

## God Our Ebenezer (1Samuel 7)

- I. The chapter of 1Samuel 7 is a story of deliverance when God's people turn to Him and repent.
  1. This is one of the things that was written aforetime for our learning that should give us comfort and hope (**Rom 15:4**).
  2. This story is an example for us and was written for our admonition (**1Co 10:11**).
  
- II. In 1Samuel 4-6, the following events happened which led up to the story of Israel's deliverance in 1Samuel 7.
  1. Israel went to war with the Philistines and lost (**1Sa 4:1-2**).
  2. Israel then decided to take the ark of the covenant with them into battle, thinking it would save them (**1Sa 4:3**).
  3. They lost the battle to the Philistines even worse than before and the ark was captured and Eli's sons were killed in the battle (**1Sa 4:10-11**).
  4. When Eli heard about the ark being taken he fell off his chair and died (**1Sa 4:12-18**).
  5. The Philistines brought the ark back and put it in the house of their god, Dagon (**1Sa 5:1-2**).
  6. Dagon was found fallen down the next morning, so they sat him up again (**1Sa 5:3**).
  7. The next morning, Dagon was found fallen down again with his head and hands cut off (**1Sa 5:4**).
  8. God smote the Philistines with emerods (hemorrhoids) (**1Sa 5:6**).
  9. After the LORD smote the Philistines with emerods (hemorrhoids), they decided to send the ark back to Israel (**1Sa 5:7-12**).
  10. The ark of the covenant remained in the land of the Philistines for seven months (**1Sa 6:1**).
  11. The Philistines decided to make five golden emerods and mice to send back with the ark to appease the God of Israel (**1Sa 6:1-5**).
  12. The ark made it back to Bethshemesh where the LORD killed 50,070 men because they looked into it (**1Sa 6:19**).
  13. They then sent messengers to Kirjathjearim and told them to come and take the ark (**1Sa 6:21**).
  
- III. 1Sa 7:1-2
  1. The ark of the LORD was in Kirjathjearim for 20 years (**1Sa 7:1-2**).
  2. Israel lamented after the LORD (**1Sa 7:2**).
    - A. The ark was where the word of God was stored (**Heb 9:4**).
    - B. The word of God was precious in those days because there was no open vision (**1Sa 3:1**).
    - C. God takes His word away from His people as a judgment against them (**Amo 8:11-12**).
  3. Israel was feeling sorrowful and desiring God's deliverance.
  4. Lament *v.* - 1. *trans.* To express profound sorrow for or concerning; also, in mod. use, to feel sorrow for; to mourn for the loss of (a person); to bewail
  
- IV. 1Sa 7:3
  1. Israel expressed their desire to return unto the LORD with all their hearts (**1Sa 7:3**).
  2. Samuel told them that if they do return unto the LORD with all their hearts that they have to prove their words by action.
    - A. Faith without works is dead (**Jam 2:17**).

- B. They were to put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from them.
  - C. They were to prepare their hearts unto the LORD.
  - D. They were to serve Him ONLY.
3. If they would do these things, then God would deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines (**1Sa 7:3**).

V. 1Sa 7:4

- 1. Israel took Samuel's advice and put away Baalim and Ashtaroth and served the LORD only (**1Sa 7:4**).
  - A. Baalim - Plur. of Baal (*Baalim*, ISBE (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia))
    - i. Baal - The chief male deity of the Phœnician and Canaanitish nations; hence, in transferred sense, false god. (OED)
    - ii. Baal was the Sun god. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) says the following about Baal.
      - a. "bʿal (???, baʿal; ?? aʿ, BCal, or ??? ?, BaCl): The Babylonian Belu or Bel, "Lord," was the title of the supreme god among the Canaanites." (*Baal*, ISBE)
      - b. "The Babylonian Bel-Merodach was a Sun-god, and so too was the Can Baal whose full title was Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven." The Phœnician writer Sanchuniathon (Philo Byblius, Fragmenta II) accordingly says that the children of the first generation of mankind "in time of drought stretched forth their hands to heaven toward the sun; for they regarded him as the sole Lord of heaven, and called him Beel-samʿn, which means 'Lord of Heaven' in the Phœnician language and is equivalent to Zeus in Greek" Baal-Shemaim had a temple at Umm el-Awamid between Acre and Tyre, and his name is found in inscriptions from the Phœnician colonies of Sardinia and Carthage." (*Baal*, ISBE)
      - c. "As the Sun-god, Baal was worshipped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being. Hence, human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger in time of plague or other trouble, the victim being usually the first-born of the sacrificer and being burnt alive. In the Old Testament this is euphemistically termed "passing" the victim "through the fire" (2Ki 16:3; 2Ki 21:6). The forms under which Baal was worshipped were necessarily as numerous as the communities which worshipped him. Each locality had its own Baal or divine "Lord" who frequently took his name from the city or place to which he belonged. Hence, there was a Baal-Zur, "Baal of Tyre"; Baal-hermon, "Baal of Hermon" (Jdg 3:3); Baal-Lebanon, "Baal of Lebanon"; Baal-Tarz, "Baal of Tarsus." At other times the title was attached to the name of an individual god; Thus we have Bel-Merodach, "the Lord Merodach" (or "Bel is Merodach") at Babylon, Baal-Melkarth at Tyre, Baal-gad (Jos 11:17) in the north of Palestine. Occasionally the second element was noun as in Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven," Baalzebub

