



6: Our ROCK of Help

(1 Sam 7)

Step into a story where terrified soldiers, a thunderstruck battlefield, and one upright stone converge to prove God still rescues repentant people. Hear how that ancient "Ebenezer" can anchor your faith, silence today's anxieties, and remind you that every impossible debt has already been paid in full.

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teachingnotes

* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.

1 Samuel 7:2-4

Time went by until twenty years had passed since the ark had been taken to Kiriath-jearim. Then the whole house of Israel longed for the LORD. Samuel told them, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, get rid of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths that are among you, set your hearts on the LORD, and worship only him. Then He will rescue you from the Philistines." So the Israelites removed the Baals and the Ashtoreths and only worshiped the LORD.

Ultimately, **the whole house of Israel longed for Yahweh** and responded in real repentance - turning FROM sin and turning TO Yahweh. Are there any idols that you place above Yahweh? Job, money, family, or a hobby? Time to CHOP IT DOWN!

1 Samuel 7:5-6

Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD on your behalf." When they gathered at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out in the LORD's presence. They fasted that day, and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the Israelites at Mizpah.

Samuel has been used by God to lead them back to Him, to **judge** the actions of their previous 20 years as sinful & demand true repentance - turning from sin and turning to Him - as we have seen at the beginning of today's passage (1 Sam 7:2-4).

- **Mizpah** "watchtower" or "lookout"¹ -this particular place is thought to be 8 miles north of Jerusalem - 2,572 ft high.²

Pouring water out in Yahweh's presence is likely imagery for the people weeping before Yahweh in repentance as in **Lamentations 2:18**: "The hearts of the people cry out to the Lord. Wall of Daughter Zion, let your tears run down like a river day and night. Give yourself no relief and your eyes no rest."

Fasting was sign of seeking Yahweh rather than seeking food. This was a sign of SINCERITY as the people confessed their sin against Yahweh.

1 Samuel 7:7-8

When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, their rulers marched up toward Israel. When the Israelites heard about it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. The Israelites said to Samuel, "Don't stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, so that He will save us from the Philistines."

Notice the difference between NOW & 20 years prior, when they took the ark of the covenant & arrogantly thought they could manipulate God's Presence and Power to defeat their enemies. Now however, the people are afraid, and humbly asking for Yahweh to save them from the Philistines.

1 Samuel 7:9

Then Samuel took a young lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on behalf of Israel, and the LORD answered him.

This **young lamb** would have its neck slit and its life leaked away. Sin brings DEATH, and this unblemished lamb was a substitute sacrifice for the sin of the people. The lamb's body would be laid on an altar and this **whole burnt offering** was entirely consumed as an offering to Yahweh, with no parts left over for the people - it was a picture of being totally dedicated to Yahweh, as were the people.

¹ LaMoine DeVries, "Mizpah, Mizpeh," in Holman Bible Dictionary (B&H, n.d.).]

² Ralph W. Klein, 1 Samuel, vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 66.

1 Samuel 7:10-11

Samuel was offering the burnt offering as the Philistines approached to fight against Israel. The LORD thundered loudly against the Philistines that day...The LORD thundered loudly against the Philistines that day and threw them into such confusion that they were defeated by Israel. Then the men of Israel charged out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines striking them down all the way to a place below Beth-car.

Baal - the false god the Hebrew people had wrongfully worshiped - is the supposed god of storms, but it is **Yahweh Who thundered loudly against the Philistines**, sending them into full retreat mode to be slayed by the ones they came to slaughter.

1 Samuel 7:12-13a

Afterward, Samuel took a stone and set it upright between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, explaining, "The LORD has helped us to this point." So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israel's territory again.

The Hebrew "**Ebenezer**" is a word meaning literally "stone of help". There's an old hymn "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" with the phrase:

"Here I raise mine Ebenezer

Hither by Thy help I'm come."

In other words, "I raise my stone of help which reminds me how I've come this far with God's help."

This **stone** was a physical reminder of God's faithfulness - the ROCK of His people. Every time they walked past it and saw it, they were reminded of what God had done that day. Further, the stones were meant to prompt the question among their children, "What do these stones mean?"

- Without a reminder like this, it's easy to forget God's faithfulness in the past. How many times has God provided for you, and yet...somehow...we forget his faithfulness in the past when we get blinded by the difficulties that now lay in our path.

1 Samuel 7:13b-17

The LORD's Hand was against the Philistines all of Samuel's life. The cities from Ekron to Gath, which they had taken from Israel, were restored; Israel even rescued their surrounding territories from Philistine control. There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites. Samuel judged Israel throughout his life. Every year he would go on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah and would judge Israel at all these locations. Then he would return to Ramah because his home was there, he judged Israel there, and he built an altar to the LORD there.

The Amorites are the people who lived in the land before Israel got there, people they used to war with on the regular. No more! Now there is **PEACE!**



▶ **SEEK God and THANK God - come to JESUS.**

▶ **Find memorable ways to recall God's faithfulness in the past.**

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Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156).

discussion questions

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. Unexpected Defeats: Read 1 Samuel 7:2-4.

- What concrete actions showed Israel's repentance was *genuine* and not merely emotional?
- How does authentic repentance differ from regret in your own life?

2. Idols Then & Now

- Samuel told the people to "get rid of the foreign gods." What modern-day "Baals or Ashtoreths" (career, comfort, approval, possessions, etc.) most often compete with your devotion to Jesus?
- What would it look like in practice to "chop them down"?

3. Ritual vs. Relationship

- Compare Israel's arrogant use of the ark in 1 Samuel 4 with their humble plea in 1 Samuel 7:7-8.
- Where are you tempted to treat religious activity like a lever to move God rather than an expression of love for Him?

4. "Yahweh's Powerful Hand is moved by Purity & Sincerity."

- Describe a time you saw God work when motives were pure and sincere.
- What safeguards can help keep our hearts aligned with His?

5. The Substitute Lamb (1 Samuel 7:9).

- How does this whole-burnt offering foreshadow Jesus' sacrifice (cf. John 1:29; Hebrews 10:10-12)?
- In what practical ways does remembering Christ's "paid-in-full" work free you from guilt or self-effort?

6. Thunder & False Storm-gods (1 Samuel 7:10-11).

- Baal was supposed to control storms, yet Yahweh thundered instead. What "powers" does our culture trust that God alone truly controls?
- How does this passage fuel your confidence when facing opposition?

7. "Here I Raise My Ebenezer" (1 Samuel 7:12).

- Share a personal "stone of help"—a memory, verse, or tangible item that reminds you of God's past faithfulness.
- How can we build rhythms of remembrance so we don't forget when new challenges appear?

8. Peace on Every Side (1 Samuel 7:13-17).

- God granted Israel peace with former enemies. Where do you long to see God bring peace or restoration in your context?
- What role does obedience and ongoing accountability (Samuel's judging circuit) play in sustaining that peace?

9. Cast All Your Anxiety (1 Peter 5:7).

- Why is recalling God's past provision essential for battling present anxiety?
- Spend a few minutes together casting specific worries on the Lord and thanking Him for past help.

10. Feet-to-Faith Challenge

- Identify one step this week that will move a truth from this passage "from head to feet." Write it down, share it with the group, and plan to follow up next meeting.

Leader tip: Close by having each person place a small stone in their pocket or on their desk this week as a physical "Ebenezer," prompting daily gratitude for the Rock of our help.