theme of “serving God alone” appears twice (1 Sam 7:3–4). To serve God alone is to make Him sole Lord.¹⁴ Genuine repentance doesn’t stop with tears and weeping but moves to concrete actions.¹⁵ Are you serving the Lord as you know you should be? What are you tangibly doing to serve your local church? I am continually astounded by supposedly “mature” Christians who aren’t involved in serving the church. One of the ways that we demonstrate we are committed to the Lord is to serve Him alone. It is not merely to serve our work, our family, and ourselves. Rather, we are called to serve the Lord and to yield our time, talents, treasure to Him.

When these three evidences of repentance are fulfilled, Israel will be restored to fellowship with the Lord, *and* she will experience deliverance from the Philistines (7:4). This is a promise. God longs to do the same for you today as well. If you have strayed from the Lord and are feeling distant from Him, know that God specializes in restoration. He wants you to return to Him with all your heart. He wants you to know that as a child of God you are always welcome home. Don’t forfeit this opportunity to experience restoration with God.¹⁶ This is your moment to make things right with God. Don’t make the mistake of assuming that you will do so at a later time. Come home today. *God helps those who honor Him.*

2. Samuel leads Israel into battle (7:5–12). After calling Israel to repent, Samuel now leads God’s people: **“Then Samuel said, ‘Gather all Israel to Mizpah’¹⁷ [“watchtower”] and I will pray to the LORD for you.¹⁸ They gathered to Mizpah, 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 sons of Israel at Mizpah”** (7:5–6). Upon Israel’s repentance, Samuel’s first instinct was to lead God’s people in prayer. Indeed, the function of a prophet was twofold: to declare the will of God and to intercede with God for people. So many want to speak for God, but what about the prayer part?¹⁹ Four things took place at Mizpah: **(1) There was an active dedication.** There is no Old Testament parallel for the act of pouring out water before the Lord.²⁰ The pouring out of water seems to have been a way of expressing the need for cleansing. It was as though the people were saying, “We have sinned and need to be washed clean.”²¹ But perhaps even more to the point was a later expression in Lam 2:19, “Pour out your heart like water” (cf. Ps 22:15). The water in this case may have reflected the tears, grief, and sorrow that their sins had caused them.²² The point is: Revival cannot occur without a genuine work of intercession on behalf of God’s people. **(2) Israel made a decision to fast.** Israel voluntarily afflicted their bodies to do without food in order to physically join in the grief of their souls. Going without food was a way of showing that they were focusing on spiritual, not physical things. Fasting was a sign of their inward distress of mind on account of their sin.²³ Why not spend a lunch hour this week fasting to break a personal sin or addiction? **(3) Israel confessed their personal and national sins.** No doubt the major sin that was renounced was that of worshipping other gods.²⁴ Because the area of their sin had been public, their confession has to be public too. What might God do if your family, church, and country confessed its sin? **(4) Samuel judged Israel.** Perhaps we do not understand that there is a proper consequence for all genuine repentance. The sincerity of the nation’s confession was somewhat in doubt until there were acts of full restoration or plans for it.²⁵ I would also suggest that Samuel judged rightly by “speaking the truth in love” concerning the twenty years that Israel lost. He likely motivated them to never even look back!

In 7:7–9 the narrator leads us near to the battle scene: **“Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. Then the sons of Israel said to Samuel, ‘Do not cease to cry to the LORD our God for us, that He may save²⁶ us from the hand of the Philistines.’ Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the LORD; and Samuel cried to the LORD for Israel and the LORD answered him.”** Can you imagine what the Philistines must have been thinking when they saw the Israelites praying and worshipping at Mizpah? They must have laughed and assumed that these “girlie-men” were no match for their battle prowess. They undoubtedly went up against Israel with incredible confidence (7:7a). Although Israel repented of her sinful ways, God’s people were still intimidated by the Philistines (7:7b). So they petitioned Samuel to keep the prayers coming! They pleaded with Samuel to “cry to the Lord” (7:8). There is a sense of urgency and desperation. Prayer replaced Israel’s manipulation and self-confidence.²⁷ They now wanted to depend solely on God’s power. Thus, Samuel transitioned from prayer into worship and offered a “suckling lamb” (approx. eight days old),²⁸ which symbolized the complete dedication of the worshiper to the Lord.²⁹ The point is that prayer without a sacrifice is groundless. But thanks be to God that He has provided the final sacrifice that has opened the way into His presence in prayer for all who have accepted His free gift and sacrifice.³⁰ John 1:29 says, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” If you’ve been making sacrifices to work your way to heaven, look to the perfect, blameless Lamb of God—Jesus Christ. Trust in Him today and receive His life.