(2Ki 1:2), “Lord of flies,” Baal-Hamm?n, usually interpreted “Lord of heat,” but more probably “Lord of the sunpillar,” the tutelary deity of Carthage. All these various forms of the Sun-god were collectively known as the Baalim or “Baals” who took their place by the side of the female Ashtaroth and Ashtrim. At Carthage the female consort of Baal was termed Pen?-Baal, “the face” or “reflection of Baal.””  
(*Baal*, ISBE)

- B. Ashtaroth (plural of *Ashtoreth*) was Baal's female counterpart.
- i. "Ashtaroth is the plural of Ashtoreth..." (*Ashtaroth*, ISBE)
  - ii. "Hence there were as “many Ashtoreths” or Ashtaroth as Baals. They represented the various forms under which the goddess was worshipped in different localities (Jdg 10:6; 1Sa 7:4; 1Sa 12:10, etc.). (*Ashtoreth*, ISBE)
  - iii. "The name of the supreme goddess of Canaan and the female counterpart of Baal." (*Ashtoreth*, ISBE)
  - iv. Ashtoreth is the goddess Ishtar who represented the morning and evening stars and the moon.
    - a. "The name and cult of the goddess were derived from Babylonia, where Ishtar represented the evening and morning stars and was accordingly androgynous in origin. Under Semitic influence, however, she became solely female, but retained a memory of her primitive character by standing, alone among the Assyro-Bab goddesses, on a footing of equality with the male divinities." (*Ashtoreth*, ISBE)
    - b. "In Canaan, Ashtoreth, as distinguished from the male 'Ashtar, dropped her warlike attributes, but in contradistinction to Ash?r?h, whose name and cult had also been imported from Assyria, became, on the one hand, the colorless consort of Baal, and on the other hand, a moon-goddess. In Babylonia the moon was a god, but after the rise of the solar theology, when the larger number of the Babylonian gods were resolved into forms of the sun-god, their wives also became solar, Ishtar, “the daughter of Sin” the moon-god, remaining identified with the evening-star. In Canaan, however, when the solar theology had absorbed the older beliefs, Baal, passing into a sun-god and the goddess who stood at his side becoming a representative of the moon - the pale reflection, as it were, of the sun - Ashtoreth came to be regarded as the consort of Baal and took the place of the solar goddesses of Babylonia." (*Ashtoreth*, ISBE)
  - v. Ashtoreth was the goddess of love and fertility.
    - a. "In Babylonia and Assyria Ishtar was the goddess of love and war." (*Ashtoreth*, ISBE)
    - b. "The other goddesses of Babylonia, who were little more than reflections of the god, tended to merge into Ishtar who thus became a type of the female divinity, a personification of the productive principle in nature, and more especially the mother and creatress of mankind." (*Ashtoreth*, ISBE)

