

1 SAMUEL 15

1 Samuel 15:1–35

Saul Defeats the Amalekites but Disobeys God

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Doctrines Alluded To

The Amalekites	Inspiration	The Kenites	Teraphim
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Introduction: God will give Saul, through Samuel, the order to destroy every Amalekite and all of their livestock. Saul does go to war against the Amalekites, and is victorious, but he spares the life of Agag, the Amalekite king, as well as the choicest of the livestock. Samuel comes to Saul, exasperated, and sweeps Saul's shadow into the wall. At this point, Saul does regret what he did and he does ask for forgiveness. Samuel tells Saul that God has already given the kingdom to another. He begs Samuel to stay with him to worship God, and he executes Agag at that time before God and Samuel. At that time, these two part for the last time.

To summarize this chapter in a little more detail: Samuel goes to Saul and tells him that the Amalekite people need to be destroyed: every man, woman and child, and all of their livestock (vv. 1–3). Although we might be able to argue about personal items and manufactured items, there is no question that every living thing was to be destroyed. You may wonder, how could God require that? God is able to see our world and all that will happen given that this or that takes place. He knows from eternity past who would believe in Him and who would not. In this chapter, we may reasonably assume that even keeping the female virgins alive or the children would result in a very problematic situation for Israel with absolutely no upside for mankind. You may wonder about the animals—it is possible, if not likely, that the entire population was infected with a contagious disease or diseases, and those were probably sexually transmitted diseases. It is also likely that they practiced child sacrifice and temple prostitution. We don't know, as the Bible does not tell us, so the best we can do is speculate. However, since it is God's Word which tells us that all of the Amalekites must be destroyed, then we can rest assured that He had good reason.

Saul apparently has a reserve force (1Sam. 13:2–14:52) and he is also able to quickly raise up a complete army, which is what he does (v. 4). They attack and defeat the Amalekites, after first allowing the Kenites to move out of harm's way (vv. 5–7, 8b). But then Saul and the people save Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive; and they also preserve the best and the second best of their livestock (vv. 8a–9).

The Word of Jehovah comes to Samuel, saying "I regret that I made Saul king over Israel." And Samuel is sent to Saul to correct Saul's disobedience (v. 10). It takes Samuel a little time to catch up to Saul (Saul is first in Carmel setting up a monument or a statue of himself), and then Saul goes up to Gilgal, which is where Samuel finally finds him (vv. 11–12).

Saul's conversation with Samuel is amazing. Scripture preserves enough to indicate that Saul is a real piece of work. One of the popular phrases of today is how some politicians put a *spin* on this or that event. That is, the event is reported and interpreted to favor that politician. Saul was certainly not the inventor of *spin* (either Adam or Satan was), but Saul was certainly a master of spin. When you read what happens and what Saul says, you will swear that you have been reading today's newspaper. Samuel has to dig through Saul's half-truths and the spin that he puts on things to get to the actual truth. Saul twice affirms that he obeyed the voice of God (vv. 13, 20), despite ample evidence to the contrary (vv. 14–15, 19, 21).

Samuel then pronounces judgment upon Saul, preceding that judgment with one of the most well-known passages from 1Samuel: "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Listen, to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen [to Him] better than [offering up] the fat of rams. Rebellion is the sin of divination and insubordination is iniquity and idolatry." (vv. 22–23a). And then Samuel informs Saul that God has taken the kingdom from him (v. 26).

For centuries, theologians have brow beat Saul. Knowing that his bravery and courage in battle is beyond reproach, and that his disobedience to God does not seem to be any worse than mine, I would prefer not to cast any stones at Saul. Saul finally admits that he did sin (vv. 24–25), and insists that Samuel join him in worship. It is not clear whether Saul is still working the situation, or whether he simply needs for Samuel to guide him in worship (Saul apparently does have a camp priest—1Sam. 14:3). In any case, I prefer to see this as Saul regretting his actions, and expressing this in worship¹ (vv. 25, 27–31). Furthermore, the people of Israel are also to blame. As we will see, Saul will blame them himself (1Sam. 15:21, 24). Now, certainly as king and commander-in-chief, he should have assumed the blame; however, no doubt that many of the people acted on their own, spending time setting aside livestock rather than continuing the battle.

Some contemporary worship services are followed by Sunday School or fellowship in the main hall, or something of that nature. Samuel followed up his worship service with Saul with the hacking to pieces of Agag, the former king of Amalek (vv. 32–33), which would be quite the interesting presentation in fellowship hall. Then this chapter ends on a sad note: Samuel and Saul part company for the last time (vv. 34–35).

¹ Recall that regretting your actions and naming your sins to God are two different things; it is the latter which brings God's forgiveness.

With respect to time, we have no idea how much time has transpired since 1Sam. 14. As I mentioned, I see 1Sam. 14 as occurring 20 years (if not more) after chapter 13; this chapter probably takes place another 10–15 years later. 1Sam. 14:47–48, 52 seem to summarize the military success of Saul, and the Amalekites, the object of Saul's attack in this chapter, are mentioned separately. My thinking is that it appears as though a writer was putting the finishing touches on the reign of Saul in the previous chapter, and what occurs here is almost like an addendum or an expansion of v. 48. Also, since this chapter records Samuel's last words to Saul, we can rest assured that Saul is at the end of his reign. God will only keep Saul alive to test David and his faithfulness.

McGee: *In chapter 15 we [will see]...God's rejection of Saul. God gave Saul not just one opportunity but several opportunities to see if he would obey Him. Saul revealed that he was totally disobedient unto God. He should have made good, but he did not. The Lord did not need to wait to see the results of Saul's kingship. He already knew. But Saul needed to know. Samuel needed to know because he loved Saul. The people needed to know because they had chosen Saul.*²

In my opinion, this portion of Scripture was written by a different hand than the previous few chapters. I came across word after word that has not been found in the book of Samuel prior to this; I found several words which are rarely found anywhere. This also is the case with subsequent chapters. In previous chapters of Samuel, once I had done 5–15 verses, almost every word that I came across after that point had already been used in that chapter. In this chapter I continually went to my Hebrew lexicon to pull out words that I had not seen for a long time (and many words that I have never seen before).

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Samuel Gives Saul Instructions from God to Completely Destroy the Amalekites

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

And so says Samuel unto Saul, "Me had sent Y^ehowah to anoint you to king over His people, over Israel. And now listen to a sound of words of Y^ehowah. 1Samuel 15:1

[Sometime later] Samuel said to Saul, "Y^ehowah had sent me to anoint you king over His people Israel. Now, therefore, listen to the words of Y^ehowah: ...

Sometime later, Samuel came to Saul and said, " Y^ehowah, Who sent me to anoint you king over His people Israel, now has these word for you to hear: ...

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so says Samuel unto Saul, "Me had sent Y ^e howah to anoint you to king over His people, over Israel. And now listen to a sound of words of Y ^e howah.
Septuagint	And Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you king over Israel; and now hear the voice of the LORD:

Significant differences: The LXX lacks *over His people*. It is rare for the LXX to lack what is in the Hebrew.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	One day, Samuel told Saul: The LORD had me choose you to be king of his people, Israel. Now listen to this message from the LORD:
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² J. Vernon McGee; *I & II Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 89.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh) Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over His people Israel. Therefore, listen to the LORD's command!"

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB Then Samuel said to Saul, "This LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore listen to the words [lit., *sound of the words*] of the LORD. And Samuel says unto Saul, 'Me did Jehovah send to anoint you for king over His people, over Israel; and now, hearken to the voice of the words of Jehovah:

Young's Updated LT

What is the gist of this verse? Samuel comes to Saul and tells him that Jehovah of Israel sent him to Saul with a message.

1Samuel 15:1

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Sh ^e mûw'êl (שִׁמְעוֹן אֵל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced <i>el</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, directional preposition to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Shâ'ûwl (שָׂאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated mark of a direct object	affixed to 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #853 BDB #84
shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced <i>shaw-LAKH</i>]	<i>to send, to send for, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy, to put forth</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7971 BDB #1018
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâshach (מָשַׁח) [pronounced <i>maw-SHAKH</i>]	<i>to smear, to anoint</i>	Qal infinitive construct with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4886 BDB #602

1Samuel 15:1

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MĒH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
ʿam (אָם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people</i>	masculine singular collective noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Yis ^e râ ^l êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿattâh (עַתָּה) [pronounced <i>gahT-TAWH</i>]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong's #6258 BDB #773
shâma ^ʿ (שָׁמָע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHG</i>]	<i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine plural	Strong's #6963 BDB #876
I wonder if what we have here is the verb cognate of qôwl, which is not used anywhere else in Scripture?			
dâ ^b vâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: [Sometime later] Samuel said to Saul, “Y^ehowah had sent me to anoint you king over His people Israel. Now, therefore, listen to the words of Y^ehowah: ... We do not know how much time has gone by since The NASB begins this chapter with the word *then* and many other translations begin this chapter with the word *and*. This is because this chapter (like almost every other previous chapter and like almost every previous sentence) begins with the wâw consecutive. Although *then* is a very good rendering of the wâw consecutive, our concept often implies a very short span of time between the events on both sides of the *then*. In the Hebrew, everything is strung together with either a wâw consecutive (which seems continue or introduce narrative action or act like the beginning of a sentence) or the wâw conjunction (which seems to act like the beginning of a sentence—in the English, we instead, use a period to end the previous sentence—or it is used to bind a list of things together (we use a comma and one *and*). However, we cannot put any sort of strict interpretation of a short chronology because the Hebrew uses the word *then*. Generally, we might assume the events of 1Sam. 15 follow chapter 14, but the intervening time is not constricted by this word. I assume that 10–20 years have passed since chapter 14, and that we are now at the end of Saul’s career.

Saul defeated the Philistines, but I suspect, as I have mentioned before, that the other groups mentioned in 1Sam. 14:47, occurred between Saul’s recorded victories over the Ammonites and the Philistines. If anything was inserted by an editor at a later date, it *may* have been v. 48. The Amalekites, the enemies of Israel in this chapter, are not listed with the other groups that Saul contended with. It is not as though the author in chapter 14 thought, *now, I won’t mention them; I’ll give them their own chapter*. It is more likely that there was no conflict until this time. In fact, I believe that a new author picked up a pen and recorded this much later than 1Sam. 14, which chapter feels almost like a completed book at the end. In any case, given what Samuel will say to Saul in vv. 22–23, we may assume that we are at the end of Saul’s career as king over Israel.

When I say that we are at the end of Saul’s career, I mean one thing, and you are probably thinking another. With regards to time, my guess is that Saul has another 10 years or so to reign as king. However, we have come to a point where Saul is no longer God’s man for the job. God will no longer work through Saul to accomplish His ends. For instance, Samuel will never again come to Saul and tell him, “This is what God wants you to do.” This chapter is why—Saul won’t do it. Whatever God has for Saul to do, Saul will do a half-assed job. So, as far as God is concerned, this is the end of Saul’s career as king over Israel. In the remainder of this chapter, we will find out why.

Our verse tells us that Samuel was the man sent to anoint Saul king over all Israel, which has been confirmed for us in our previous study of 1Sam. 9:16–10:1. What is important is the way that Samuel explains this. He first tells Saul that he is being sent by the same God who appointed Saul king over Israel. Saul doubted that, and Samuel made certain that Saul had quite a few signs to confirm this appointment (1Sam. 10). Samuel comes to Saul under the exact same authority with the command of the next two verses. Saul is to have no confusion as to the origin or as to the solemnity of the command Samuel is about to deliver.

<p>So has said Y^ehowah [of] Armies, ‘I have visited [that] which has done Amalek to Israel which he placed to him in the way in his going up from Egypt.</p>	<p>1Samuel 15:2</p>	<p>Thus Y^ehowah of the Armies has said: ‘I will [re-] visit that which Amalek did to Israel [for] that [which] they set before them on the road when they came up out of Egypt.</p>
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This is the message of Y^ehowah of the Armies: ‘I will revisit that which Amalek did to Israel; for that which they set in the way of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

So has said Y^ehowah [of] Armies, ‘I have visited [that] which has done Amalek to Israel which he placed to him in the way in his going up from Egypt.

Septuagint

Thus said the Lord of hosts, ‘Now I will take vengeance for what Amalee did to Israel, when he met him in the way as he came up out of Egypt.

Significant differences: The differences in the verbs may simply be a result of translation from Hebrew to Greek.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	"When the Israelites were on their way out of Egypt, the nation of Amalek attacked them. I am the LORD All-Powerful, and now I am going to make Amalek pay!
NLT	This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I have decided to settle accounts with the nation of Amalek for opposing Israel when they came from Egypt.
TEV	He is going to punish the people of Amalek because their ancestors opposed the Israelites when they were coming from Egypt.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	This is what the LORD of Armies says: I will punish Amalek for what they did to Israel. They blocked Israel's way after the Israelites came from Egypt.
JPS (Tanakh)	"Thus said the LORD of Hosts: I am exacting the penalty for what Amalek did to Israel, for the assault he made upon them on the road, on their way up from Egypt.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish [or, visit] Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt.
Young's Literal Translation	'Thus sad Jehovah of Hosts, I have looked after that which Amalek did to Israel, that which he laid for him in the way in his gong up out of Egypt.

What is the gist of this verse? What God tells Saul is that He is going to settle accounts with Amalek. Amalek had caused Israel problems in her trek from Egypt to the Land of Promise, and now God was going to destroy all of Amalek (that will be made clear in subsequent verses).

1 Samuel 15:2

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôh (כֹּה) [pronounced koh]	so, thus, here, hence	adverb	Strong's #3541 BDB #462
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	to say, to speak, to utter	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as Jehovah, Yahweh, Y ^e howah	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ts ^{eb} â`ôwth (צְבָאוֹת) [pronounced tz ^{eb} -vaw-OHTH]	armies, wars	masculine plural noun, simply the plural of Strong's #6635, but often used in titles	Strong's #6635 BDB #838

1Samuel 15:2

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pâqad (פָּקַד) [pronounced paw-KAHD]	<i>to go to a person, to visit, to have personal contact with, to sort out, to visit a person, to commit, to charge to the care of, to fall upon, to attack, to number, to take a census</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6485 BDB #823
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʿăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced gaw-SAWH]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
ʿamâlêq (עַמְלֵק) [pronounced gah-maw-LAYK]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Yis ^o râʿêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
ʿăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
sîym (שָׂיַם) [pronounced seem]	<i>to put, to place, to set, to make</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7760 BDB #962
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
derek ^e (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced DEH-rek ^e]	<i>way, distance, road, journey, manner, course</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1870 BDB #202
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88

1Samuel 15:2

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿâlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i>]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to rise, to climb</i>	Qal infinitive construct with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
The infinitive construct, when combined with the bêyth preposition, can often take on a temporal meaning and may be rendered <i>when [such and such happens]</i> . It can serve as a temporal marker that denotes an event which occurs simultaneously with the action of the main verb.			
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
mits ^e rayim (מִצְרַיִם) [pronounced <i>mits-RAH-yim</i>]	translated <i>Egypt, Egyptians</i>	proper noun (pausal form)	Strong's #4714 BDB #595

Translation: Thus Y^ehowah of the Armies has said: 'I will [re] visit that which Amalek did to Israel [for] that [which] they set before them on the road when they came up out of Egypt.