In response to Israel’s insistent plea, Samuel “cried to the LORD for Israel and the LORD answered him” (7:9). This is Yahweh’s first positive action toward Israel or in Israelite since He answered Hannah’s petition and 1:19. Once again, it’s prayer that moves the heart of God. When we pray, God moves on our behalf. It may not always be the way we want or as quick as we want, but God loves to respond to the prayers of His people. *God helps those who honor Him.* We honor God when we pray and worship Him.

Verses 10–11 explain that God moved in a powerful way on behalf of His people: **“Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused³¹ them, so that they were routed before Israel. The men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as below Beth-car.”** The expression of national unity frightened the Philistines. They knew they needed to nip this in the bud, so they drew up for battle immediately. However, the narrator states that “the LORD thundered with a great thunder.”³² Interestingly, Baal was considered to be the storm god, yet he is silent. God is the one who thunders! The passive verb “were routed” (*nagaph*) also suggests that Yahweh was responsible for the outcome of the battle. He alone wins the day! Although the Israelites were given a part to play in the action (“pursued the Philistines and struck them down,” 7:11), God accomplished the victory, and by His own means (7:10). The narrator wants you to understand that when you begin with God, everything follows from there.³³ *God helps those who honor Him.*

An especially meaningful Old Testament verse is found in 7:12: **“Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer,³⁴ saying, ‘Thus far the LORD has helped us.’”³⁵** When you read the term “Ebenezer,” perhaps you think of Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens’ classic book *A Christmas Carol*. Ebenezer Scrooge was a heartless, miserly, self-centered man. It’s hard to read the name Ebenezer and not associate it with Scrooge. However, its original meaning was light-years away from that. In our text, Samuel erected a stone as a reminder of the Lord’s help in the battle. He named that stone “Ebenezer,” which meant “Stone of Help,”³⁶ to remind Israel of how God rescued them from their enemies. What a contrast! A name that we have come to associate with man’s selfishness should actually serve as a reminder of the readily available help of God. As we move through life, may we focus on the faithfulness of the Lord and not the selfishness of people. Let’s look to Him as our true Ebenezer—our help in the challenges of life.³⁷ *God helps those who honor Him.*

When I was growing up, our family took two six-week vacations around the United States. We spent a great deal of time in Washington D.C. and New York. I was able to see the granite monuments to Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln. I was also able to see the Vietnam War Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I was even able to climb the Statue of Liberty and celebrate freedom. As important and meaningful as these national monuments are none of them speaks to the needs addressed by Israel's Ebenezer monument. The Ebenezer stood in Samuel's day as a reminder of what *God* had done for the nation of Israel. As a matter of fact, the name itself emphasized that their victory was solely of God. It was not a monument to an abstract concept such as "liberty" or "justice," nor was it a memorial to individuals who contributed much or sacrifice all. This was a reminder that repentance and faith had been effective and that God had been faithful to His Word. God had acted on their behalf. America could use such a monument. In many ways, our annual Thanksgiving Day serves—or at least should serve—as such a commemorative event.³⁸ This Thanksgiving may we hit pause on our whirlwind lives and spend significant time in prayer and reflection. As we honor God by remembering Him and expressing gratitude, He has an uncanny way of helping us overcome many of our unique challenges. Indeed, He is our stone of help who is faithful forever.

