Adam Clarke:

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Introduction

Saul†s lineage and description; he is sent by his father to seek some lost asses, 1 Samuel 9:1-5. Not finding them, he purposes to go and consult Samuel concerning the proper method of proceeding, 1 Samuel 9:6-14. The Lord informs Samuel that he should anoint Saul king, 1 Samuel 9:15, 1 Samuel 9:16. Samuel invites Saul to dine with him, and informs him that the asses are found; and gives him an intimation that he is to be king, 1 Samuel 9:17-21. Saul dines with Samuel, and afterwards he is taken to the house-top, where both commune together, 1 Samuel 9:22-27.

Verse 1

A mighty man of power - Literally, a strong man; this appears to be the only power he possessed; and the physical strength of the father may account for the extraordinary size of the son. See 1 Samuel 9:2.

Verse 2

From his shoulders and upwards - It was probably from this very circumstance that he was chosen for king; for, where kings were elective, in all ancient times great respect was paid to personal appearance.

Verse 3

The asses of Kish - were lost - What a wonderful train of occurrences were connected in order to bring Saul to the throne of Israel! Every thing seems to go on according to the common course of events, and yet all conspired to favor the election of a man to the kingdom who certainly did not come there by the approbation of God.

Asses grow to great perfection in the East; and at this time, as there were no horses in Judea, they were very useful; and on them kings and princes rode.

Verse 5

Were come to the land of Zuph - Calmet supposes that Saul and his servant went from Gibeah to Shalisha, in the tribe of Dan; from thence to Shalim, near to Jerusalem; and thence, traversing the tribe of Benjamin, they purposed to return to Gibeah; but passing through the land of Zuph, in which Ramatha, the country of Samuel, was situated, they determined to call on this prophet to gain some directions from him; the whole of this circuit he supposes to have amounted to no more than about twenty-five leagues, or three daysâ \in journey. We do not know where the places were situated which are here mentioned: the Targum translates thus: $\hat{a}\in \alpha$ And he passed through the land of Mathbera, but they were not there; and he passed through the land of the house of Ephraim, and went into the southern land, but did not meet with the tribe of Benjamin, but did not find them; then they came into the land where the prophet of the Lord dwelt. And Saul said to his servant, $\hat{a}\in \text{etc.}$

Verse 7

There is not a present to bring to the man of God - We are not to suppose from this that the prophets took money to predict future events: Saul only refers to an invariable custom, that no man approached a superior without a present of some kind or other. We have often seen this before; even God, who needs nothing, would not that his people should approach him with empty hands. $\hat{a} \in \mathfrak{e}$ is very common in Bengal for a person, who is desirous of asking a favor from a superior, to take a present of fruits or sweetmeats in his hand. If not accepted, the feelings of the offerer are greatly wounded. The making of presents to appease a superior is also very common in Bengal. $\hat{a} \in \bullet$ - Ward $\hat{a} \in \mathfrak{s}$ Customs.

Verse 8

The fourth part of a shekel of silver - We find from the preceding verse, that the bread or provisions which they had brought with them for their journey was expended, else a part of that would have been thought a suitable present; and here the fourth part of a shekel of silver, about ninepence of our money, was deemed sufficient: therefore the present was intended more as a token of respect than as an emolument.

Verse 9

Beforetime in Israel - This passage could not have been a part of this book originally: but we have already conjectured that Samuel, or some contemporary author, wrote the memoranda, out of which a later author compiled this book. This hypothesis, sufficiently reasonable in itself, solves all difficulties of this kind.

Was beforetime called a seer - The word seer, x[°]x•x[°] (roeh), occurs for the first time in this place; it literally signifies a person who Sees; particularly preternatural sights. A seer and a prophet were the same in most

cases; only with this difference, the seer was always a prophet, but the prophet was not always a seer. A seer seems to imply one who frequently met with, and saw, some symbolical representation of God. The term prophet was used a long time before this; Abraham is called a prophet, Genesis 20:7, and the term frequently occurs in the law. Besides, the word seer does not occur before this time; but often occurs afterwards down through the prophets, for more than three hundred years. See Amos 7:12; Micah 3:7.

All prophets, false and true, profess to see God; see the case of Balaam, Numbers 24:4, Numbers 24:16, and Jeremiah 14:14. All diviners, in their enthusiastic flights, boasted that they had those things exhibited to their sight which should come to pass. There is a remarkable account in Virgil which may serve as a specimen of the whole; the Sibyl professes to be a seer: -

- Bella, horrida bella,

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Et Tyberim molto spumantem sanguine

Cerno. Aen. lib. vi., ver. 86.