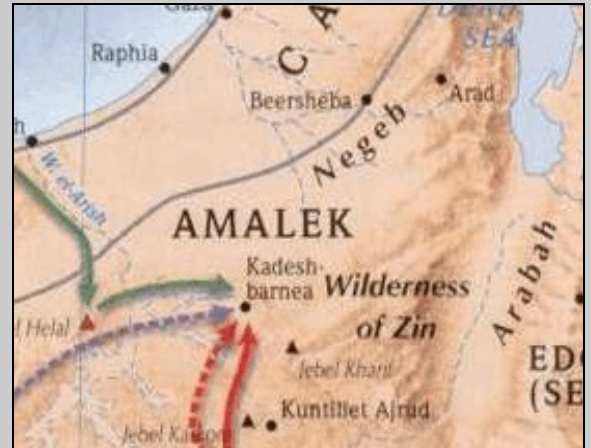
There were two general responses to Israel and the God of Israel when God took them out of Egypt and brought Egypt to her knees: some feared Israel and feared their God. However, there were others who want to challenge the biggest kid on the block. This was Amalek. The progenitor of this tribe was possibly the grandson of Esau, the brother of Jacob (Gen. 36:10–12). Just as Esau broke off from his father Isaac and formed his own nation, so did Amalek, forming a nation which was near Edom. There appear to be differing opinions as to the location of Amalek, placing it on either side of Edom (which is due south of the Dead Sea). I would think that Amalek would be found between Edom and the Mediterranean Sea. However, because these were nomadic Arabs, they probably lived in several different places. As Israel came up from Egypt, the first human obstacle that they faced was Amalek (the nation, not the individual). Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us, and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." And Joshua did as Moses told him and fought against Amalek. Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. So it came about when Moses held his arm up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were held steady until the sun set. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword (Ex. 17:8–13). There was no reason for the nation of Amalek to come out against Israel. They just did, whether out of hatred, jealousy or whatever group of mental attitude sins that acted upon. Interestingly enough, Moses told Israel that, at some point in time, they would have to blot out the memory of Amalek: "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt: how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore, it will come to pass when Y^ehowah your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which Y^ehowah your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you will blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget." (Deut. 25:17–19).³ We covered in detail the **Doctrine of the Amalekites** back in Num. 24:20.

³ I should mention that Moses did not just come up with this out of the top of his head; God told him, "Write this in a book, as a memorial, and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven.? And Moses built an altar, and named it Y^ehowah is My Banner and he said, "Y^ehowah has sworn; Y^ehowah will have war against Amalek from generation to generation." (Ex. 17:14–16).

And just in case you don't look to the Doctrine of the Amalekites, let's look at...

A Brief Summary of the Amalekites

1. The origins of the Amalekites are unknown. They seem to appear suddenly in Gen. 14:7, although there is also a mention of an Amalek being born to the family of Esau (Gen. 36:12, 16).
2. They primarily occupied the area south of Judah, although they also made inroads to Ephraim. Gen. 14:7 Ex. 17:8 Judges 12:15 1Sam. 30:1-3
3. The Amalekites were the first nation to attack Israel when they came out of Egypt. They attacked Israel from the rear, where there were the tired, weak and sickly Israelites. It is possible that this attack was based on water rights, even though the water provided for the Israelites was from God. Ex. 17:8-16 Deut. 25:17-18
4. Because of this merciless and vicious attack, and because of the negative volition and anti-Semitism which this people exhibited over the years, God ordered their complete and total destruction (Deut. 25:19 1Sam. 15:2-3). Saul disobeyed God about completely destroying the Amalekites, which was the act of disobedience which marked the end of his dynasty. 1Sam. 15
5. David was troubled by the Amalekites when he was an expat in the territory of the Philistines. They raided his camp when he was gone and took his women and the things which he had accumulated over the past year or so. 1Sam. 30
6. The Amalekites were among the people which David struck down. 2Sam. 8:11-14 1Chron. 18:11
7. The Amalekites are not mentioned again until the time of Hezekiah (circa 700 A.D.), when the tribe of Simeon defeat them. 1Chron. 4:24
8. The last Amalekite that we here about is Haman, who is said to be descended from Agag (an unspecified Amalekite king). Haman, in the book of Esther, launches a plan to destroy all the Jews in Persia (a scheme thwarted by Esther and her uncle, Mordecai). Esther 3:1, 10 8:3, 5 9:24.
9. There is one historical theory which equates the Amalekites with the Hyksos dynasty in Egypt, but I personally do not buy into that, primarily because every time we run into the Amalekites in Scripture, they are over 100 miles away from Egypt and function more like Bedouins than like a people who have conquered a great nation.



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Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

When Israel was moving from Egypt to the Land of Promise, they encountered several groups of people who impeded their progress, despite the fact that Israel was deferential to them.

The Groups of People Who Impeded Israel's Progress Toward the Land of Promise

Scripture	Incident
Ex. 14	Although the Pharaoh of Egypt finally, after facing several plagues, allowed Israel to depart from their position as slaves to the Egyptians, he had one more bout of negative volition and he took his army in pursuit of the Israelites. They cornered the Israelites at the Sea of Reeds, which God opened up for Israel to pass through, and then closed up on the pursuing army of Pharaoh, killing them all.

The Groups of People Who Impeded Israel's Progress Toward the Land of Promise

Scripture	Incident
Ex. 17:8–13	When Israel was in Rephidim, the Amalekites apparently stood in the way of the Israelites. God miraculously allowed Israel to win based upon Moses raising his hands toward God (when Moses raised his hands, the battle went in favor of the Jews; when he let his arms down, the Amalekites began to win).
Num. 14:39–45	When Israel attempted to enter the land prematurely (they had just demonstrated a complete lack of faith in God's ability to give them the land), a large group of Israelites attempted to enter the land against Moses' wishes, and they were beat back by a coalition of Amalekites and Canaanites.
Num. 21:1–3	When Israel resumed their journey toward the Land of Promise, they were met by the king of Arad, a Canaanite, who took some Israelites prisoners. Israel vowed to destroy their cities completely if God gave them victory, and God did.
Num. 21:21–30	Sihon, king of the Amorites, would not allow Israel to pass through his land. Israel defeated him and captured his cities, which he had previously taken from Moab.
Num. 21:32–35	Og, the king of Bashan, and his people stood in Israel's way and they were defeated by Israel as well.
Num. 22–24	Moab and Midian both were concerned that Israel had defeated so many armies and they sent for a prophet, Balaam, to curse Israel. As you may recall, Balaam was unable to curse Israel, but blessed them instead.
Num. 25:1–9	Moab then took a different approach; their women lured Israelite men into doing obeisance to their gods. This rebellion was checked by Moses and Phinehas.
Num. 31:1–24	Israel took vengeance against the Midianites for their part in the previous two incidents.
Quite obviously, there was not a mention of the Kenites in all of the situations above. There is a reasonable possibility that there was more contact between the Israelites and the Kenites than is recorded in Scripture.	

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Barnes believes that this aggressive action incited against the Amalekites in our passage was not necessarily unprovoked. Ditto for Keil and Delitzsch. Their justification is v. 33 of this chapter, in which Samuel refers to the sword of Agag, king of the Amalekites, which sword had made many women childless. It is speculated that the most recent aggression of the Amalekites is well-known to all, and is therefore not even given. Just as possible, we only are allowed in on a portion of Samuel's conversation with Saul; and that other transgressions were enumerated as well. The Amalekites throughout several generations had been thorns in the sides of the Israelites, attacking them without reason on several occasions (knowing what we know about the reaction of some Arabs to the Jews in modern Israel makes this not a difficult thing to understand). Therefore, Barnes suggests that Amalek probably initiated an attack on Israel (similar to what we will find in 1Sam. 30) while Israel was weakened from their battles with the Philistines.⁴ Even if this war is not recently provoked, I will, in the next verse, provide ample reasons for Israel's military advance against Amalek.

⁴ *Barnes' Notes; 1Samuel to Esther*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 37. Keil and Delitzsch concur on pp. 464–465 of Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2.

Why is all of this not simply inserted, self-serving text? Maybe Saul hated the Amalekites, went to war with them, and later made some scribe stick these verses into Scripture in order to justify what he has done.

Why Do We Know this Passage Is Not Self-serving and Simply Inserted by Saul?

1. There are a number of reasons why we know that Saul did not just make this up and stick it into the Bible. First of all, Saul does not obey God's order; he half-obeyes it, and it makes him look bad.
2. Saul takes his orders from Samuel in this passage; which makes him look subservient to Samuel. This would not be consistent with the ego of a king.
3. Saul fails in this passage; this does not make him look good.
4. If Saul wants this placed into Scripture, why doesn't God speak to him and tell him to preserve the life of the king?
5. Finally, what was done by Saul in the end—taking the best of the flocks of the Amalekites was self-serving and disobedient. Why not change the command of God and insert one which makes Saul look good?

People despise truth and they despise the Word of God. They will do anything to denigrate truth or to make Scripture appear to be the work of man.

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Now you go and may you strike down Amalek and you [all] completely devote [or, *destroy*] all that [is] to them and you will not show mercy unto him and you have caused to kill from man as far as woman, from infant and as far as suckling [child], from ox and as far as sheep, from camel and as far as donkey.' ”

1Samuel
15:3

Now go and strike down Amalek and you [all] will completely destroy all that they have [lit., *all that (is) to him*] and you will not show [any] mercy to them [lit., *him*] and you will execute men and women, infants and newborns, oxen and sheep, and camels and donkeys.' ”

Now go and strike down the people of Amalek and completely devote to God by destruction all that they have. Do not show any mercy or compassion to them. You must execute and destroy all men, women, children and livestock.' ”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

Now therefore go, and smite Amalec, and utterly destroy all that he has: do not spare him; do not covet anything that is his: but slay both man and woman, child and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Masoretic Text

Now you go and may you strike down Amalek and you [all] completely devote [or, *destroy*] all that [is] to them and you will not show mercy unto him and you have caused to kill from man as far as woman, from infant and as far as suckling [child], from ox and as far as sheep, from camel and as far as donkey.' ”

Septuagint

And now go, and you will strike Amalee and Hierim and all that belongs to him, and then you will not save anything of him alive, but you will utterly destroy him; and you will devote him and all his and you will spare nothing belonging to him; and you will slay both man and woman, and infant and suckling, and calf and sheep, and camel and ass.

Significant differences:

I began to note the differences above, and almost put a darker blue over the latter two-thirds of this verse. The general meaning is the same—there are several words which are the same; however, there are a great many differences as well. However,

it appears as though we are dealing with same basic idea in the Greek and the Hebrew.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	“Go and attack the Amalekites! Destroy them and all their possessions. Don’t have any pity. Kill their men, women, children, and even their babies. Slaughter their cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys.”
NLT	Now go and completely destroy the entire Amalekite nation—men, women, children, babies, cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys.’ ”
TEV	Go and attack the Amalekites and completely destroy everything they have. Don’t leave a thing; kill all the men, women, children, and babies; the cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys.”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™	Now go and attack Amalek. Claim everything they have for God by destroying it. Don’t spare them, but kill men and women, infants and children, cows and sheep, camels and donkeys.”
JPS (Tanakh)	Now go, attack Amalek, and proscribe all that belongs to him. Spare no one, but kill alike men and women, infants and sucklings, oxen and sheep, camel sand asses!”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	‘Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’ ”
Young’s Updated LT	Now, go and you have struck down Amalek, and devote all that he has, and you have no pity on it, and you have put to death from man unto woman, from infant unto suckling, from ox unto sheep, from camel unto ass.’

What is the gist of this verse? God made it clear to Saul that every Amalekite must die—every man, woman and child. Furthermore, their cattle and livestock were to be completely destroyed as well.

1Samuel 15:3

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
ʿattâh (הַתָּאָה) [pronounced <i>gaht-TAWH</i>]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong’s #6258 BDB #773
According to Rotherham, the Septuagint, Vulgate and Aramaic all read <i>now therefore...</i>			
hâlak ^e (הֵלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>go, come, depart, walk; advance</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong’s #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
nâkâh (נָכַח) [pronounced <i>naw-KAWH</i>]	<i>to smite, to assault, to hit, to strike; to strike [someone or something] down, to defeat</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect with the voluntative hê	Strong #5221 BDB #645

1Samuel 15:3

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾêth (תּא) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʿamâlêq (עמלֵק) [pronounced <i>gah-maw-LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
châram (חרם) [pronounced <i>khaw-RAM</i>]	<i>to completely devote to, to devote to, to devote to God via complete and total annihilation, to utterly destroy, to dedicate to destruction</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #2763 BDB #355
ʾêth (תּא) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
kol (כּל) [pronounced <i>kol</i>]	<i>the whole, all, the entirety, every</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lôʾ (לֹא or לא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
châmal (חמל) [pronounced <i>khaw-MAHL</i>]	<i>to spare, to have compassion, to show mercy</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2550 BDB #328
ʿal (על) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mûwth (מת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i>]	<i>to kill, to cause to die, to put to death, to execute</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559

1Samuel 15:3

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾîysh (ישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i>]	<i>man, each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
ʿad (עד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
ʾîshshâh (ישׁשה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAWH</i>]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #802 BDB #61
min (מן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿôlâl (ולל) [pronounced <i>go-LAWL</i>]	<i>a child as opposed to an adult</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5768 BDB #760
wê (or vê) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿad (עד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
yânaq (ינק) [pronounced <i>yaw-NAHK</i>]	<i>sucking, suckling</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #3243 BDB #413
min (מן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
shôwr (שוׁר) [pronounced <i>shohr</i>]	<i>an ox, a bull, a head of cattle</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7794 BDB #1004
wê (or vê) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿad (עד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
seh (שה) [pronounced <i>seh</i>]	<i>one of a flock, a sheep, a goat</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7716 BDB #961

1Samuel 15:3

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
gâmâl (גָּמָל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAWL</i>]	<i>camel</i> (this is obviously a transliteration)	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1581 BDB #168
w ^e (or v ^e) (וְ) [pronounced <i>veh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿad (עַד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
chămôwr (חֲמֹר) [pronounced <i>khuh-MOHR</i>]	<i>ass, male donkey, he-ass</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2543 BDB #331

Translation: Now go and strike down Amalek and you [all] will completely destroy all that they have [lit., all that (is) to him] and you will not show [any] mercy to them [lit., him] and you will execute men and women, infants and newborns, oxen and sheep, and camels and donkeys.' ” This order is given to Saul, who is the great military man of his time. Saul is not a squeamish man; he has killed hundreds of men, if not thousands; and, as general, has overseen the killing of thousands and thousands of men. Therefore, God going to Saul at this time and requiring him to destroy all of Amalek—this is not a daunting task by any means.