Do you have any Ebenezers symbolizing God's faithfulness in your life? If not, here are a few suggestions: (1) Keep a spiritual journal that records God's blessings. Write answers to prayer in your journal. Tell a friend what God has done in your life. (2) Find some family Ebenezers. Look back to memories when God helped your family. Search for ways to pass on to your children (or those in your sphere of influence) memorials of God's faithfulness. (3) Look for memorials, stones of remembrances in your life. Possible examples include: a ring, a pair of crutches, a rock, or a shell. Determine the most meaningful Ebenezer and then regularly remember God's faithfulness. *God helps those who honor Him.*

3. Samuel judges Israel (7:13–17). These last five verses summarize Samuel's faithfulness to God and to Israel. In 7:13–14 the narrator writes: **"So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."**³⁹ **The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites."** When Israel returned to God, they experienced the fruits of national revival and victory over their enemies. God honored Samuel's commitment to prayer and worship by bringing peace to Israel throughout his ministry. With one prayer Samuel accomplished a victory that Samson could not win during the entire twenty years of his leadership! Samuel, the man of prayer, was able to accomplish what Samson, the man of muscle, could not accomplish.⁴⁰ Such is the power of a dedicated life! May you and I realize that a lifestyle of prayer and worship brings about more fruit than serving for the Lord in our own strength. *God helps those who honor Him.*

The summary in 7:15–17 prepares the reader for what will take place in chapter 8: **"Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. He used to go annually on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. Then his return was to Ramah, for his house was there, and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar to the LORD."**⁴¹ Verse 15 summarizes Samuel's life in one sentence.⁴² Three times the narrator emphasizes that "Samuel judged Israel" (7:15, 16, 17).⁴³ In this context, the term "judged" (*shaphat*) means more than the handing out of judicial decisions—it involved a comprehensive leadership that fused prayer and worship, justice and mercy, guidance and wise counsel. One could say that Samuel "led" (NET) Israel in the ways of God.⁴⁴ Yet, it is important to remember that Samuel started off as a sanctuary janitor; then, God turned him into a prophet, who also functioned as a priest.⁴⁵ This one man—Samuel—changed his world. Similarly, Greg Laurie, pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, CA, began serving as a janitor at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa under the leadership of Pastor Chuck Smith. Today he is one of the most influential pastors and evangelists in the world. Like Samuel and Laurie when you are faithful in little, God typically provides greater opportunities to serve Him.

Perhaps you're still feeling that you—as one person—can't make a difference in your family, church, and world. I can assure you that if you sell out to the Lord He can use your life in unimaginable ways. Maybe you're distraught over your past life of sin. Today God wants you to experience His forgiveness and fellowship. He wants you to return to Him. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8). God doesn't help those who help themselves. He helps those who turn from idols. God isn't going to help you until you turn to Him. *God helps those who honor Him*. Where do you need to return from? Cry out, "Lord, I return from my sin of _____. Lord, I return from following *MY* way. Lord, I need to put away _____. Lord, I need to put away my bad attitude towards _____. Lord, I need to put away my immorality in this area _____. God wants you to experience His best. As you return to the Lord and honor Him, He will embrace you and use your life for His kingdom.

Scripture References

1 Samuel 7:2–17

Jeremiah 3:22–4:2; 18:1–12

Daniel 9:4–19

Joel 2:12–13

Genesis 35:2–4

Joshua 24:14, 23

Matthew 10:37–38

Study Questions

1. In what specific ways do I need to experience personal revival? Do I need to turn to the Lord with all my heart? What idols do I need to remove from my life? How do I need to direct my heart to serve the Lord alone? As a believer, have I ever rededicated myself to Christ? What brought this about? What changed as a result?
2. What are my modern-day idols? How have I taken good things and turned them into god things? Ask the following questions to identify potential idols: What makes me angry? What makes me depressed? What do I think about all the time? Where do I spend my time? Now, will I confess my idolatry?
3. What principles can we glean from this passage to guide us in corporate prayer for revival in our own church and country? What are the glaring sin issues that need to be dealt with? How can I lead those in my sphere of influence (e.g., youth group, college group, small group) to a greater resolve to pray?
4. What do I need to change in my schedule in order to be devoted to prayer? Will I commit to strengthening my personal prayer life by reading a book on prayer? Listening to a sermon series on prayer? Participating in a prayer group? Who can I trust to hold me accountable when I share this commitment with them?
5. Ebenezer is a helpful reminder of the value of recalling God's past deeds of grace for us. Why not make a list of them? What are my Ebenezer's? How has God recently shown Himself faithful to me? Have I spent time praising Him for His goodness and grace? Have I shared with another believer what God has done?