- C. By worshipping Baal (the sun god) and Ashtoreth (the fertility goddess), Israel was essentially celebrating Christmas (*Natalis Solis Invicti* - the birth of the unconquered sun) and Easter (Eostre - the goddess of Spring and fertility).
- i. Celebrating Christmas is worshipping Baalim.
    - a. "December 25th in Rome.--This was the date of a pagan festival in Rome, chosen in A.D. 274 by the emperor Aurelian as the birthday of the unconquered sun (*natalis solis invicti*), which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase of light. At some point before A.D. 336 the church at Rome established the commemoration of the birthday of Christ, the sun of righteousness, on this same date." (Christmas, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.704)
    - b. "The well-known solar feast, however, of *Natalis Invicti*, celebrated on 25 December, has a strong claim on the responsibility for our December date." (Christmas, Catholic Encyclopedia)
    - c. "In A.D. 354, Pope Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun. Christians honoured Christ, instead of Saturn, as the light of the world." (World Book Encyclopedia)
  - ii. Celebrating Easter is worshipping Ashtaroth, the goddesses of fertility, Spring, and the dawn.
    - a. Easter: "Baeda *Temp. Rat.* xv. derives the word from Eostre, the name of a goddess whose festival was celebrated at the vernal equinox; her name shows that she was originally the dawn-goddess." (Etymology of Easter, Oxford English Dictionary)
    - b. "The English name Easter is of uncertain origin; Bede in the 8th century derived it from that of the Anglo-Saxon SPRING GODDESS EOSTRE." (caps mine - CEW) (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.865)
2. Israel had been worshipping Baal and Ashtoreth AND the LORD (**1Sa 7:3-4**).
- A. In other words, Israel had been incorporating pagan sun and fertility worship with the worship of the true God.
  - B. This is precisely what celebrating Christmas and Easter is: incorporating pagan sun and fertility worship with the worship of the true God.
  - C. If Israel were to be saved from their enemies, it would only be by forsaking their pagan worship and worshipping God only.

VI. 1Sa 7:5

1. Samuel told them to all gather at Mispeh and he would pray for them (**1Sa 7:5**).
2. Having a godly man pray for you is advantageous (**Job 42:8-10**).
3. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (**Jam 5:16**).

VII. 1Sa 7:6

1. Israel humbled themselves, fasted, and confessed their sins to God (**1Sa 7:6**).
2. If we humble ourselves, God will lift us up (**Jam 4:8-10; 1Pe 5:6**).
3. Those who confess their sins and forsake them will find mercy (**Pro 28:13**).
4. God rewards sincere fasting (**Mat 6:16-18**).

VIII. 1Sa 7:7-8

1. When the Philistines heard that Israel had gathered together they went up against them and Israel was afraid (**1Sa 7:7**).
2. The devil will do anything to keep us from assembling with our brethren and repenting of and confessing our sins.
3. Although Israel was afraid, they didn't let their fear overcome their faith.
4. Israel asked Samuel to keep praying for them, that God would save them from the Philistines (**1Sa 7:8**).

IX. 1Sa 7:9

1. Samuel offered a young lamb as a sacrifice and cried unto the LORD for Israel (**1Sa 7:9**).
2. Samuel sought God through the blood of a lamb, which is a picture of going to God for salvation through Jesus Christ (**Heb 10:19; Heb 7:25**), the lamb of God (**Joh 1:29**).
3. Whoso calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (**Rom 10:13; Psa 116:4,8; Psa 107:6,13,23-30**).

X. 1Sa 7:10

1. While Samuel was making the offering, the LORD destroyed the Philistines before Israel (**1Sa 7:10**).
  - A. God knows what we need before we ask (**Mat 6:8**).
  - B. God answers before we call (**Isa 65:24**).
2. God loves 11th-hour-victories because it ensures that He gets all the glory.
3. God will not let us be tempted above that we are able, but will always leave a way of escape (**1Co 10:13**).

XI. 1Sa 7:11

1. Israel then went out and smote the Philistines (**1Sa 7:11**).
2. Once God had done the hard work, Israel then did their part.
3. Once God first works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure by giving us eternal life, then we must work out that salvation temporally by doing the good works which He created us to do (**Phi 2:12-13; Eph 2:10**).

XII. 1Sa 7:12

1. Samuel commemorates the victory by setting up a stone and calling it Ebenezer, which means The Stone of Help (**1Sa 7:12**).
2. Jesus is our Ebenezer, the chief corner stone (**Eph 2:20**) which helps us (**Heb 4:15-16**).

XIII. 1Sa 7:13

1. As long as Samuel lived, the Philistines were subdued and gave Israel no more trouble (**1Sa 7:13**).
2. Having a godly person around will spare people trouble (**Jer 5:1**).

XIV. 1Sa 7:14

1. God gave back Israel the cities and the coasts which the Philistines had taken and gave them peace (**1Sa 7:14**).
2. When a man's (or a nation's) ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him (**Pro 16:7**).
3. This happened to Israel under the reign of godly king Jehoshaphat (**2Ch 17:3-6,10-11**).
4. The work and effect of righteousness is peace and quietness (**Isa 32:17-18**).

XV. 1Sa 7:15-17

1. Samuel spent the rest of his life in Israel as a judge and circuit riding preacher (**1Sa 7:15-17**).

2. 1Samuel 7 is a beautiful story of how God our Ebenezer will save His people from their enemies and their troubles and give them peace when they turn from their sins and idolatry and seek him with a humble heart.