There is no additional reason given for this offensive action against Amalek. There is no indication that they are encroaching on Israel's territory (they do live in southern Judah, but they have always lived there). There is nothing which Amalek has done recently which has brought this on. That is, there is no immediate revealed provocation on the part of Amalek. However, what we have here is rather sobering—four centuries ago, the Amalekites attacked the weak and stragglers of Israel, and God has not forgotten. God promised that Amalek would be taken down, and now He is going to fulfill this promise. God allowed them their sin for awhile, but He never forgot. You might think, *you don't punish the sons for what the fathers have done!* And God does not punish the sons for the sins of their fathers. However, God also knows the hearts of men, and God knows the hearts of the Amalekites of Saul's day. We will discuss this further as we go on.

It is extremely important to fully understand exactly how Samuel has approached Saul with this mandate. He makes it clear that the authority of this mandate emanates from God. The same God who placed Saul as authority over all Israel is commanding Saul now to completely destroy the Amalekites. This not only absolutely clarifies the origin of this order, but it emphasizes Saul's ability to carry the order out, as he is the king of Israel. Saul's existence as king was as a military leader, defeating the foes of Israel who trouble her from all sides. Therefore, such a mandate is properly delivered to no one else in Israel. This is completely Saul's responsibility.

Want you to notice two things are carefully interconnected here. God set Saul as king over Israel—i.e., God granted Saul great authority in the land; and God has responsibilities for Saul as well. V. 1 is God granted authority to Saul; v. 3 is God drops a responsibility into Saul's lap. The two things go together: authority and responsibility.

Application: There are perhaps a million idiots who think they could be president of the United States; or, the president of their corporation, or the spiritual leader in their little group. These people desire the power and the

authority, but they have no clue as to the responsibility that goes along with that authority. They think the whole idea is, they can now tell everyone else what to do. That is their goal; that is what they are after. There is a lot more to authority than you being the boss and telling everyone else what to do because you know better than they do. If you do not realize the extent of your responsibility, then you have no basis for coveting this or that position of power. It is a smart and wise Indian who realizes that he has no business being chief.

In this verse, we find the word *châram* (כָּרַם) [pronounced *khaw-RAM*], which is a word with several meanings. However, usually it means *to devote to destruction, to completely give over to God via annihilation, to completely and utterly destroy*. Strong's #2763 BDB #355. The related masculine noun is *chêrem* (כְּרֵם) [pronounced *KHĀ-rem*], which means *something completed devoted [to God], the act of completely devoting something to God, something dedicated to destruction, the curse, the ban, something completely in God's possession, something placed under the ban*. Strong's #2764 BDB #356. In case there is any dispute as to the meaning, this context of this verse makes it quite clear—Saul is to strike down every single man, woman, and child along with all of their animals. There is no way to mitigate the meaning of this word or to tone down what God expects of Saul. On the other hand, God did not point to each and every group of antagonistic peoples and place them under the ban. In Joshua 12, we have a list of 31 kings that Joshua defeated. Very few of these were put under the ban; very few groups of people were every dedicated to complete annihilation. This was the exception, not the rule, as that meant that there were no spoils of victory for the Israelites, which is one motivating reason to fight in the first place. This may cause us to ask...

Who Has God Dedicated to Complete Annihilation?

Scripture	The People and the Circumstances
Num. 21:1–3	Interestingly enough, our first example of <i>cherem</i> was initiated by Israel. Arad, a Canaanite king in the Negev, took some Israelites prisoners. Arad was the aggressor in this war. Israel vowed to God to completely destroy him and his cities, if God would deliver him into their hands. God heard their voice, and gave them the victory.
Num. 21:21–26 Deut. 2:30–35	In retrospect, we find out that Israel dedicated Sihon and all of his people (Deut. 2:34). Israel destroyed all of the people, but retained their wealth (i.e., their animals—Deut. 2:35).
Num. 21:31–35 Deut. 3:1–7	Israel did the same to Og, king of Bashan (Num. 21:35 Deut. 3:4–6). Again, Israel kept their animals (Deut. 3:7).
Deut. 7:1–2 Psalm 106:34–39	Generally speaking, Israel was to destroy all the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan. Because Israel did not completely destroyed all of the peoples of the land, these people infiltrated Israel and corrupted her. In fact, Israel became so corrupted as to become involved in child sacrifice (Psalm 106:38).
Joshua 6:17–21	The first city that Israel attacked when in the Land of Promise was Jericho, and that city was placed under the ban (except for Rahab the prostitute and those of her household). Whereas the example in Num. 21 may not have been clear, there is no question about Jericho. And they completely annihilated everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword (Joshua 6:21).
Joshua 8:24–29	Joshua placed all the people of Ai, the second city to be destroyed by Israel, under the ban. However, their livestock and personal effects were retained by Israel.
Joshua 10:28	To fulfill an obligation to the Gibeonites, Joshua fought against a coalition of 5 Canaanite kings (Joshua 10:1–15). In their retreat, they hid out in a cave of Makkedah (Joshua 10:16). Joshua sealed up the cave, slaughtered their people (although there were some survivors) and then he hung these kings (Joshua 10:17–27). Finally, Joshua captured the city of Makkedah and devoted all of it to destruction, just as he had done to Jericho.

Who Has God Dedicated to Complete Annihilation?

Scripture	The People and the Circumstances
Joshua 11:11	Once Joshua had finished taking Southern Canaan, Jabin, the king of Hazor caught wind of this and formed an alliance with three other rulers in the north (Joshua 11:1–5). God gave Israel victory over these kings (Joshua 11:6–10) and Israel destroyed every living person in Hazor and then burned Hazor to the ground.
1Sam. 15:1–3	God orders Saul to completely annihilate the Amalekites, along with all of their livestock and belongings.

Given that Joshua defeated 31 kings and several groups of people prior to entering into the Land of Canaan; given all of the wars found in the book of Judges, and given all of the wars fought by Saul, this is a relatively small number of instances where a people were placed completely under the ban.

When a nation was put under the ban, the idea was, Israel was not to profit from their destruction. That is, this was not to be a situation where a king of Israel covets what another group of people have, and then tells his soldiers, “God told me that we need to wipe out this people; but don’t kill their animals or destroy their i-pods; those belong to me.” When a degenerate people were destroyed, all that they had was destroyed as well.

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This idea that a people should be destroyed completely does not sit well with many today; particularly during a time of *ethnic cleansing* which is found in the most barbaric of countries. Therefore, we need to examine this from today’s perspective.

Concerning this order for complete destruction of the Amalekites, Stephen T. Davis wrote: *I speak for no one except myself, but I believe that killing innocent people is morally wrong. And killing Canaanite civilians is to be sharply distinguished from killing soldiers in the battles that were necessary for the Israelites to conquer the land that God had promised them. I frankly find it difficult to believe that it was God’s will that every Canaanite—man, woman, and child—be slaughtered. Since the Bible clearly says that this was God’s will, I must conclude that the biblical writers in this case were mistaken. The error of confusing patriotic sentiments with God’s will is a common one in human history, but it is an error nonetheless.*⁵

God does not simply lash out at a people for no reason. That Amalek had displayed extreme viciousness toward Israel in the past, revealing great mental attitude sins and prejudices against Israel which festered within that Bedouin group. We have seen in our own country how prejudice is taught and can be carried down from one generation to the next for hundreds of years. We may reasonably assume that the same was true of the nation Amalek. They had been soundly defeated by Joshua and had been given perhaps 400 years to get over it. At this point in time, they could have been even great allies of Israel; however, we may assume that this generation had been taught hatred and prejudice toward the Jews and that they were like a mad dog. What Amalek did 400 years previous was still in the hearts of the Amalekites. We have seen this over and over in the Middle East. The hatred which has accumulated generation after generation is almost incomprehensible. God gave this people several centuries to get past this hatred and vindictiveness, and they did not. Now they are a cancer, a ticking bomb, a mad dog, and they have to be put down. We may infer that not one Amalekite was without hatred and prejudice, and we may infer that none of them would have ever chosen to believe in Jehovah of Israel.

⁵ *When Skeptics Ask*; Geisler and Brooks, ©1990, Victor Books, pp. 169–170. Taken from Stephen T. Davis, *The Debate about the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 96–97.

This is an important recurring issue in Scripture. Therefore, we need to determine two things: why did God demand the destruction of the Amalekites in particular and why would God demand the complete destruction of any people?

Why Did God Demand the Complete Destruction of the Amalekites?

1. The first time that Israel encountered the Amalekites was in Ex. 17 where the Amalekites militarily opposed Israel from moving further north. This attack revealed their great hatred toward Israel and toward their God. The way they attacked the Jews revealed their character. *When the Israelites were struggling through the desert toward Canaan, the Amalekites picked off the weak, sick and elderly at the end of the line of marchers and brutally murdered these stragglers. Warned Moses, "Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God"* (Deut. 25:17–18).¹ Those who were in the rear of the Israelites would have been the weakest most helpless people; those were the ones that Amalek attacked. It is not unlike the suicide attacks of certain radical Arab groups today. They intentionally target civilians and non-military targets.
2. The Amalekites consistently displayed a long-standing animosity against Israel. We have their first vicious attack of Ex. 17 against the most helpless of Israel's number. Their attack was cowardly and unprovoked. It revealed a tremendous amount of prejudice and hatred for the Jews.
3. The Amalekites also allied themselves with several different nations in order to fight against Israel:
 - a. The Canaanites in Num. 14:43–45
 - b. The Moabites in Judges 3:12–13
 - c. The Midianites in Judges 6:3–5, 33 7:12
4. We may speculate that this nation of Amalek was diseased and that their children and animals were carriers.
5. We may reasonably speculate that there was great involvement here with such practices as the phallic cults.
6. We can reasonably suppose from 1Sam. 15:33 that not only was there at that time open hostility between Israel and the Amalekites, but that these Amalekites were behaving with extreme and wanton cruelty.²
7. This attack of Saul's is the only time that Israel may have been the aggressor against the Amalekites (although 1Sam. 15:33 suggests that this was in response to recent aggressions by the Amalekites).
8. We know for certain that Israel's hesitation to wholly destroy some groups of people resulted in Israel becoming corrupted to the point of offering their children in sacrificial offerings (Psalm 106:34–39).
9. Let me see if I can explain this next point properly, as it is subtle: God did not allow Israel to plunder the Amalekites so that there would be no confusion in history as to the reason for Israel's attack on the Amalekites. We are to look back at this attack as having a moral basis; if the Israelites seize all that they can from the Amalekites, then that blurs the morality of it all. It appears to us many hundreds of years later that, God's command to destroy the Amalekites was just a pretext. However, the real reason was to take what they had built up. The point of this narrative is, God ordered Amalek completely destroyed for moral reasons. God would not allow history to suggest any other motivation.
10. Because Israel did not destroy all of these Amalekites (I would assume that many of them escaped because the Israelite soldiers were busy picking through their livestock), they posed a serious threat to Israel a very short time later and David had to defeat them (1Sam. 30).
11. Because these Amalekites were not wiped out, many years later, Haman, an Amalekite, will attempt to destroy the Jewish race (Esther 3–7).³
12. These last two points indicate that there was no half-way measure with regards to the Amalekites. Israel could not simply defeat them soundly and that would be the end of it. Israel had to completely destroy the Amalekites in order for all aggressions to cease.
13. We are in the devil's world. It would be nice if everything could be popsicles and candy, but that just isn't the way life is. President Truman made one of the most difficult decisions a president could make—dropping Atomic bombs on Japan. Japan, however, was allied with absolute evil. What Truman did was end World War II almost immediately, and saved hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides (we have no idea what could have happened had he faltered at this point). However, we do know what happened because Saul faltered. Saul and the people did not obey God, and as a result, the Amalekites

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would remain as a people who hated the Jews and would go to any lengths to destroy them.

14. To sum up, it is very likely that the continuance of the Amalekites would affect both Israel's spiritual health and physical health. Furthermore, the Amalekites would bear hatred for Israel as long as they were alive. The incidents which occurred after many of them were destroyed here bear this fact out.

¹ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 207.

² Paraphrased from Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 458.

³ According to J. Vernon McGee; *I & II Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 81. Haman was an Agagite (Esther 3:1, 10 8:3, 5 9:24), meaning that he may have been descended from the Agag of this chapter. This would mean, of course, that some of Agag's sons would have escaped in Israel's attack (which could have occurred because many Israelite soldiers were busy keeping the best of their cattle and sheep from being destroyed). This would also account for his bitter hatred of the Jews. Also, Josephus calls Haman an Amalekite in *Antiquities* xi. 6. 6.

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Why Would God Demand the Destruction of an Entire People?

