Israel Recommits to God

1 Samuel 7:3-11, 15-17
SS Lesson for 11/15/2026

Devotional Scripture: Judges 10:15-16

OUTLINE

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Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
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Conviction is when the Holy Spirit convinces of sin (John 16:6-8)
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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Previous lessons describe how the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant from the Israelite settlement at Ebenezer and moved it to the temple of Dagon in the city of Ashdod (1 Samuel 4:11; 5:2). However, to put it mildly, things did not go well for the people of Ashdod after the ark's arrival (see 5:3-6)! The inhabitants of Gath fared no better when the ark was transferred to their city, about twelve miles east of Ashdod (5:7-8). Neither did the citizens of Ekron, about eleven miles due north of Gath (5:8-12). These three relocations occurred over a period of seven months. It took that long before the Philistines realized that the ark was far from being a good-luck charm (see 1 Samuel 6:1-2). Therefore, with great fear and trepidation, the Philistines sent the ark to the Israelite settlement at Beth Shemesh, about eight miles due east of Ekron (6:3-18). God quickly made his displeasure known, however, as seventy Israelites looked into the ark and died (1 Samuel 6:19-20). The ark was to contain the tablets of the Law and may have also housed other items (see Exodus 40:20; Deuteronomy 10:5; compare Hebrews 9:4). But what they saw wasn't the point. Rather, the offense was their imposition on God's holiness. God had assigned holiness to the ark when he specified its location to be in the "Most Holy Place." The holy place had highly restrictive entrance requirements (Leviticus 16:1-2; Hebrews 9:1-5). In contrast, the residents of the town treated the ark like a tourist attraction. Therefore, residents of Beth Shemesh asked the people of Kiriath Jearim, about eight miles away, to accept the ark. The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim (approximately seven miles west of Jerusalem) for twenty years (1 Samuel 7:2a). During this time, the Israelites repented, turning their hearts back to the Lord (7:2b).

Key Verses: 1 Sam 7:15

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Recommitted through Repentance (1 Sam 7:3-4)

3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."
4 So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.

Repentance because of conviction (3)

Conviction that "cuts to the heart" by God's Word (Acts 2:37)

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Conviction is when the "secrets of our hearts" are totally open to God (1 Cor 14:24-25)

24 But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, 25 and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

Conviction is when the Holy Spirit convinces of sin (John 16:6-8)

6 Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. 7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

Conviction is something we don't want to ignore (Heb 2:2-4)

> 2 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Conviction that brings us to our knees (Acts 16:29-30)

> 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Repentance through actions (4)

Repentance is a "changing of one's mind" (Matt 21:28-29)

> 28 "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 29 "'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

Repentance results in believing in Jesus Christ (Mark 1:15)

> 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Repentance results in forgiveness (Acts 2:28)

> 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

Repentance results in a path to life (Acts 11:18)

> 18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

Repentance results in having a godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:10-11)

> 10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

Recommitted through Prayer (1 Sam 7:5-9)

5 And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you."
6 So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the Lord." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.
7 Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.
8 So the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines."
9 And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Then Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him.

Prayer in unity (5-6)

Unity in prayer through the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:5-6)

> 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Unity in prayer through being in agreement (1 Cor 1:10)

10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Unity in prayer through being firm in one spirit (Phil 1:27)

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

Unity in prayer through being like-mindedness (Phil 2:2)

2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Prayer during opposition (7-8)

Opposition because of hatred of Christianity (Matt 10:22)

22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Opposition because of being hated for Jesus' sake (Luke 6:22)

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

Opposition because of rejection of God (1Thes 4:8)

8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Opposition that should be instructed to lead to repentance (2 Tim 2:25)

25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

Prayer along with offering of sacrifices (9)

Sacrificial prayer and offerings starts with offering self to God (Rom 12:1)

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.

Sacrificial prayer and offerings that are steadfast in commitment (Acts 21:12-14)

12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Sacrificial prayer and offerings that reaps rewards (Mark 10:29-31)

29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields, and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Sacrificial prayer and offerings that are according to God's will (2 Cor 8:3-5)

3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

Recommitted Results in Defeat of Enemies (1 Sam 7:10-11, 15-17)

10 Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel.
11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car.
15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.
16 He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places.
17 But he always returned to Ramah, for his home was there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Defeat through God's intervention (10-11)

God intervenes to show that we should not fear enemies (Josh 10:8-10)

> 8 The Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you." 9 After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. 10 The Lord threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah.

God intervenes because He goes with those who belong to Him (Deut 20:4)

> 4 For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory."

God intervenes because the victory rests with God (Prov 21:31)

> 31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.