Wars, horrid wars, I View; a field of blood;

And Tyber rolling with a purple flood.

I think the 9th verse comes more naturally in after the 11th.

Verse 11

Young maidens going out to draw water - So far is it from being true, that young women were always kept closely shut up at home, that we find them often in the field, drawing and carrying water, as here.

Verse 12

He came to - day to the city - Though Samuel lived chiefly in Ramah, yet he had a dwelling in the country, at a place called Naioth, where it is probable there was a school of the prophets. See 1 Samuel 19:18-24.

A sacrifice of the people - A great feast. The animals used were first sacrificed to the Lord; that is, their blood was poured out before him; and then all the people fed on the flesh. By high place probably Samuel†s altar is alone meant; which no doubt was raised on an eminence.

Verse 13

He doth bless the sacrifice - He alone can perform the religious rites which are used on this occasion.

Afterwards they eat that be bidden - Among the Arabs, often a large feast is made of sacrificed camels, etc., and then the people of the vicinity are invited to come and partake of the sacrifice. This is the custom to which allusion is made here.

Verse 14

Come out against them - Met them.

Verse 15

Now the Lord had told Samuel - How this communication was made, we cannot tell.

Verse 16

Thou shalt anoint him to be captain - Not to be king, but to be x x'x[™]x" (nagid) or captain of the Lord†s host. But in ancient times no king was esteemed who was not an able warrior. Plutarch informs us that Alexander the Great esteemed the following verse the most correct, as to its sentiment, of any in the whole Iliad of Homer: -ΟI...I,î,¿I, γ †î'i,i,i•îµÎ1Î-i, îµI...I•I...ΕI...ΕI...ΕÎ1¹/2Î¹1¹/2Î¹/2Î¹/2¹/2¹,

Î⁺μφοÏ"εϕον βασιλεÏ…Ï, Ï" †Ĩ±Î³Î±Î,οÏ,, κϕαÏ,εϕοÏ, Ï" †Î±Î¹Ï‡Î¼Î·Ï"ηÏ,.

"The king of kings, Atrides, you survey;

Great in the war, and great in acts of sway.―

Pope.

Verse 17

Behold the man whom I spake to thee of - What an intimate communion must Samuel have held with his God! A constant familiarity seems to have existed between them.

Verse 19

I am the seer - This declaration would prepare Saul for the communications afterwards made.

Verse 20

As for thine asses - Thus he shows him that he knew what was in his heart, God having previously revealed

these things to Samuel.

And on whom is all the desire of Israel? - Saul understood this as implying that he was chosen to be king.

Verse 21

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Am not I a Benjamite - This speech of Saul is exceedingly modest; he was now becomingly humble; but who can bear elevation and prosperity? The tribe of Benjamin had not yet recovered its strength, after the ruinous war it had with the other tribes, Judges 20:29-46.

Verse 22

Brought them into the parlour - It might as well be called kitchen; it was the place where they sat down to feast.

Verse 23

Said unto the cook - x^x 'x— (tabbach), here rendered cook; the singular of x^x 'x—x•x^a (tabbachoth), female cooks, 1 Samuel 8:13, from the root (tabach), to slay or butcher. Probably the butcher is here meant.

Verse 24

The shoulder, and that which was upon it - Probably the shoulder was covered with a part of the caul, that it might be the better roasted. The Targum has it the shoulder and its thigh; not only the shoulder merely, but the fore-leg bone to the knee; perhaps the whole fore-quarter. Why was the shoulder set before Saul? Not because it was the best part, but because it was an emblem of the government to which he was now called. See Isaiah 9:6: And the government shall be upon his Shoulder.

Verse 25

Upon the top of the house - All the houses in the East were flat-roofed; on these people walked, talked, and frequently slept, for the sake of fresh and cooling air.

Verse 26

Called Saul to the top of the house - Saul had no doubt slept there all night; and now, it being the break of day, $\hat{a} \in \mathfrak{S}$ amuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. $\hat{a} \in \mathfrak{S}$ There was no calling him to the house-top a second time he was sleeping there, and Samuel called him up.

Verse 27

As they were going down - So it appears that Saul arose immediately, and Samuel accompanied him out of the town, and sent the servant on that he might show Saul the word, the counsel or design, of the Lord. What this was we shall see in the following chapter, 1 Samuel 10 (note).