1. The quotation above from Stephen Davis represents the thinking and feelings of many people.
2. However, what we have here are people's opinions and feelings without having all of the facts.
3. That analogy which I have offered (which in no way justifies God's mandates in and of itself) is that these people had become like a cancer and, just like cancerous tissue, must be completely removed. Another medical analogy is gangrene. Sometimes an entire limb must be removed in order for the remainder of the body to survive. This describes what must be done to some groups of people.
4. God is the giver of life; therefore, it is His pejorative as to when it must be removed. Job 1:21: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will return there. Y^howah gave and Y^howah taken away; blessed by the name of Y^howah." Deut. 32:39: "See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me. It is I Who puts to death and gives life. I have wounded, and it is I Who heals; and there is no one who can deliver from My hand."
5. God knows all of the facts; we do not. Therefore, when God demands that a people be completely destroyed, we can accept that He knows what He is doing and what He is requesting.
6. We may look at what appears to be an innocent baby and determine that it is immoral to destroy such a beautiful creature; however, God looks at that innocent baby and sees what they will become. He is not playing the percentages; He is God and He knows!
7. In the Middle East today, we find extreme hatred toward the Jews; we find groups of people who exhibit a hatred that seems to never be placated.
8. The most important issue for any unbeliever is will they choose, at some point in their lives, Jesus Christ as their hope and Savior. Since **God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a change of mental attitude** (II Peter 3:9), we can rest assured that God is not going to allow the killing of any unbeliever who would later become a believer in time. Therefore, we may assume one of two things:
 - a. Either there were no Amalekites alive at that time that would ever believe in Jesus Christ or...
 - b. ...God would allow those who would believe an escape.
9. Therefore, even though it is wrong for man to kill whole groups of people, it is not wrong for God to do so. Therefore, it is reasonable for God to demand the complete destruction of certain peoples (Deut. 20:13–18).
10. There was a long-standing mandate for Israel to deal with these Amalekites (Deut. 25:17–19). It had come time for Israel to act.
11. Those who have a problem with God's order to destroy a whole group of people often assume that innocent people will be killed in the process. They thereby lay claim to omniscience, which attribute only God possesses. If there are innocents, God will either single them out (as He did with Rahab the prostitute and

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- her family) or He will see that they escape (enough Amalekites escaped in this attack to be a problem in the next generation with King David).
12. It is presumptuous of us to think that our moral standards are superior to God's. We can depend upon His perfect nature to be the ultimate standard.
 13. Geisler and Howe offer the following argument:
 - a. No child is innocent; all children are born with old sin natures (Psalm 51:5).
 - b. All who sin and all who possess an old sin nature are deserving of death (Rom. 5:12).
 - c. Every person will die eventually; it is only a matter of time when they do die (Heb. 9:27).
 - d. Since God is sovereign over all, it is His perfect timing when a person is to die, whether young, old or anywhere in between (Deut. 32:39 Job 1:21).
 - e. Those children who die prior to the age of accountability are automatically saved (2Sam. 12:23).
 - f. Therefore, God taking the lives of these children is not a merciless act.¹
 14. When a believer or unbeliever suggests that the *prophets got it wrong*, they call into question the entire **Doctrine of Inspiration** (covered in Judges 18 introduction). That is, if one can say that the prophets got it wrong here, then one could make that call at any time throughout Scripture.
 15. We are not given any reason for this annihilation apart from Amalek's treatment of Israel in the past. From that statement, we can reasonably assume that, at this time, there is no one in the nation of Amalek who would behave any differently than did their ancestors.
 16. We may assume that no one that God allows to be killed will ever believe in the God of Israel had they been allowed to live.
 17. We may speculate that several of the nations devoted to destruction were diseased and that their children and animals were carriers.
 18. We do have both archeological evidence as well as Biblical testimony that there were peoples in that era who sacrificed their own children and practiced both sodomy and bestiality (see Lev. 18:21, 25, 27–30).
 19. There were groups of peoples in that day, as in this, who demonstrated complete and absolute contempt for the Israelite, and would do anything to destroy them.
 20. We know for certain that Israel's hesitation to wholly destroy some groups of people resulted in Israel becoming corrupted to the point of offering their children in sacrificial offerings (Psalm 106:34–39).
 21. We also know that this was not some sudden decision of God's. God provides any people with ample opportunity to change their ways. Israel was in slavery to Egypt for nearly 400 years because *the sin of the Amorites was not yet complete* (Gen. 15:16b). Israel cooled their heels while the Canaanites became more and more depraved. *Thus, God waited for centuries while the Amalekites and those other Canaanite groups slowly filled up their own cups of condemnation by their sinful behavior. God never acted precipitously against them; his grace and mercy waited to see if they would repent and turn from their headlong plummet into self-destruction.*² This tells us that God these groups of peoples centuries during which they could have reformed, but instead, they chose greater and greater debauchery with each generation.
 22. It is clear today that there is a great deal of hatred directed toward Israel. There are groups of people who would be happy only if all Israelis were destroyed. It is almost an everyday occurrence for a man to strap explosives to himself and walk into a public place, just to kill a handful of Israelite civilians along with himself. This kind of vicious hatred is motivated by Satan, but not apart from their free will. Given this clear predilection for violence that we see today, it is no wonder that God had Israel destroy several groups of people, as Israel would never receive any peace from these people.
 23. God can and has used other means of annihilation: pestilence, famine, disease, natural disasters.
 24. Again (and this cannot be overemphasized), God gave life and God therefore can choose to remove it.

The general idea for this doctrine and several of these points came from *When Skeptics Ask*; Geisler and Brooks, ©1990, Victor Books, pp. 168–170. Several points were also harvested from *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 206–207.

¹ From *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 206.

² Paraphrased from *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, p. 161.

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Given the actions of certain radical Arab groups over the past several decades, it is reasonable to ask...

Does God Work Through Any Specific Nation Today as He did Through Israel Previously?

1. Here is where dispensations come into play: God worked through Israel as a nation prior to the Incarnation.
2. God communicated directly with Israel through her prophets and certain leaders.
3. Israel acted as an agent of God.
4. God no longer works through the nation Israel.
5. There is nothing in Scripture in the New Testament which indicates that God will be working through any particular nation in the future (at least, not until the Great Tribulation).
6. Therefore, in today's world there is no call for any nation to destroy any other nation, as there is no nation that God acts through as He did with Israel.
7. Today, we have what Thieme termed *client nations to God*. God works through these specific nations; in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, God has worked through the United States. In the 18th and 19th centuries, God worked through England. However, the primary functions of these nations was to teach and disseminate the Word of God, and to send out missionaries. God even uses these nations in war; however, there is no Biblical or extra-Biblical authorization to destroy any people completely as we find in the Old Testament in passages such as this.
8. In other words, there is no authorization in this dispensation for any nation anywhere, no matter how godly, to participate in ethnic cleansing.
9. Paul describes the sort of struggle in which we are involved: **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies** (Eph. 6:12).
10. Now, let me give you a scenario: you are sitting and contemplating and you unequivocally believe that God comes to you and tells you to destroy this people or that. What do you do? Here is where doctrine comes in: God does not work through nations or through individuals as He did in the Old Testament; therefore, even if something like that occurred, you may rest assured that you were tempted by a lying spirit (see Mark 13:22 II Cor. 11:13 II Thess. 2:9 II Peter 2:1 I John 1:4 Rev. 16:13 19:20). The key is this: God's Word is correct and your experience, no matter how vivid and marvelous, is not.

A very reasonable question which I will reserve for later is, *Why, in the Dispensation of Israel, did God promote ethnic cleansing, as it were, but in our time, the Dispensation of the Church, there is no valid call for ethnic cleansing. After all, people and groups still sin; sin still builds up; why is there not a similar approach today?*

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Given all of this, it is important to recognize that it is not a matter of Israel being full of integrity and the people of the land being less so; Moses made that clear in Deut. 9:4–5: **“Do not say in your heart when Jehovah God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness Jehovah has brought me in to possess this land;’ but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that Jehovah is dispossessing them before you. It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that Jehovah your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which Jehovah swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”** After saying this, then Moses told the Israelites how stubborn they were, providing specific examples. The idea is that these groups of people had become so degenerate that their very existence was a threat to all civilization.

Even though Saul will disobey this order from God, it will not be because he is squeamish or a humanitarian. Saul, above all else, is a great and fearless general and soldier. No one else in Israel could have done what he did in Israel's fight against her enemies on all sides. He has nothing against destroying an entire population, either. When he becomes angry with the priests in Nob (which apparently was the religious center at that time), he will destroy men, women, children and animals of Nob (1Sam. 22:19). This is a command which Saul is fully able to obey.

There are several things at work here. For one thing, this is a test of Saul's obedience to God. God tests men for approval and for disapproval. God chose something which Saul was able to clearly understand and He chose an order which Saul could easily obey; Saul's disobedience was not a mistake or a misunderstanding, it was a clear choice to disobey. The second factor is one of discipline. The Amalekites, many centuries previous, had caused the Israelites great trouble on their journey on two occasions. Now, God does not punish this generation which is far removed from their patriarchs just to prove a point or to gain revenge. Obviously, their hearts are no different than those of their ancestors; and it is time for them to be wiped out. A third factor, which is a guess on my part, is that these people are infected, probably with various sexually transmitted diseases (or possibly an easily transmitted disease). The complete destruction of this people will control the disease, just as cutting out a cancerous growth will relieve the attack of the cancer. It is important to note that we are not dealing with a blameless people that God simply chose to use as an object lesson for Saul (and I have gone into great detail previously to substantiate this). Finally, the war in history needs to be seen as a war of principal and not a war of opportunity and greed. Israel's enemies need to know that God will avenge His people; if the end result was that Israel took everything that they could, then the sense of morality is lost.

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Saul Defeats the Amalekites, but Does Not Comply with All God's Directives

And so causes to hear Saul the people and so he visits them in the Telaim—two hundred thousand on foot and ten of a thousand a man of Judah.

1Samuel
15:4

So Saul called the people and he numbered them in Telaim—200,000 on foot and 10,000 men from Judah.

Therefore, Saul assembled the people in Telaim and numbered them; there were 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men from the tribe of Judah.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	So Saul commanded the people, and numbered them as lambs: two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand of the men of Juda.
Masoretic Text	And so causes to hear Saul the people and so he visits them in the Telaim—two hundred thousand on foot and ten of a thousand a man of Judah.
Septuagint	And Saul summoned the people, and he numbered them in Galgala, 400,000 regular troops and Juda 30,000 regular troops.

Significant differences: The numbers are obviously different. Where they were numbered is different as well.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Saul sent messengers who told every town and village to send men to join the army at Telaim. There were two hundred ten thousand troops in all, and ten thousand of these were from Judah. Saul organized them,...
NLT	So Saul mobilized his army at Telaim. There were 200,000 troops in addition to 10,000 men from Judah.
REB	Saul called out the levy and reviewed them at Telaim; there were two hundred thousand foot-soldiers and another ten thousand from Judah.
TEV	Saul called his forces together and inspected them at Telem; there were 200,000 soldiers from Israel and 10,000 from Judah.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™

Saul organized the troops, and he counted them at Telaim: 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men from Judah.

JPS (Tanakh)

Saul mustered the troops and enrolled them at Telaim: 200,000 men on foot, and 10,000 men of Judah.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB

Then Saul summoned the people and numbered [lit., *mustered*] them in Telaim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

Young's Updated LT

And Saul summons the people and inspects them in Telaim, 200,000 footmen and 10,000 men of Judah.

What is the gist of this verse? Saul begins to obey God's mandate. He summons his soldiers to Telaim and numbers and organizes them there. There are 200,000 men along with 10,000 men from Judah.

1Samuel 15:4			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâma' (שָׁמַע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHÇ</i>]	<i>to cause to hear; to call, to summon</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
Shâ'ûwl (שָׁאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'am (אָמ) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
pâqad (פָּקַד) [pronounced <i>paw-KAHD</i>]	<i>to go to a person, to visit, to have personal contact with, to sort out, to visit a person, to commit, to charge to the care of, to fall upon, to attack, to number, to take a census</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with a 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #6485 BDB #823
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
t ^e lâ'îym (תֵּלַיִם) [pronounced <i>t^{eh}law-EEM</i>], which	transliterated <i>Telaim</i> ; probably equivalent to <i>Telem</i> ; possibly means <i>place of lambs</i>	proper noun, location	Strong's #2923 BDB #378

1Samuel 15:4

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Many suggest that this is equivalent to Telem (טֵלֵם) [pronounced <i>TEH-lem</i>], which means <i>lambs</i> , probably because of all the flocks in that area. It is found only in Joshua 15:24. Strong's #2928 BDB #378. This helps to explain the translation from the Latin.			
mâ`thayim (מֵאֵתַיִם) [pronounced <i>maw-thah-YIM</i>]	<i>two hundred</i>	feminine dual numeral	Strong's #3967 BDB #547
ʿelep̄h (אֶלֶף) pronounced <i>EH-lef</i>	<i>thousand, families, (500?); military units</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #505 (and #504) BDB #48
ragʿîy (רַגְלִי) [pronounced <i>rahg^e-LEE</i>]	<i>on foot, footmen</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #7273 BDB #920
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿasârâh (עֶשְׂרֵה) [pronounced <i>gah-saw-RAW</i>]	<i>ten</i>	feminine numeral construct	Strong's #6235 BDB #796
ʿelep̄h (אֶלֶף) pronounced <i>EH-lef</i>	<i>thousand, families, (500?); military units</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #505 (and #504) BDB #48
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
I suppose the direct object continues the action of the verb (<i>pâqad</i>) to the men of Judah.			
ʿîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i>]	<i>man, each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
Y ^e hûwdâh (יְהוּדָה) [pronounced <i>y^ehoo-DAW</i>]	possibly means <i>to praise, to be praised</i> ; and is transliterated <i>Judah</i>	masculine proper noun/location	Strong's #3063 BDB #397

Translation: So Saul called the people and he numbered them in Telaim—200,000 on foot and 10,000 men from Judah. As I have mentioned, we do struggle with the word for *a thousand* in the Hebrew; what we may have here are 200 military units, including 10 military units from Judah (the accepted text is 200,000, but I believe that to be far too large—I suspect that a military unit has between 100–500 men). In any case, this is in stark contrast to the meager 600 who remained with Saul during the attack of the Philistines.

It is interesting to note that the soldiers from Judah are counted separately from the rest. The reason for this is two fold: first, the Amalekites are just south of Judah, so Judah would be the territory most threatened by them; and secondly, even at this point in time, we seem to be experiencing a split between the northern and southern kingdoms.

There is another factor here which causes me to question the numbers. Since Amalek is in southern Judah, we would expect a larger proportion of Israel's army to be men from Judah. Rather than being 1/20th of the entire force, we would have expected Judah to be 1/10th (or more) of the entire infantry. I do not have an explanation for this.

When something strikes me as odd, I will mention it, whether or not I have a ready explanation. It is perhaps based upon the word for *1000* which refers to *military units* instead.

Telaim of Judah is possibly found only here, near Ziph and the northern border of the Amalekites. However, there is another passage in 1Sam. 27:8 where there is a reference to *men of old* and ZPEB suggests that this passage has been corrupted (if one followed the Septuagint at this point) and that it should read *they of Telaim*.⁶ Although there are a few similar letters in the Hebrew, the text would have had to have been corrupted in order for this to refer to *Telaim*. Finally, several suggest that *Telaim* might be identical to *Telem* of Joshua 15:24, which is also a city in southern Judah. These are the only passages where this city (or cities) are possibly mentioned.

I have no explanation is to why the Septuagint differs so much with respect to the numbers of soldiers.

And so comes Saul as far as a city of Amalek and so he [causes to] lay in wait in the brook.	1Samuel 15:5	Then Saul went as far as the [northernmost] city of Amalek and he [causes his soldiers to] lay in wait in [the valley of] the brook.
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Saul led his troops to the northernmost city of Amalek, and then laid in wait in the valley of the brook.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so comes Saul as far as a city of Amalek and so he [causes to] lay in wait in the brook.
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Septuagint	And Saul came to the cities of Amalec, and laid wait in the valley [lit., <i>brook</i>].
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Significant differences:	None.
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Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	[Saul organized them], then led them to a valley near one of the towns in Amalek, where they got ready to make a surprise attack.
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TEV	Then he and his men went to the city of Amalek and waited in ambush in a dry riverbed.
-----	--

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> TM	Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley.
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JPS (Tanakh)	Then Saul advanced as far as the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the wadi. [the meaning of the Hebrew word translated <i>lay in wait</i> is uncertain]
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Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	And Saul came to the city of Amalek, and set an ambush in the valley.
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<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	And Saul comes in unto a city of Amalek, and lays wait in a valley;...
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What is the gist of this verse? Saul takes his men to the northernmost city of Amalek (the territory of Amalek is just south of Judah). They go down by the brook to wait in ambush so that they are hidden in the foliage which would surround a brook and so that they have water to drink.