God intervenes through Jesus (1 Cor 15:57)

> 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God intervenes so that we may overcome the world (1 John 5:4)

> 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Defeat through the leadership of Samuel (15-17)

Leadership that focuses on God's Word in order not to error (Matt 22:29)

> 29 Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.

Leadership that is entrusted with God's work (Titus 1:7)

> 7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

Leadership that is blameless so as to encourage godliness (1 Thess 2:10-12)

> 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Leadership that is faithful because of being given a trust (1 Cor 4:2)

> 2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Leadership that has integrity (Titus 2:7-8)

> 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Happy Days Are Here Again, With Samuel and Without the Ark (1 Samuel 7:3-17)

Samuel is strangely absent from the narrative of chapters 4-6. His name is not mentioned from chapter 4, verse 2, through chapter 7, verse 2. Samuel does not seem to be with the Ark when it is foolishly taken into battle against the Philistines in chapter 4. He is not a part of the humiliation of the Philistines in chapters 5 and 6. But Samuel is very much a part of the revival of Israel as described in chapter 7. The very things which are not happening in Israel when the Ark is in Shiloh are the things which happen without the involvement of the Ark in chapter 7. The Ark is not the instrument through which God works (as the Israelites previously falsely assumed); He works through the Word of the Lord and prayer spoken by the prophet Samuel.

God takes away Israel's security blanket, the Ark, and now they have to look elsewhere for security. Samuel tells them where to look. Samuel calls upon the nation to return to the LORD with all their hearts. They will show this by putting away all their pagan idols. (And so, we see that the Ark of God is really one idol among many to the Israelites – the greatest idol, perhaps, but only an idol.) This the people do, purposing to serve God alone and to look to Him alone for deliverance from the Philistines. Samuel then gathers all of Israel to Mizpah, not far from his home in Ramah, promising that he will pray to the LORD on behalf of the nation there. The people draw water and pour it out before the LORD. Because we are told that the people also *fasted* that day, it seems as though the nation refrains from food or water as a token of their repentance and sincerity in seeking God. When they confess their sins, Samuel prays for the Israelites.

Mizpah was apparently a high place which overlooked the surrounding area. Militarily speaking, it was the ideal location to defend oneself in battle. The Philistines have not yet learned their lesson from the heavy hand of God. They assume that the nation Israel has gathered at Mizpah for war. The Philistines have been victorious in waging war with the Israelites before, and so they assume they will be successful once again. The Israelites are frightened when they learn that the Philistines are coming. They do not have the Ark to take to war with them (and, besides, it didn't work the last time they tried to use it), so all they can do is cast themselves upon God and trust in Him. They will have to appeal to Him on the basis of grace, not magic. They cry out to Samuel, beseeching him to pray to the LORD on their behalf, asking Him to deliver them from the approaching Philistines.

Samuel offers a whole burnt offering to the LORD on behalf of the Israelites. He cries out to the LORD, beseeching Him to deliver the Israelites, and God answers his prayer. Samuel is still offering the sacrifice to the LORD as the Philistine warriors arrive. The Israelites are completely unprepared for this attack, but the LORD seems to bring about a great thunderstorm (or at least the sounds of thunder) which causes great confusion among the Philistine warriors and enables the Israelites to overcome them. From Mizpah, the Israelites pursue the Philistines as far as Beth Car, a city whose location is not known. Samuel then sets up a stone between Mizpah and Shen, calling the stone **"Ebenezer,"** which means, "stone or rock of my help," a commemoration that this battle has been won by the LORD'S help.

The result is that the Philistine domination over Israel ends. From then on, they do not invade Israel all the days of Samuel, for the hand of the LORD is upon him and against them. The cities which the Philistines have taken from the Israelites are restored to Israel. Peace is also established between the Israelites and the Amorites. All of this our author directly relates to the reign of Samuel. Samuel is a priest, a prophet, and a judge over all Israel. He is a kind of "circuit judge," who makes his rounds from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in each of these locations. When he makes his circuit, he always returns home to Ramah. He judges Israel there also, and there he builds an altar to the Lord.

(Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/5-hands-dagon-and-hand-god-1-samuel-51-717)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Under Samuel's leadership, the people of Israel demonstrated honest repentance and renewal. They identified themselves with the Lord, and he responded with swift provision. The story that began with defeat and despair, culminating with the capture of the Ark of the Covenant, concludes with recommitment. And yet, the account is not free from conflict. The Israelites' humble request for intercession indicates that their reconciliation with the Lord is genuine. Hearts and lives attuned to the Lord and purified from unrighteousness are poised to see God's deliverance. But righteous living requires sacrifice. God still asks his people to reject the idols that culture offers. God still wants our whole hearts. Are you living in right relationship with both the Lord and the community of faith? Do you humbly ask for assistance when danger arises?