Notes

¹ There is a great deal of disagreement among scholars regarding the placement of chapter 7. However, Tsumura correctly states: “Nevertheless, from a literary and discourse grammar point of view, ch. 7 seems to be a terminal literary unit. The narrative of Samuel’s life has reached a conclusion; it summarizes his role and prepares for the next episode.” David Toshio Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 230.

² Chapters 4–7 are one large unit. Chapter 4 tells of the capture of the ark, chapter 5 of its movement from place to place in Philistia, and chapter 6 of its return to Israel after being in Philistine territory for several months. In chapter 7, the LORD used Samuel to bring relief to the nation and terminate the long oppression of the Philistines. In 7:2–17, Samuel functions as prophet, priest, and judge of Israel.

³ The Hebrew verb translated “lamented” (*nahah*) occurs in only two other places in the OT (Ezek 32:18; Mic 2:4).

⁴ Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 229.

⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, *Quest for Renewal* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 56.

⁶ Smith suggests that Samuel was about fourteen when the ark was returned by the Philistines. For twenty years he pleaded with the people to get right with the Lord. When he was thirty–three all the people repented. James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*. College Press, NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 2000), 110.

⁷ The Hebrew verb *shub* (“to return”) implies acknowledging, confessing, and forsaking sinful behavior, making it possible to be reinstated in a right relationship with the Lord. See also Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 130.

⁸ The Baals and the Ashtaroth are joined in denoting Israel’s sin in Judg 213; 10:6; 1 Sam 12:10.

⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 48.

¹⁰ The phrase “with all your heart” (1 Sam 7:3) is emphatic.

¹¹ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 49.

¹² Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 49.

¹³ Kaiser, *Quest for Renewal*, 57.

¹⁴ Kaiser, *Quest for Renewal*, 62.

¹⁵ Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel*. Focus on the Bible (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000 [1988]), 57.

¹⁶ God grants us intimate fellowship with Him when we are walking in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7). He loves to work on our behalf when we are wholly devoted to Him.

¹⁷ This Mizpah is not to be confused with the Mizpah where Jacob and Laban made their covenant (Gen 31:43–50); that one is another fifty miles to the northeast.

¹⁸ Samuel stands alongside Moses as one of the great intercessors of the OT (Ps 99:6; Jer 15:1).

¹⁹ Kaiser, *Quest for Renewal*, 60: “Verse eight is very convicting to all who are leaders. Our sin as leaders is that we often fail our people by failing to pray for them.”

²⁰ David later ‘poured out’ water before the Lord (2 Sam 23:16; the Hebrew verb, however, is different) as a libation in the context of the heroism of his three companions. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 111–12 remarks: “Without exact parallel in the Old Testament, it is difficult to ascertain the precise significance of this action. It has been taken to symbolize (1) repentance, (2) contrition, (3) total surrender, (4) humility (cf. Ps 22:14; Lam 2:19), and (5) self-denial. On the other hand, the action may have been a proclamation that Yahweh not Baal or Ashtart, was the true source of life and fertility in Israel (Gordon, 107).”

²¹ Michael Eaton, *1 Samuel*. Preaching Through The Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 1995), 35; John Goldingay, *1 and 2 Samuel For Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2010), 43.

²² Kaiser, *Quest for Renewal*, 58; Eugene H. Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*. Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 51.

²³ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 112.

²⁴ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 112.

²⁵ Kaiser, *Quest for Renewal*, 59.