⁶ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 614.

1Samuel 15:5

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i>]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
'ad (עַד) [pronounced <i>ghad</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
'îyr (עִיר) [pronounced <i>geer</i>]	<i>encampment, city, town</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #5892 BDB #746
'amâlêq (עַמְלֵק) [pronounced <i>ghah-maw-LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
'ârab (אַרַב) [pronounced <i>aw-RA^bV</i>]	<i>to ambush, to lay in wait, to hide, caused to lay in wait</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #693 BDB #70
<p>The previous verb is the supposed corrected reading. What is actually found in the Masoretic text is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of rîy'v (רִיב) [pronounced <i>ree^bv</i>], which means <i>to debate, to contend, to dispute</i>. Strong's #7378 BDB #936.</p>			
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
nachal (נַחַל) [pronounced <i>NAHKH-al</i>]	<i>brook, torrent</i>	masculine singular noun, pausal form	Strong's #5158 BDB #636

Translation: Then Saul went as far as the [northernmost] city of Amalek and he [causes his soldiers to] lay in wait in [the valley of] the brook. Saul, after numbering his troops, takes them to the outskirts of the nearest major city in Amalek and they all wait by the brook (which is part of a valley). The NIV Study Bible places this city somewhere between Telem and Kadesh-barnea⁷ (Kadesh-barnea is the southernmost city of Judah; this does *not* mean that Israel controls the land around Kadesh-barnea at this time). The NIV Study Bible, in fact, suggests that Kadesh-barnea might even be the city of the king of the Amalekites.

⁷ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 393.

And so says Saul unto the Kenite, “Go, depart, go down from a midst of [the] Amalekite lest I relocate [or, *remove*] you with him; and you made grace with all sons of Israel in their coming up from Egypt.” And so turned aside [the] Kenite from a midst of Amalek.

1Samuel
15:6

Then Saul said to the Kenites, “Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites so that I do not remove you with them, for you were gracious [lit, *manufactured grace*] to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt.” So the Kenites departed from the midst of the Amalekites [lit., *Amalek*].

Then Saul sent word to the Kenites: “Leave, depart, and move away from the Amalekites so that you are not destroyed with them, as you were gracious to the sons of Israel when they came up out from Egypt.” So the Kenites departed from the region of the Amalekites.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so says Saul unto the Kenite, “Go, depart, go down from a midst of [the] Amalekite lest I relocate [or, *remove*] you with him; and you made grace with all sons of Israel in their coming up from Egypt.” And so turned aside [the] Kenite from a midst of Amalek.

Septuagint And Saul said to the Kinite, “Go and depart out of the midst of the Amalekites, lest I put you with them, for you dealt mercifully with the children of Israel when they went up out of Egypt.” So the Kinite departed from the midst of Amalec.

Significant differences: Apart from one verb, which does not change the meaning of the verse one whit, there are no significant differences between these passages.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Some Kenites lived nearby, and Saul told them, “You people were kind to our nation when we left Egypt, and I don’t want you to get killed when I wipe out the Amalekites. Leave here and stay away from them.” The Kenites left,...

NLT Saul sent this message to the Kenites: “Move away from where the Amalekites live or else you will die with them. For you were kind to the people of Israel when they came up from Egypt.” So the Kenites packed up and left.

TEV He sent a warning to the Kenites, a people whose ancestors had been kind to the Israelites when they came from Egypt: “Go away and leave the Amalekites, so that I won’t kill you along with them.” So the Kenites left.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word[™] Then Saul said to the Kenites, “Get away from the Amalekites so that I won’t destroy you with them. You were kind to all the Israelites when they came from Egypt.” So the Kenites left the Amalekites.

JPS (Tanakh) Saul said to the Kenites, “Come, withdraw at once from among the Amalekites, that I may not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they left Egypt.” So the Kenites withdrew from among the Amalekites.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB And Saul said to the Kenites, “Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt.” So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

Young's Updated LT

...and Saul says to the Kenite, "Go, turn aside, go down from the midst of Amalek, lest I consume you with it, and you have done kindness with all the sons of Israel, in their going up out of Egypt;...

What is the gist of this verse? Because the Kenites were not antagonistic to the Jews moving northward from Egypt to the Land of Promise, Saul warns them to move away from the Amalekites so that they are not hurt in the destruction of the Amalekites. The Kenites take Saul's advice and move away from the Amalekites.

1Samuel 15:6a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אמר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Shâʾul (שׂאול) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
ʾel (אל) [pronounced <i>eI</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
qêynîy (קניני) [pronounced <i>kay-NEE</i>]	<i>to acquire</i> and is transliterated <i>Kenite</i>	proper adjective gentis with the definite article	Strong's #7017 BDB #884
hâlak ^e (הלך) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>go, come, depart, walk; advance</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
çûwr (סור) [pronounced <i>soor</i>]	<i>turn aside, depart, go away</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693
yârad (ירד) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAHD</i>]	<i>descend, go down</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #3381 BDB #432
<p>Having three imperatives together like this without being punctuated by a wâw conjunction (or a wâw consecutive) is called an <i>asyndeton</i>. [pronounced <i>uh-SIN-di-ton</i>]. Leaving out the <i>and</i>'s means that we do not stop and consider each command, but we take them as a whole, and they draw us quickly forward to what it is that they are leading us to.⁸ In this case, the Kenites are warned that Saul does not want to remove them as he will be removing the Amalekites. The idea is that the Kenites should <i>depart, go away, descend</i>—they should take whatever route they can to separate themselves from the Amalekites.</p>			
min (מן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
tâvek ^e (תַּבַּע) [pronounced <i>taw-VEK^e</i>]	<i>midst, among, middle</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #8432 BDB #1063

⁸ Taken from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; pp 137–138.

1Samuel 15:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāmâlêqîy (עַמְלֵקִי) [pronounced <i>guh-maw-lay-KEE</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalekite</i>	proper noun gentis	Strong's #6003 BDB #766
pen (וְ) [pronounced <i>pen</i>]	<i>lest, peradventure, or else, in order to prevent, or, so that</i> [plus a negative]	conjunction	Strong's #6435 BDB #814
ʿâçaph (אָפַח) [pronounced <i>aw-SAHF</i>]	<i>relocate, transfer, transport, gather, to gather and remove, to remove</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #622 BDB #62
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ahT-TAW</i>]	<i>you</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
cheçed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced <i>KHEH-sed</i>]	<i>grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2617 BDB #338
Interestingly enough, this is the first time that this very common noun occurs in the book of Samuel.			
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
bên (בֵּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Yis ^e râ ^l êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88

1Samuel 15:6a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿâlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i>]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to rise, to climb</i>	Qal infinitive construct with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
mitz ^o rayim (מִצְרַיִם) [pronounced <i>mits-RAH-yim</i>]	translated <i>Egypt, Egyptians</i>	proper noun (pausal form)	Strong's #4714 BDB #595

Translation: Then Saul said to the Kenites, “Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites so that I do not remove you with them for you were gracious [lit, *manufactured grace*] to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt.”

It is not clear as to how close the Kenites were to the Amalekites. It does not appear as though they lived integrated within the same cities, but that possibly their cities were side-by-side. Whatever the situation, Moses was able to contact the Kenites and ask them to move from their areas so that Israel could attack and destroy the Amalekites without accidentally killing any Kenites. As J. Vernon McGee points out, this is *an act of mercy that no pagan nation would have practiced in that day.*⁹

We have covered the **Doctrine of the Kenites** in Judges 1:16, however, let's quickly look at where they are found in Scripture:

The Kenites in Scripture	
Scripture	Summary
Gen. 18	Although we are not told that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, is a Kenite, we later find that out in Judges 1:16 (actually, Jethro's father was a Midianite and his mother was therefore a Kenite—compare Num. 10:29). Moses seemed to have a much better relationship with Jethro than he did with his wife, Jethro's daughter.
Num. 24:21–22	We first hear about the Kenites in the oracle of Balaam. Balaam had been hired to curse the Israelites; however, everything he went into prophetic mode, he blessed them. About the Kenites, he said, “Your dwelling place is enduring and your nest is set in the cliff. Nevertheless, the Kenite will be consumed; how long will Asshur keep you captive?” (Num. 24:21b–22).
Judges 1:16	Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite and his descendants lived in the wilderness of Judah, south of Arad, among the Jews.

⁹ J. Vernon McGee; *I & II Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 82.

The Kenites in Scripture

Scripture	Summary
Judges 4:11–22	Jael, the wife of Heber, a Kenite, killed one of Israel's more formidable enemies, the general Sisera. Deborah and Barak had Sisera on the run. In making his escape, he went by her tent. She offered him milk and a place to rest, safe from the outside. Then, once he fell asleep, she killed him.
I Chron. 2:55	It is quite difficult to determine what is being said in this passage. One interpretation is that some descendants of the Kenites became scribes (and that there were 3 different types of scribes).

Therefore, it is easy to see from the appearances of the Kenites above, that the Israelites always had a good relationship with the Kenites, and therefore, they had no desire to allow them to be killed in their conflict with the Amalekites.

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1Samuel 15:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
çûwr (וּרָ) [pronounced <i>soor</i>]	<i>to turn aside, to depart, to go away</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693
qêynîy (יְנִי) [pronounced <i>kay-NEE</i>]	<i>to acquire</i> and is transliterated <i>Kenite</i>	proper adjective gentis	Strong's #7017 BDB #884
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
tâvek ^e (בְּתוֹכָם) [pronounced <i>taw-VEK^e</i>]	<i>midst, among, middle</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #8432 BDB #1063
ʿamâlêq (עַמְלֵק) [pronounced <i>ʿah-maw-LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766

Translation: [So the Kenites departed from the midst of the Amalekites \[lit., Amalek\]](#). However they were warned, the Kenites, who lived in southern Judah, heeded the warning and separated themselves from the Amalekites.

[And so strikes down Saul Amalekites from Havilah your going to Shur, which \[is\] upon faces of Egypt.](#)

1Samuel
15:7

[Saul then struck down the Amalekites from Havilah as far as \[lit., as your going to\] Shur, which faces Egypt.](#)

[Saul then struck down the Amalekites from Havilah to Shur, which is just east of Egypt.](#)

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so strikes down Saul Amalekites from Havilah your going to Shur, which [is] upon faces of Egypt.

Septuagint And Saul struck down Amalec from Evilat to Sur fronting Egypt.

Significant differences: No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV [The Kenites left], and Saul attacked the Amalekites from Havilah to Shur, which is just east of Egypt. [I've included the tail end of v. 6 here]

NLT The Saul slaughtered the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, east of Egypt.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh) Saul destroyed Amalek from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is close to Egypt,...

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB So Saul defeated [lit., *smote*] the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt.

Young's Updated LT And Saul smites Amalek from Havilah—your going to Shur, which *is* on the front of Egypt.

What is the gist of this verse? With the Kenites out of the way, Saul successfully attacks and beats down the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is just east of Egypt.

1Samuel 15:7

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâkâh (נָכָה) [pronounced <i>naw-KAWH</i>]	<i>to smite, to assault, to hit, to strike; to strike [someone or something] down, to defeat</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong #5221 BDB #645
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'amâlêq (עַמְלֵק) [pronounced <i>gah-maw-LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766

1Samuel 15:7

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
chāvīylāh (חַיִּילָה) [pronounced <i>khuh-vee-LAW</i>]	<i>sand-land, wet sand and is transliterated Havilah</i>	proper noun, location	Strong's #2341 BDB #296
bōw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i>]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	Qal infinitive construct with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #935 BDB #97
shūr (שׁוּר) [pronounced <i>sher</i>]	<i>wall, fortress and is transliterated Shur</i>	proper noun, location	Strong's #7793 BDB #1004
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahʿ</i>]	<i>upon, against, above</i>	preposition	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
pânîym (פְּנֵים) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i>]	<i>face, faces</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, ʿâl and pânîym mean <i>upon the face of, facing, in front of, before (as in preference to), in addition to, overlooking</i>			
mitzʿrayim (מִצְרַיִם) [pronounced <i>mits-RAH-yim</i>]	translated <i>Egypt, Egyptians</i>	proper noun (pausal form)	Strong's #4714 BDB #595

Translation: Saul then struck down the Amalekites from Havilah as far as [lit., as your going to] Shur, which faces Egypt.

Havilah is mentioned early on as a land almost surrounded by a river which is one of the four forks of a river that flows out of Eden (Gen. 2:11–12). It is unlikely that this is the same Havilah that we speak of in this context, as the great flood no doubt altered the shape of the earth after this mention of Havilah.

Originally, the Ishmaelites occupy the area from Havilah to Shur (Gen. 25:12–18). Recall that Ishmael was Abraham's son by Hagar, the Egyptian, Sarah's personal attendant. The Amalekites are descendants of Amalek, who was the grandson of Esau, Jacob twin brother (Esau and Jacob were grandsons of Abraham)

¹⁰ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 47.

(Gen. 36:15–16). It is obvious that they occupy the same area at this time. Since the Ishmaelites seem to have somehow banded with the Midianites (Gen. 37:26–28 Judges 8:1–24; but that is another story), apparently they left that particular area and went northeast. Whether they were forced out by the Amalekites or whether one took over as the other left, we are not told. The exact location of Havilah is disputed. Some place it in western Arabia, north of Yemen, not far from the Red Sea; others place it way over near the Persian Gulf, which is on the eastern side of Saudi Arabia.¹¹

Although we cannot place Havilah exactly, Shur as a region is much easier to identify. Shur was just east of Egypt and it may have referred to a fortified wall between Egypt and to that general region (*Shur* means *wall, fortress*). It is reasonable that the region took its name from the wall. In the Bible, the first reference to Shur is Gen. 16:7 where the Lord finds Hagar at the spring on the way to Shur (this is after she had left Abraham and Sarah). At one time, Abraham lived in this general vicinity (between Kadesh and Shur—Gen. 20:1). The *way to Shur* probably refers to an old caravan route. It could very well be the last leg of the *King's Highway*, which came down on the east side of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, crossing through Edom, and then passing through the wilderness of Zin toward Kadesh-barnea, extending all the way to Egypt on this last leg of road. In Ex. 15:22, Moses leads Israel from the Sea of Reeds to the wilderness of Shur, so his approach to Shur is from the other direction (see also 1Sam. 27:8).

