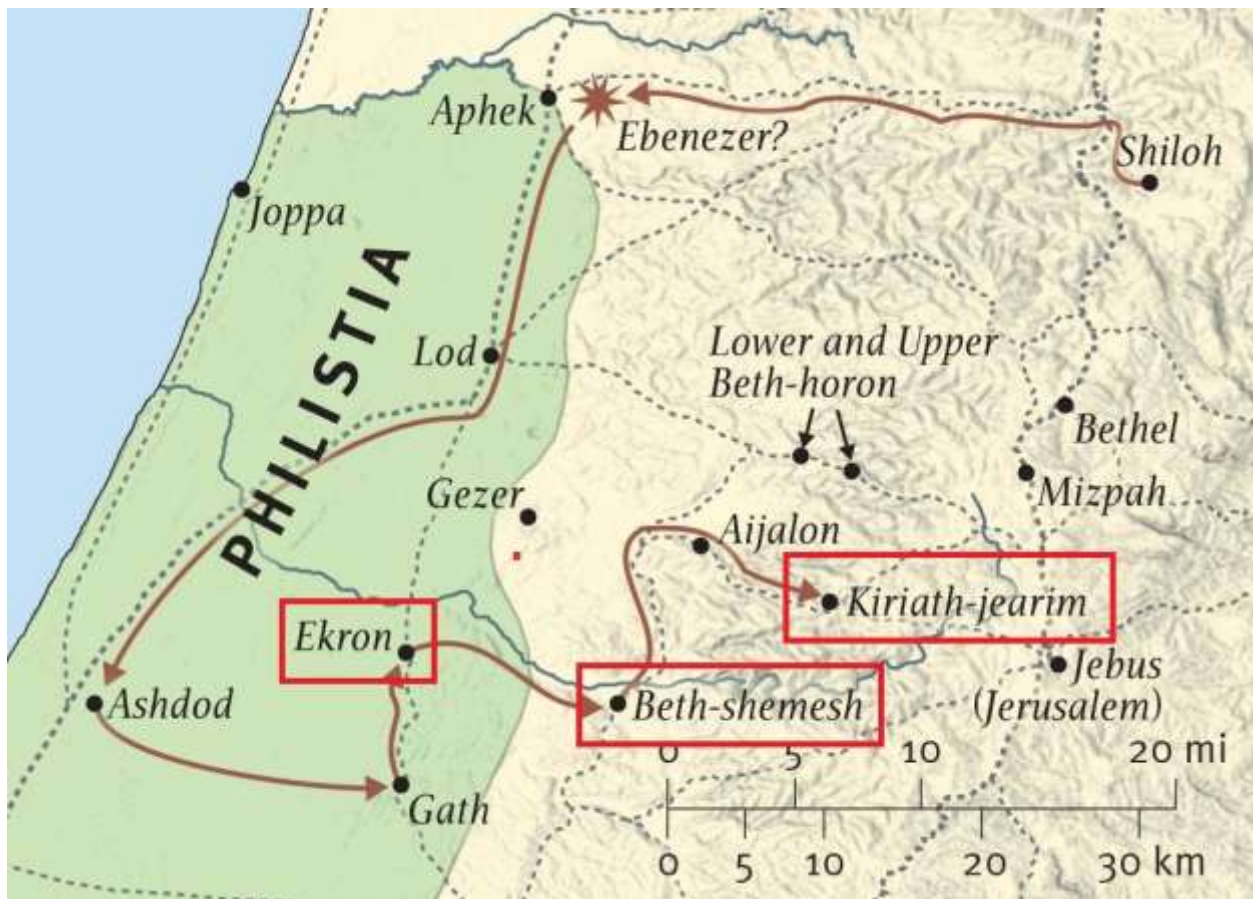


1st Samuel 7

Verses 1 - 2

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the ark of the Lord and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and they consecrated his son Eleazar to watch over the ark of the Lord. 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 mourned after the Lord.

See map 705



The ark remained with Abinadab and his son Eleazar for twenty years. However there was no official place to house the Ark because the Tabernacle had been destroyed.

After reflecting on all the disaster that had befallen them, their defeat at Ebenezer, the destruction of Shiloh and the Tabernacle, Israel was truly sorry for their sin and sought the Lord's forgiveness.

Verses 3 - 4

³ Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone; and He will save you from the hand of the Philistines.” ⁴ So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and served the Lord alone.

“If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone”

Ashtaroth refers to the goddess of the Babylonians called Ishtar. She was the goddess of fertility and sexual relations.

It is amazing that Israel needed a prophet to tell them to put away all of the foreign gods. The 1st commandment was number 1 for a reason.

Verses 5 - 6

⁵ Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the Lord for you.” ⁶ So 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.

See map 710



Verses 7 - 11

⁷ Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the governors of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard *about it*, they were afraid of the Philistines. ⁸ So the sons of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that He will save us from the hand of the Philistines!” ⁹ Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord; and Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. ¹⁰ Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines advanced to battle Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were struck down before Israel. ¹¹ And the men of Israel came out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and killed them as far as below Beth-car.

⁷ Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the governors of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard *about it*, they were afraid of the Philistines.

Mizpah was the gathering place for Israel when they declared war on Benjamin.

See Judges 20:1

Then all the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out, and the congregation assembled as one person to the LORD at Mizpah.

According to Josephus, Mizpah means watch-tower.

The Philistines may have seen this gathering of Israel as a declaration of war.

⁸ So the sons of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that He will save us from the hand of the Philistines!”

The Israelites had not forgotten their last battle with the Philistines when they lost 34,000 men. But that was before they had repented.

But the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were struck down before Israel.

We are not told how the Lord confused the Philistines but however He did it, it was effective. The same is true with the thunder.

Verses 12 - 14

¹² Then Samuel took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, “So far the Lord has helped us.” ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel recovered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

¹² Then Samuel took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, “So far the Lord has helped us.”

Ebenezer was the name of the place where Israel was defeated by the Philistines and the Ark of God was captured. That event took place 20 years before God gave them this victory over the Philistines.

This stone was a memorial so Israel would remember that God can turn a great defeat into victory if they repent of their sin and devote themselves to the Lord.

¹⁴ The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath

See map 715



This does not mean that the Israelites overthrew Ekron and Gath, but rather that they regained the Judean cities along the border between those cities.

So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

The Amorites were the most powerful of the Canaanite nations, and when they saw that Israel had defeated the Philistines who had always stood alone from the other nations of Canaan, and could do so because of their prowess, they knew it was wise to make peace with Israel.

Verses 15 - 17

¹⁵ Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. ¹⁶ And he used to go annually on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. ¹⁷ Then *he would make his return to Ramah*, because his house was there, and there he *also* judged Israel; and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Samuel lived in Ramah but he traveled to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah in order to administer justice as a judge of Israel.

See map 720



Samuel built an altar to the Lord in his hometown of Ramah. If the Tabernacle was still in Shiloh this would have been wrong (only one place to offer sacrifices) but since it had been destroyed and the Lord had not picked a new place to put His Name it was allowed.