²⁶ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 50 observes that in the midst of this battle, the important drama is between Israel and Samuel. Israel petitions Samuel by using the most elemental terms of their faith: “cry” and “save.” Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 112 notes that the verb *yasha* (“save”) is used frequently in reference to deliverances affected by the judges (Judg 2:16, 18; 3:9, 15, 31; 6:14f; 10:13f; 13:5; 1 Sam 9:16).

²⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 632.

²⁸ The lamb would be at least seven days old, for so the Mosaic law required (Lev 22:27).

²⁹ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 112.

³⁰ Kaiser, *Quest for Renewal*, 60–61.

³¹ The term for “confusion” (*hamam*) occurs first in Exod 14:24, where the Lord threw the Egyptian army into confusion. See esp. 2 Sam 22:15 (cf. Ps 18:14), where the Lord’s lightning “routed” (*hamam*) the enemy.

³² Lit. “with a great voice.” The translation “with a great thunder” highlights the OT image of thunder as the voice of God (see 1 Sam 2:10; Ps 29:3–9).

³³ Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*, 52.

³⁴ The Ebenezer mentioned here is regarded by many as a different place than the site mentioned in 4:1 (Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 114). Samuel apparently used the name for two reasons: (1) As the meaning of the name implies, this “stone of help” functioned as a memorial stone. It possibly marked the new boundary between the Philistines and the Israelites. Examples of memorial stones marking territorial limits are common in the ancient Near East. (2) Samuel may have chosen the name Ebenezer to declare God’s victory over the Philistines in contrast to the humiliating defeat suffered at the first Ebenezer (4:1). According to Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 108: “All that was lost through sin in the first Ebenezer event was restored through repentance in the second.” Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*, 54 observes: “Three place names in chapter 7 summarize, in turn, stages in the ‘upward’ movement from corruption to reformation: Kiriath-jearim (v. 1), where the ark was returned with reverence and treated with respect; Mizpah (v. 5), where Samuel prayed and the people repented; Ebenezer (v. 12), where the LORD showed saving strength in the midst of the renewed people.”

³⁵ God honored Israel’s humility before Him by giving them a decisive victory over the Philistines. Although the Philistines would still trouble the nation even through the time of David, the Philistines grip had been broken for now, and the forty year oppression ended. The victory at Mizpah did not restore the nation to her former role as a theocracy, however. That privileged opportunity was no longer available to them. Nevertheless, the people could still experience Yahweh’s blessing since the Abrahamic covenant was in force. Things would be different, and the nation would have to make the most of it with her judges. But this was an unstable situation: the prospect of a new generation of judges was bleak, for even Samuel’s sons were corrupt (8:3).

³⁶ The NLT adds the meaning parenthetically after the name.

³⁷ Bill Crowder, “Ebenezer” in *Daily Bread*: www.odb.org/2008/12/12/ebenezer/; accessed 11 November 2011.

³⁸ Revised and adapted from Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 145.

³⁹ Davis, *1 Samuel*, 59 has noted that a formal parallel exists between the actions in 1 Sam 4 and 7. The contrast between what Israel could not do and what God did may be seen in the following chart:

Chapter 4	Chapter 7
Israel “struck down” (<i>nagap</i>) by Philistines (4:2, 3, 10)	Philistines “struck down” (<i>nagap</i>) by Israel (7:10)
Manipulation: “Let it save” (4:3)	Repentance: “Let him deliver/save” (7:3, 8)
Philistines hear (4:6)	Philistines hear (7:7)
Result: “Ichabod” (4:21)	Result: “Ebenezer” (7:12)

⁴⁰ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 115.

⁴¹ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 109 summarizes the faithful ministry of Samuel by noting five major points about his career: (1) He was a prophet (1 Sam 3:20; 4:1); (2) he led in repentance and recommitment to the Lord (7:3, 5); (3) he was recognized as a judge (7:15; 8:4); (4) he was chosen to select Israel’s first king (10:17–25); and (5) he was mourned when he died (25:1).

⁴² Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 240.

⁴³ The same root (*shaphat*) will be used five times in the beginning of 1 Sam 8 (8:1, 2, 3, 5, 6).

⁴⁴ Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*, 52–53.

⁴⁵ Goldingay, *1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone*, 43.