However, bearing in mind what Bullinger explains, the point is that the Amalekites lived throughout this area; however, it is not necessarily the case that Saul and his men pursued the Amalekites throughout this entire area. In fact, we will find out later that a significant number of Amalekites were left alive (see 1Sam. 27:8 30:1, 18 2Sam. 8:12 1 Chron. 4:43). When comparing this fact with the rest of the information in this narrative—that many of Saul's soldiers stopped to worry about the livestock that had belonged to the Amalekites (see v. 19 in particular)—it is not unreasonable to suppose that a significant number of Amalekites escaped *corban*.¹²

A second possible explanation for the Amalekites that we find later on in Scripture is the specific area mentioned herein—from Havilah to Shur, which tells us that Amalekites living outside of this territory were left untouched. Now, this again could have been because Saul and his men stopped to cull out the best and second best of their livestock; therefore, they did not attack all of the Amalekites, leaving the Amalekites outside of this region able to continue to be thorns in the side of Israel. Although we tend to read over these cities without giving them much thought, one purpose of mentioning this area of attack tells us right up front that only a specific area was militarily dealt with (God's mandate did not limit Saul to a specific area). Again, whether Bullinger's take on this verse is correct, or whether some Amalekites lived outside of this area, nevertheless, many of them survived Saul's attack, which is also a point of disobedience on the part of Saul and his army.

And so he seizes Agag king of Amalek alive and all the people he has completely devoted [and destroyed] to a mouth of a sword.

1Samuel
15:8

He seized Agag, the king of Amalek, alive, but he destroyed [in devotion to God] all the people with regards to the edge of the sword.

He seized Agag, king of the Amalekites, alive, but destroyed as devoted to God all of the people utilizing the edge of the sword.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

And so he seizes Agag king of Amalek alive and all the people he has completely devoted [and destroyed] to a mouth of a sword.

¹¹ As per *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 48.

¹² A second explanation is that there was a large group of Amalekites living elsewhere who did not participate in this battle; however, the tenor of the narrative would suggest that the men of Israel simply did not do what they were supposed to.

Septuagint And he took Agag the king of Amalec alive, and he killed all the people and Hierim with the edge of the sword.

Significant differences: The Greek translators were apparently confused by one word, and decided to transliterate it instead. The word they transliterate means *to put under the ban; to devote completely*.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Every Amalekite was killed except King Agag.
NAB He took Agag, king of Amalek, alive, but on the rest of the people he put into effect the ban of destruction by the sword.
TEV ...he captured King Agag of Amalek alive and killed all the people.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ He captured King Agag of Amalek alive. Bu the claimed all the people for God by destroying them.
JPS (Tanakh) ...and he captured King Agag of Amalek alive. He proscribed all the people, putting them to the sword;...

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB And he captured Agag the eking of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.
Young's Updated LT ...and he catches Agag king of Amalek alive, and all the people he has devoted by the mouth of the sword;...

What is the gist of this verse? Saul had been ordered to kill every Amalekite. He almost obeys this order; however, he allows the king of Amalek to live (and, as just discussed in the previous verse, Saul's men allow many Amalekites to escape).

1Samuel 15:8			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וּ) [pronounced wah]	and so, then	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
tâphas (שׁוּבָה) [pronounced taw-FAHS]	to lay a hold of, to manipulate, to seize	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8610 BDB #1074
êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
âgâg (אֶגָּג) [pronounced uh-GAWG]	which possibly means <i>violent</i> and is transliterated <i>Agag</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #90 BDB #8
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	king, ruler, prince	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572

1Samuel 15:8

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿamâlêq (עַמְלֵק) [pronounced <i>gah-maw-LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766
chay (חַי) [pronounced <i>KHAH-ee</i>]	<i>living, alive</i>	masculine singular adjective, pausal form	Strong's #2416 BDB #311
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʿam (עַם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
châram (חָרַם) [pronounced <i>khaw-RAM</i>]	<i>to completely devote to, to devote to, or to completely destroyed</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #2763 BDB #355
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
peh (פֶּה) [pronounced <i>peh</i>]	<i>mouth, edge</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6310 BDB #804
chereb (חֶרֶב) [pronounced <i>khe-RE^BV</i>]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2719 BDB #352

Translation: He seized Agag, the king of Amalek, alive, but he destroyed [in devotion to God] all the people with regards to the edge of the sword. Here we have a problem. Part of what Saul did was in obedience to God—he was told to destroy this entire people, and he almost did that, save one individual, the king of the Amalekites, Agag.

Zodhiates (as well as several others) suggests that *Agag* may be a title for the Amalekite king rather than his actual name (like *pharaoh*).¹³ The reference to *Agag* in Num. 24:7 seems to support that theory.

Now, why does Saul save Agag? Agag is the ruler of his country, and Saul identifies with that. Perhaps he even met Agag first, uncertain as to what he would do, and Agag ingratiated himself to Saul. Saul told his men, save their king aside for me to deal with. And then he meets with Agag personally. Agag may have hated Jews, but he certainly did not reveal that when he spoke to Saul. Realize that a country gets the ruler (or rulers) that it deserves. If all of the Amalekites hated the Jews, there is no reason to think that their king was any different. There is no reason to think that their king did not inspire and fan the flames of their hatred. During this era, I have seen film of

¹³ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 759.

Iraqi and Iranian rulers standing before large groups of their people; and they hold up pictures of our heads of state and the rulers whip the crowd into a frenzy of hatred and hysteria. There is no reason to think that Agag was any different. However, one-on-one with the man who held the power of life and death over him, Agag could be much more civilized. So Saul does not kill him.

Other explanations have been offered: e.g., Saul wanted a *royal* slave;¹⁴ or that Saul wanted to personally honor or dishonor Agag. However, none of those explanations ring true; as there is no support for any of them. That the relationship between Saul and Agag is relatively amiable is implied because (1) Saul does not kill Agag and (2) what Agag says in v. 32, albeit confusing, seems to indicate that Agag thought things were copesetic. You no doubt have heard the expression, *it's lonely at the top*. This is Saul. He perhaps suffered, to some degree, early manifestations of several mental illnesses; furthermore, there was no previous king to guide him; and Saul went from zero to ruling a country in no time flat. So, some of the things which Saul pondered were not things that could be shared with just anyone. Agag was also a ruler of a people and Saul may have found that he had more in common with Agag than with anyone on his own staff. That Agag picked up on this and capitalized on Saul's isolation is a reasonable theory. Whereas, they may not have been best buds; still, Agag was alive, and this was due to Saul. It's easy to execute someone for whom you have great distaste and someone who is thoroughly unlike you. However, the more Charlie Brown is like you, the more difficult it is to order Charlie's execution. Why Saul preserved Agag alive in the first place is unknown. It may have been that some of his soldiers captured Agag alive and brought him to Saul, as your cat might bring an almost dead mouse to you. Agag may have himself been a factor in all of this. In any case, here was Agag, arrested and imprisoned, but still very much alive in the palace of Saul.

Apart from Agag, Saul does destroy every Amalekite that he comes in contact with. Because we find the Amalekites in conflict with David later on in Scripture, this means that not all of them were killed. In fact, for enough to be alive to oppose David a decade or so later indicates that there were a great many Amalekites who survived this attack, probably because they retreated and because Israel's interest in their cattle gave them ample time to do so. There may have been Amalekites further out from their general settlement who decided to retreat. Again, Israel's preoccupation with their cattle allowed them to do so.

And so spares Saul and the people concerning Agag and concerning [the] best of the flock and the herd and the seconds and concerning the rams and concerning all the good things and they had not willed their devotion [to God by destruction] and all the work, despised and melted, it [lit., her] they devoted [by destruction].

1Samuel
15:9

But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the flock and the herd, and the second-best; and they chose not to devote [to God by destruction] the rams and all the good things. However, crafted items which were despised or melted [in the attack], [that] they devoted [to God].

But Saul and the people did spare Agag, along with the best of the livestock, as well as the second-best. They decided not to destroy the rams or any of the good things that they found. However, the things that they despised and the things which suffered damage in their attack, these they devoted to God.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

And so spares Saul and the people concerning Agag and concerning [the] best of the flock and the herd and the seconds and concerning the rams and concerning all the good things and they had not willed their devotion [to God by destruction] and all the work, despised and melted, it [lit., her] they devoted [by destruction].

Septuagint

And Saul and all the people saved Agag alive, and the best [lit., good] of the flocks, and of the herds, and of the fruits, of the vineyards, and of all the good things; and

¹⁴ From Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 466.

they would not destroy them; but every worthless and refuse thing [lit., *work*] they destroyed.

Significant differences: There is some minor disagreement between the texts as to what was preserved.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

- CEV Saul and his army let Agag live, and they also spared the best sheep and cattle. They didn't want to destroy anything of value, so they only killed the animals that were worthless or weak.
- NLT Saul and his men spared Agag's life and kept the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything, in fact, that appealed to them. They destroyed only what was worthless or of poor quality.
- REB Saul and his army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat beasts and the lambs, and everything worth keeping; these they were unwilling to destroy, but anything that was useless and of no value they destroyed.
- TEV But Saul and his men spared Agag's life and did not kill the best sheep and cattle, the best calves and lambs [*One ancient translation the best calves and lambs, Hebrew unclear*], or anything else that was good; they destroyed only what was useless or worthless. [*Some ancient translations useless or worthless; Hebrew unclear*]

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

- God's Word™ Saul and the army spared Agag and the best sheep and cows, the fattened animals, the lambs, and all the best [property]. the army refused to claim them for God by destroying them. But everything that was worthless and weak the army did claim for God and destroy.
- JPS (Tanakh) ...but Saul and the troops spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the second-born [Targum and Syriac read *fatlings*], the lambs, and all else that was of value. The would not proscribe them; they proscribed only what was cheap and worthless.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

- KJV But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything *that was* vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.
- NASB But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.
- NKJV But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.
- Young's Updated LT ...and Saul has pity—also the people—on Agag, and on the best of the flock, and of the herd, and of the seconds, and on the lambs, and on all that *is* good, and have not been willing to devote them; and all the work, despised and wasted—it they devoted.

What is the gist of this verse? God had specifically ordered that everything be devoted to him—everyone and everything that belonged to the Amalekites was to be destroyed. Saul and the people saved Agag alive, along with the best and second best of their livestock. Only the crap that they didn't want was destroyed and devoted to God. Although it may not be clear in the English, this verse shows extreme disrespect for God.

1Samuel 15:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
châmal (חַמַּל) [pronounced <i>khaw-MAHL</i>]	<i>to spare, to have compassion, to show mercy</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2550 BDB #328
Shâ`ûwl (שׂוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘am (אָמ) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
‘al (אֲלֵ) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
When not showing a physical relationship between two things, ‘al can take on a whole host of new meanings: <i>on the ground of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, concerning, besides, in addition to, together with, beyond, above, over, by on to, towards, to, against, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i> . It is one of the most versatile prepositions in Scripture. This word often follows particular verbs (it very often follows our verb, <i>châmal</i>). In the English, we have <i>helping verbs</i> ; in the Hebrew, there are <i>helping prepositions</i> .			
‘ăgâg (אֲגָג) [pronounced <i>uh-GAWG</i>]	which possibly means <i>violent</i> and is transliterated <i>Agag</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #90 BDB #8
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘al (אֲלֵ) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
See the extensive remarks above.			
mêyṭa ^{bv} (מֵיטָב) [pronounced <i>may-TAH^{BV}</i>]	<i>the best of</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4315 BDB #406
tsôn (צֹן) [pronounced <i>tzohn</i>]	<i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>	feminine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #6629 BDB #838
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bâqâr (בָּקָר) [pronounced <i>baw-KAWR</i>]	<i>ox, herd, cattle</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #1241 BDB #133

1Samuel 15:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mish ^e neh (הַשְׁנֵי) [pronounced <i>mish^e-NEH</i>]	<i>doubles, copies, seconds</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #4932 BDB #1041
You will no doubt notice that the common translation of mish ^e neh is nothing like what we find here (Young being the sole exception). ¹⁵ That is unfortunate, because what this means is that the Israelites did not just seize the best, but they grabbed up the second-best as well. The idea is, they did not leave many for God.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
kar (כַּר) [pronounced <i>kahr</i>]	<i>male lamb, he-lamb, battering ram</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #3733 BDB #503
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ṭûw ^h v (טוֹב) [pronounced <i>too^hv</i>]	<i>good things, goodness, prosperity, well-being, beauty</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2898 BDB #375
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô ^ʿ (לֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
ʾâbâh (אָבָה) [pronounced <i>aw-^âVAWH</i>]	<i>to be willing, to consent</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #14 BDB #2
châram (חָרַם) [pronounced <i>khaw-RAM</i>]	<i>to completely devote to, to devote to, or to completely destroyed</i>	Hiphil infinitive construct plus the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #2763 BDB #355

Translation: But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the flock and the herd, and the second-best; and they chose not to devote [to God by destruction] the rams and all the good things. For some reason, the people chose to spare Agag. It is not clear what occurred. If Saul was with them, he may have identified with Agag and

¹⁵ Barnes also acknowledges this meaning, but guesses that the word must have been corrupted in transmission. *Barnes' Notes; 1Samuel to Esther*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 38.

asked him to be spared; if Saul was not with them, Agag may have used bribery to retain his life (asking only to be able to speak to Saul). Whatever the circumstances, Agag lived. As the Israelites continued their assault, they looked at all the great animals that the Amalekites had and decided to keep them for themselves.

The way I see it, this was not done by a few errant Israelite soldiers who did not know what was up. Saul had to issue a direct order to preserve Agag and to preserve the best and second-best of their animals. That does not just happen. A couple of confused soldiers just don't do that by mistake.

Now, you may wonder why God chooses to *devote* every man, woman, child and animal to Himself. Even though these are a degenerate people, why would you not save the babies? Why would you not save the virgin women? Why would you not save the best of their livestock? A group of people who have fallen into immoral practices could suffer all kinds of venereal diseases and their children could be born with these diseases. Or there could be other diseases which have infected the entire population, including the animals. Isolating all of them and burning them with fire would effectively contain and control the diseases, and prevent their spreading. It does not have to be the case that every single person and animal is infected; however, enough of them might be infected to require the destruction of all. There is nothing here which tells us that this is the reason; however, this would be one plausible explanation.

A second reason to destroy all of the animals is that it is very possible for a group of soldiers to become distracted with the spoils of victory, thus keeping them from completing their mission. This Israelites were commanded to destroy every man, woman and child; yet, there will be enough Amalekites alive during the time of David,¹⁶ only a few years later, to make raiding parties on southern Judah, burning the city of Ziklag to the ground (1Sam. 30:1).

We have seen today in Israel tremendous hatred on the part of some Arabs for Israel (and vice versa). Their hatred is such that a significant number of Arabs have worn jackets of explosives into public places in Israel and detonated themselves simply to kill off a few Jewish civilians. Their hatred is so great that they are willing to give their lives in order to kill several Jews who are not soldiers, who may or may not be prejudiced against the Arabs. Simply because they are Jews is enough of a reason to motivate these attacks. So realize in these attacks, both ancient and recent, it is not simply about gaining a piece of real estate, but about hatred and vindictiveness.

1Samuel 15:9b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>koh</i>]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
m ^e lâ`kâh (מְלָאכָה) [pronounced <i>m^elaw-KAWH</i>]	<i>work, occupation, labor, workmanship, items produced by work?</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4399 BDB #521
bâzâh (בָּזָה) [pronounced <i>baw-ZAW</i>]	<i>to be despised, to be regarded with contempt, despicable, contemptible</i>	feminine singular, Niphal participle	Strong's #959 BDB #102

¹⁶ This was before he was king, but after he had become a nationally-known figure.

1 Samuel 15:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Actually, the word which is found here is <i>n^emb^ezâh</i> (נִמְצָח) [pronounced <i>n^emi-b^ezaw</i>], and this word has no cognates, and its pronunciation would be difficult for Hebrews of that era (the silent or barely pronounced e's are rarely seen between the consonants that we find here. So, Owen says the correct reading is what I have; BDB references the correct reading (BDB #659), but refers back to BDB #102 without defining the word—again, indicating that what I have is the accepted correct reading and indicating that the accepted text is wrong.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mâçaç (וּצָח) [pronounced <i>maw-SAUCE</i>]	<i>to dissolve, to melt; figuratively to become faint, fearful, to despair</i>	Niphal participle	Strong's #4549 BDB #587
There is no disputed reading here; however, the only place where this particular word is generally rendered <i>refuse</i> or <i>worthless</i> is right here. It is found in 20 other places in Scripture and its 3 cognates in as many additional passages, and it does not appear as though this meaning is reasonably applied elsewhere (except in Psalm 112:10, where the verb <i>could</i> be so rendered; however, the verse stands up without changing the meaning of the verb). Now the explanation: when Israel attacked, although we are not told this, I suspect that they used fire to some extent—they gained a foothold and then started a fire here or there. The idea may have been originally to devote some of the things to God—so, the things which burned in these fires, or melted; that they were also willing to devote to God.			
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated mark of a direct object	affixed to 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #853 BDB #84
The feminine singular suffix refers back to the items which were produced by work; those things that the Amalekites made or constructed.			
châram (חָרַם) [pronounced <i>khaw-RAM</i>]	<i>to completely devote to, to devote to, or to completely destroy</i>	3 rd person plural, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #2763 BDB #355

Translation: *However, crafted items which were despised or melted [in the attack], [that] they devoted [to God].* The latter portion of this verse is a great insult to God. In the attack, some things burned. The Amalekites had some things which were worthless to the Israelites—so the Israelites were willing to devote this to God. I hope that it is clear what is happening here. An Israelite soldier would come across some item and remark, “That’s a piece of crap! I wouldn’t give that to my worst enemy.” *That* he devotes to God. Also, in the attack, much of the Amalek dwellings were burned to the ground. If an Israelite came across something that was at one time nice, but had been burned in the fire to a point that it was worthless—*that* he would devote to God.

The NIV Study Bible has an excellent summarization of this verse: *When Israel refused to obey the Lord’s command (v. 3), their holy war against the Amalekites degenerated into personal aggrandizement, much like that of Achan at the time of the conquest of Canaan (see Joshua. 7:1). Giving to the Lord by destruction only what was despised and weak was a contemptible act (see Mal. 1:7–12), not to be excused (see v. 19) by the protestation that the best had been preserved for sacrifice to the Lord (v. 15, 21).¹⁷ Despite the difficulties in translating this verse, its gist is still clearly understood.*

¹⁷ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 393.

Keil and Delitzsch summarize: *Saul no longer desired to be the medium of the sovereignty of Jehovah, or the executor of the commands of the God-king, but simply wanted to reign according to his own arbitrary will. Nevertheless this rejection was not followed by his outward deposition. The Lord merely took away His Spirit.*¹⁸ Which statement sets us up for what is to come.

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Samuel Confronts Saul Concerning His Disobedience to God

And so is a word of Y^ehowah unto Samuel to say,... 1Samuel 15:10 Then the Word of Y^ehowah came [lit., *is*] to Samuel, saying,...

Then the Word of Jehovah went to Samuel: ...

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so is a word of Y^ehowah unto Samuel to say, ...
Septuagint The word of the Lord then came to Samuel, saying: ...

Significant differences: None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV The LORD told Samuel,...

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ Then the LORD spoke to Samuel: ...
JPS (Tanakh) The word of the LORD then came to Samuel: ...

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, ...
Young's Literal Translation And the word of Jehovah is unto Samuel, saying, ...

What is the gist of this verse? God does not go to Saul directly; He speaks to Samuel.

1Samuel 15:10

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224

¹⁸ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 464.

1Samuel 15:10			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dâ ^b vâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAWR]	word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly y ^h oh-WAH]	transliterated variously as Jehovah, Yahweh, Y ^e howah	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʿel (אֵל) [pronounced e/]	in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Sh ^e mûw ^ʿ êl (שְׁמוֹעַל) [pronounced sh ^e -moo-ALE]	which means heard of El; it is transliterated Samuel	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	to say, to speak, to utter	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #559 BDB #55

Translation: Then the Word of Y^ehowah came [lit., is] to Samuel, saying,... We are not told in what way God spoke to Samuel; however, it does not appear to be necessarily a face-to-face meeting where Samuel can discuss this (as Moses discussed the children of Israel with God). Samuel will call out in prayer all night to God, so my reasonable guess is that God came to Samuel in a dream and after the dream, Samuel calls out to God.

“I have been sorry that I caused to reign Saul for a king because he had turned back from after Me and My words he has not caused to stand.” And so He [perhaps, he?] was kindled to Samuel. And so he cried out unto Y^ehowah all the night.

1Samuel
15:11

“I regret that I caused Saul to reign as [lit., to or for] king because he has turned away from following [lit., after] Me and He has not performed My commands [lit., words].” And He evoked [great emotion] in [lit., with regards to] Samuel [or, possibly, and He (he?) burned (in anger) with regards to Samuel]. Then he [Samuel] called out to Y^ehowah all night.

“I regret that I have made Saul king because he has not followed Me nor has he obeyed my commands.” Therefore, God so constrained Samuel [to no longer recognize Saul as king]. However, Samuel called out in prayer to Jehovah all night.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

“I have been sorry that I caused to reign Saul for a king because he had turned back from after Me and My words he has not caused to stand.” And so He [perhaps, he?] was kindled to Samuel. And so he cried out unto Y^ehowah all the night.

Septuagint “I have repented that I have made Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following Me, and he has not kept My word.” And Samuel was grieved and he cried to the Lord all night.

Significant differences: The minor difference in verbs does not affect the meaning of this verse.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV “Saul has stopped obeying me, and I’m sorry that I made him king.” Samuel was angry, and he cried out in prayer to the LORD all night.

NLT “I am sorry that I ever made Saul king, for he was not been loyal to me and has again refused to obey me.” Samuel was so deeply moved when he heard this that he cried out to the LORD all night.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh) “I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned away from Me and has not carried out My commands.” Samuel was distressed and he entreated the LORD all night long.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Emphasized Bible I am grieved that I made Saul to be king, for he hath turned back from following me, and <my words> hath he not established. And it was vexing to Samuel, so that he made outcry unto Yahweh all the night.

NASB “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following [lit., after] Me, and has not carried out My commands.” And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night.

Young’s Updated LT “I have repented that I caused Saul to reign for king, for he has turned back from after Me, and My words he has not performed;” and it is displeasing to Samuel, and he cries unto Jehovah all the night.

What is the gist of this verse? God tells Samuel that he regrets making Saul king over Israel (this is known as an anthropopathism—an emotion is ascribed to God which He does not possess). Saul was rejected because he does not follow God nor does he obey God. Part of this verse is obscure—it appears as though God is expressing anger with regards to Samuel; probably this is not towards Samuel (as there is no reason for God to be upset with him), but since God is speaking to Samuel, His anger is revealed to Samuel. Samuel is upset over this and cries out to God all night in prayer.

1Samuel 15:11a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
nâcham (נָחַם) [pronounced naw-KHAHM]	to be sorry, to be moved to pity, to lament, to grieve to have compassion, to be sorry, to pity, to suffer grief, to rue	1 st person singular, Niphal perfect	Strong’s #5162 BDB #636
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	for, that, because, when	conjunction; preposition	Strong’s #3588 BDB #471

1Samuel 15:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mâlak ^e (מַלַּךְ) [pronounced <i>maw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>to make king, to cause to reign, to cause to rule over</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #4427 BDB #573
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Shâʿûwl (שׂוֹאֵל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l^e</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because, when</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
shûw ^b v (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿachar (אַחֲרַי) [pronounced <i>ah-KHAHR</i>]	<i>after, following, behind</i>	preposition affixed to a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #310 BDB #29
w ^e (or v ^e) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
dâ ^b vâr (דְּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter</i>	masculine plural noun affixed to a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
lô ^ʿ (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518

1Samuel 15:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced koom]	<i>to cause to raise up, to cause to stand, to establish, to fulfill, to cause to stand; to uphold, to perform [a testimony, a vow, a commandment, a promise]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877

Translation: "I regret that I caused Saul to reign as [lit., to or for] king because he has turned away from following [lit., after] Me and He has not performed My commands [lit., words]." God, of course, knew that Saul would fail as king—He knew this in eternity past. However, sometimes the actions or thoughts of God are explained in language of accommodation (or, in other words, an anthropopathism). God does not actually regret, because He knew in advance of Saul's disobedience. However, since God first made Saul king, and then He will proclaim that David will be king—this is easily explained on a human level by saying that God *regretted* making Saul king, and so He chose someone else. We ascribe these thoughts or feelings to God, although He does not have them.

Now may be an excellent time to glance back at the various times that God has *regretted* doing this or that. Just bear in mind that this is an anthropopathism, ascribing to God feelings and emotions which He does not possess in order to better understand *why* He does what He does.

Times When God is Said to Have *Changed His Mind*

Scripture	Details
Gen. 6:6–7	Early on the history of man, mankind became corrupt. Although there are several interpretations of Gen. 6, the one which makes the most sense is that, prior to the flood, sexual union between man and fallen angels was possible. Mankind had become almost completely corrupted; that is, there were only seven people who were still 100% human; every one else was a corrupted mix of fallen angels and man. The behavior was more degenerate than we can imagine even today, with tremendous violence and debauchery reigning in the thoughts and actions of those on earth. Only Noah and his family were not a part of this (the idea very much parallels the Christian today, who is <i>in</i> the world but not <i>of</i> the world).
Ex. 32:1–14	God appeared as though He was going to destroy Israel after the golden calf incident (Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Law, and the Israelites made themselves a golden calf which they worshiped). When Moses interceded on Israel's behalf (thus shadowing what Jesus would do in the future), God is said to have <i>changed His mind</i> about harming His people (v. 14).
1Sam. 15:11	God regrets having made Saul king over Israel.
2Sam. 24:1–17	David took a census of the people (apparently wondering if God had fulfilled His promises to Israel), and God began disciplining Israel for it. God struck Israel with sickness, and 70,000 men died. Then He was about to destroy Jerusalem, but David intervened, taking the (deserved) blame upon himself. So God changed His mind about destroying Jerusalem.
Jer. 18:7–10	If God plans to strike a nation, and that nation turns from it evil, then God will change His mind and refrain from destroying them. On the other hand, if a nation that God has blessed and prospered turns away from Him, then God will also change His mind and place them under great discipline.
Jonah 3:10	When Nineveh turns from the evil that it was doing, God <i>repented</i> from destroying them.

Addendum: Does God change His mind or not is not a matter of dueling theologies, where you find one writer of Scripture asserting that he does, and another asserting that He does not. Even in this chapter, we read: *Furthermore, the Enduring of Israel does not recant [possibly, /ie] nor [is He] moved to pity because He [is] not a man [so as] to pity [a recalcitrant].* (1Sam. 15:29). Moses, in writing down the Law, recorded these words of God: *“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. If He speaks, will he not perform? Or if He has spoken, will He not make it good?”* (Num. 23:19). And Ezekiel confirms this with God’s Word: *“I, Y^{ehowah}, have spoken; it is coming and I will act. I will not relent and I will not pity, and I will not be sorry; according to your ways and according to your deeds, I will judge you,”* declares Y^{ehowah} Elohim (Ezek. 24:14; see also Psalm 110:4 Jer. 4:28 13:14 Ezek. 9:10 Mal. 3:6).

It is first important to note that none of what occurred was a surprise to God. God did not make Saul king, then notice that Saul was rebellious, and cry out, “What have I done? Did I make the wrong person king?” We already know, from Gen. 49:8–10 that the line of Judah would provide the kings of Israel.

Kaiser, Davids et al. explain this: *Repentance in God is not, as it is in us, an evidence of indecisiveness. It is rather a change in his method of responding to another person based on some change in the other individual. The change, then, was in Saul. The problem was with Saul’s partial obedience, his wayward heart and covetousness.*¹⁹ Saul, as the leader of his people, essentially authorized disobedience to God on a grand scale. Therefore, dealing with his disobedience was crucial to the future of Israel.

There is an alternate theory, which I do not buy into, but I will offer it just the same. This passage expresses grave sorrow on the part of God, which is indicated by the word used (which does not always refer to a change of mind but to deep emotional regret).²⁰

Kaiser, Davids, et. al. make an important point in their book *Hard Sayings of the Bible: God’s essence and character, his resolute determination to punish sin and to reward virtue, are unchanging...These are absolute and unconditional affirmations that Scripture everywhere teaches. But this does not mean that all his promises and warnings are unconditional many turn on either an expressed or an implied condition. The classic example of this conditional teaching is Jeremiah 18:7–10: “If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.”* This principle clearly states the condition underlying most of God’s promises and threats, even when it is not made explicit, as in the case of Jonah. Therefore, whenever God does not fulfill a promise or execute a threat that he has made, the explanation is obvious: in all of these cases, the change has not come in God, but in the individual or nation...God’s character, person and plan are immutable; these are things which do not change. However, God is a living being Who does change in response to our thoughts, impulses and actions.²¹ That is, one day Saul is king; the next day, God removes this responsibility from Saul. This does not mean that God’s character has changed; He simply changed a specific in His plan in order to deal with Saul’s change of character. Again, saying that God changed His mind or regretted making Saul king merely helps us to understand God’s motivation.

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Robert Gordon gives us an excellent view of repentance in very few words: *‘Repent’ when used of God is, of course, anthropopathic; yet it conveys an important truth about a God who is not impassive or static, but dynamic in his interaction with his creation.*²²

¹⁹ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 209.

²⁰ *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, p. 161.

²¹ These sentiments were expressed in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; pp. 109, 209.

²² Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 144.

1Samuel 15:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
chârâh (חָרָה) [pronounced <i>khaw-RAWH</i>]	<i>to burn, to kindle, to become angry, to evoke great emotion</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2734 BDB #354

BDB suggests that the reading is probably the Qal imperfect of tsârar, which means *to bind, to tie up, to restrict*, giving us: [So He \[God\] was restrictive to Samuel](#). God was restrictive in the sense that Saul was no longer to be king, and there wasn't anything Samuel could do about it. However, I don't know why BDB would suggest this rendering, apart from problems with understanding the actual text. The Septuagint also makes some changes here, saying that [Samuel was grieved](#). Though this makes a great deal of sense, we still most lose the lâmed preposition and change the verb.

Another thing about which we should be cognizant is the 3rd person masculine singular; if this should read *it kindled Samuel*, then we would expect a feminine singular noun instead (so that it would not be mixed up with the masculine singular nouns).

Another approach is to allow the MT to stand as is, and reinterpret the verb. *Chârâh* does actually mean *to kindle* [a fire], and the idea is that what could be kindled is strong emotion, determined by the context (generally speaking, it is anger, but that is not the only emotion which would *kindle*, so to speak). There is support for this notion in Neh. 3:20, where Baruch *burns with zeal to repair the walls*. [And He evoked great emotion with regards to Samuel...](#) would be the sense of this, which fits well with the context. Under these circumstances, I would have expected a Hiphil stem, however.

lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Sh ^e mûw`êl (שְׁמוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028

The subject of a sentence is not preceded by a lâmed preposition. However, we have several instances where the verb *chârâh* is followed by a lâmed preposition (e.g., Gen. 4:5–6 31:36 34:7). You may notice that most translations ignored the lâmed preposition and made *Samuel* the subject of the anger.

Translation: [And He evoked \[great emotion\] in \[lit., with regards to\] Samuel](#). Or, [Then He burned \[with anger\] with respect to Samuel](#). Most translations have Samuel being angry (presumably with God), but that is not how the text reads. Although it appears as though someone is angry with Samuel, or *someone kindles* [something] *with respect to Samuel*, this just does not fit the context of this verse. Even though the proper noun *Saul* is the closest noun in the context, it makes little sense for Saul to be angry with Samuel, as Saul is not even there. My thinking, if we accept the Masoretic text as accurate, then the interpretation is going to be difficult. If God was angry with Samuel, then we would really expect an explanatory conjunction to follow (there are two of them in this verse), as God would be angry at Samuel for praying on behalf of Saul, the loser. *God was angry with Samuel because he cried out to God all night*. We just do not find that explanatory conjunction here. Therefore, it may be best for us to examine each interpretation in a table to keep them separate.

Translating these four very simple words, and then interpreting them, is actually a rather daunting task. Therefore, let's look at the various interpretations in points. Also, as I write these things, it occurs to me that

some may not have a good understanding of the word *kindle* (not everyone has been a cub scout or a boy scout). I recall building this stack of small twigs over a few leaves, which I would light on fire, and then have to cover with larger twigs, and then pieces of small branches, until, 5 minutes later, I have a reasonable fire going. This is the concept of *to kindle*. In the ancient world, they operated without matches, so the kindling of a fire took even longer. The idea is that an emotion is evoked and then that emotion grows and grows until it is extremely powerful. If we view *to kindle* as not necessarily a small emotion which builds into a great emotion, but an emotion which is simply evoked by the situation, then we have a little more latitude in our interpretation of this passage.

According to Webster, *kindle* means 1. To start (a fire); cause (a flame, blaze, etc.), to spring up. 2. to set fire to or ignite (fuel or any combustible matter) 3. to excite; stir up or set going; animate, rouse, or inflame. 4. to light up, illuminate, or make bright. 5. to begin to burn as combustible matter, a light, fire or flame. 6. to become roused, ardent, or inflamed.²³

Translating and Interpreting Four Words of 1Sam. 15:11

Translation	Interpretation/Pros/Cons
<p>And He kindles [anger] with respect to Samuel.</p>	<p>God's anger (or, emotion) toward Samuel is kindled, aroused or invoked. Although this is easy to justify on the basis of the Hebrew, there just does not appear to be a reason for God to feel anger, even as an anthropopathism, toward Samuel. And if God were angry with Samuel for crying out to Him all night, there should be an explanatory conjunction to pull this together. In any case, there is nothing said in this context which would confirm such an anger from God.</p>
<p>And He kindled [great emotion] with respect to Samuel.</p>	<p>This interpretation makes the most sense (although a Hiphil stem would have been my choice for the verb). The word for <i>kindle</i> generally refers to anger, but we have at least one instance where it does not. Therefore, <i>kindling</i> great emotion, whose content is determined by context, is a very reasonable rendering of this verb and sentence structure. The fact that Samuel cries out to God all night is indicative of Samuel's great emotion. However, it is what God has said to Samuel which has caused the emotion to well up within him. Therefore, Samuel does not work himself up, per se, which is why Samuel is not the subject of the verb (furthermore, being preceded by the lamed preposition also eliminates Samuel as the subject).</p>
<p>And he kindles [great emotion] with respect to Samuel.</p>	<p>Here, Saul's anger is kindled or aroused toward Samuel. The problem is one of timing. We first hear what God has to say, and then find out how Saul will feel about this when Samuel goes to him, and then we go back to right after God speaks to Samuel and Samuel prays for Saul. Furthermore, Saul's response to Samuel, which is not recorded until vv. 24–25. If this is a reference to Saul's feelings toward Samuel, it is way out of place. Saul is nowhere to be found in this immediate context. Furthermore, there is nothing in this chapter which ever suggests that Saul is angry with Samuel. Despite his shortcomings, Saul never seems to have anything less than great respect for Samuel.</p>

²³ Webster's *New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*; Barnes & Noble, Inc., ©1994, p. 787.

`Translating and Interpreting Four Words of 1Sam. 15:11	
Translation	Interpretation/Pros/Cons
And it kindles [emotion] with respect to Samuel.	The big problem here is the subject. The Hebrew does not have a neuter gender, so <i>it</i> has to be represented with either the masculine or feminine gender. Generally speaking, when all of the nearby nouns are masculine, the Hebrew uses the feminine gender to denote <i>it</i> , so that there is no confusion with the other possible subjects. When it comes to interpretation, this is the most reasonable. We have great emotion which is evoked in Samuel, which emotion will be clear in the next line.
And Samuel's anger kindles.	There are two problems with this: (1) Samuel is not the subject in the Hebrew and (2) this interpretation does not square with what is to follow. Samuel does not pray like a man angry with God.

Obviously, knowing the Hebrew does not always make translation and interpretation easier. On the other hand, what I have given you is a more accurate approach to this verse than is found in any other translation.

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Bearing all of this in mind, it may be interesting to look back and see how others have rendered these four words.

Other Translations of These Four Words in 1Sam. 15:11			
Translator	Translation	Pros	Cons
Amplified Bible	And Samuel was grieved and angry [with Saul]...		Samuel is not really the subject in this short sentence. The emotions appear to be contradictory here. I would think that Samuel would be grieved for Saul.
God's Word™, NRSV, REB	Samuel was angry...	<i>To kindle</i> is generally associated with <i>anger</i> .	<i>Samuel</i> is not the subject, and what does he have to be angry about?
JPS	Samuel was distressed...	Fits well with context.	<i>Samuel</i> is not the subject. Is <i>distressed</i> the kind of verb which is evoked and then grows?
NASB	And Samuel was distressed...	The translation <i>distressed</i> appears to fit with the context, even though we do not find this exact rendering of <i>chârâh</i> elsewhere.	The two biggest problems are (1) Samuel is not the subject and (2) <i>kindled</i> is usually associated with anger (although, not always).
NIV	Samuel was troubled...	This fits with the context. We could reasonably see <i>troubled</i> as an emotion which is kindled.	<i>Samuel</i> is not the subject in the Hebrew, nor does <i>troubled</i> seem like an emotion (in this case) which would be kindled.
NJB	Samuel was appalled...	This view is original.	<i>Samuel</i> is not the subject and does <i>appalled</i> really fit with the context or the Hebrew?

Other Translations of These Four Words in 1Sam. 15:11			
Translator	Translation	Pros	Cons
KJV, NKJV	And it grieved Samuel...	This fits with the context and <i>grieving</i> is the kind of emotion which can be <i>kindled</i> .	The only problem here is the word <i>it</i> , we would have expected a feminine singular subject.
NLT	Samuel was so deeply moved when he heard this that...	This fits well with the context.	These 10 words are used to translate only 4 Hebrew words.
Rotherham	And it was vexing to Samuel...	Accurate and reasonable rendering, apart from <i>vexing</i> , which is debatable.	<i>Vexing</i> means <i>to irritate, to annoy, to provoke; to torment, to trouble</i> . What we are looking for is an emotion which grows as Samuel thinks about it, which does not seem to agree with <i>vex</i> .
Young	...and it is displeasing to Samuel...	This is a relatively literal rendering of the Hebrew words with the exception of <i>chârâh</i> , which is nowhere else rendered <i>displeasing</i> .	<i>Chârâh</i> is usually associated with <i>anger</i> . Being <i>displeased</i> does not seem to be the sort of emotion that would be <i>kindled</i> (like anger, jealousy or zeal).

This should tell you that you can have a dozen different translations and still not know what is actually being said here. I think the clear meaning, given the context is: **God kindled [great emotion] with respect to Samuel...** (the negative in this translation is that it takes me 8 English words to translate 4 Hebrew words).

I realize that it would never occurred to you to put this amount of time into the translation and interpretation of 4 simple Hebrew words; however, the purpose of this exegesis is to first given an accurate translation of the Hebrew and then to properly interpret the verse. The fact that it takes a great deal of time is not really an issue.

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1Samuel 15:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
zâ´aq (צָעַק) [pronounced <i>zaw-GAHK</i>]	<i>to cry out, to call, to cry</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2199 BDB #277
´el (אֶל) [pronounced <i>e/</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

1Samuel 15:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
lay ^l lâh (לַיְלָאִה) [pronounced LAY-law]	<i>night; nightly, at night, in the night, during the night</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article; this word can take on adverbial qualities	Strong's #3915 BDB #538

Translation: Then he [Samuel] called out to Y^ehowah all night. This is the greatest help for us to understand the previous four words. Samuel obviously had a great deal of emotion well up within and this sentence indicates that clearly. However, what the context of this does is rule out Samuel being angry. This does not appear to be the action of one who is angry with anyone. That Samuel grieved over Saul being rejected by God is clearly testified to here and in 1Sam. 15:35–16:1. What God said clearly brought out great emotion in Samuel, as Samuel crowned Saul king, and genuinely loved Saul. He takes Saul's complete failure very seriously.

And so rises early Samuel to call Saul in the morning and so it was made known to Samuel, to say, "Had come in Saul the Carmel-ward and behold a setting upright to himself a hand [possibly *monument*] and so he was turning around and so he goes down the Gilgal."

1Samuel
15:12

Samuel then arose early in the morning to summon Saul, but it was made known to Samuel, "Saul had come in to Carmel and look, a setting up for him a monument [lit., *hand*]. Then he turned around and went down [to] Gilgal."

Then Samuel got up early that morning to summon Saul [to tell him God's determination in the matter]. However, he was told, "Saul did come in to Carmel; see, a monument was set up for him. Then he turned around and went down to Gilgal."

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

And when Samuel rose early, to go to Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel that Saul was come to Carmel, and had erected for himself a triumphant arch, and returning had passed on, and gone down to Galgal. And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul was offering a holocaust to the Lord, out of the choicest of the spoils, which he had brought from Amalec.

Masoretic Text

And so rises early Samuel to call Saul in the morning and so it was made known to Samuel, to say, "Had come in Saul the Carmel-ward and behold a setting upright to himself a hand [possibly *monument*] and so he was turning around and so he goes down the Gilgal."

Peshitta

And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul has come to Carmel, and, behold, he has set up a dwelling place fo himself, and has turned and passed on and gone down to Gilgal."

Septuagint

And Samuel rose early and went to meet Israel in the morning, and it was told Saul, saying, "Samuel has come to Carmel, and he has raised up help for himself. And he turned his chariot, and came down to Galgala to Saul." And, behold, he was offering to the Lord, the chief of the spoils which he brought out of Amalec. [in the Hebrew and in the Alexandrian Septuagint, this was told to *Samuel* and it was *Saul* who went to Carmel; it is unclear where the quote should end].

Significant differences: There are a huge number of differences in these verses. The quote seems to be backwards—someone is speaking to Samuel in the Hebrew, Latin and Syriac; but speaking to Saul in the Greek. There is a second sentence in the Greek and Latin, where it appears as though Saul is offering up some of the spoils of his war with Amalek.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Early the next morning he went to talk with Saul. Someone told him, “Saul went to Carmel, where he had a monument built so everyone would remember his victory. Then he left for Gilgal.”

NLT Early the next morning Samuel went to find Saul. Someone told him, “Saul went to Carmel to set up a monument to himself; then he went on to Gilgal.”

TEV Early the following morning he went off to find Saul. He heard that Saul had gone to the town of Carmel, where he had built a monument to himself, and then had gone on to Gilgal.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh) Early in the morning Samuel went to meet Saul. Samuel was told, “Saul went to Carmel, where he erected a monument for himself; then he left and went on down to Gilgal.”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB And Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, “Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal.”

Young's Updated LT And Samuel rises early to meet Saul in the morning, and it is declared to Samuel, saying, “Saul has come in to Carmel, and lo, he is setting up to himself a monument, and goes round, and passes over, and goes down to Gilgal.”

What is the gist of this verse? God has spoken to Samuel, now Samuel needs to talk to Saul and tell him what God said. It appears as though Samuel went all the way down to Carmel, and was then told that Saul was there, he erected a monument, and then he turned around and headed over to Gilgal. It is possible that Saul is avoiding Samuel by moving around as much as he is.

1Samuel 15:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâkam (שָׁכַם) [pronounced <i>shaw-KAHM</i>]	<i>to start, to rise, to rise early, to make an early start</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7925 BDB #1014
Sh ^e mûw ^{êl} (שִׁמְעוֹן) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028

1Samuel 15:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced kaw-RAW]	<i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7121 BDB #894
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוּאֵל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
bôqer (בֹּקֶר) [pronounced BOH-ker]	<i>morning</i>	masculine singular noun (with a definite article)	Strong's #1242 BDB #133
wa or va (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâgad (נִגַּד) [pronounced naw-GAHD]	<i>to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hophal imperfect	Strong's #5046 BDB #616
The Hophal is the passive of the Hiphil (causative stem) and the rarest of the seven stems. There is never a hint of reflexive in this stem and the agent of the verb is often not given in the immediate context. This means, the name of the person who told Samuel this is unimportant to us.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Sh ^e mûw'êl (שְׂמוּאֵל) [pronounced sh ^e -moo-ALE]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'amar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #559 BDB #55

Translation: Samuel then arose early in the morning to summon Saul, but it was made known to Samuel,... The reason that Samuel was going to summon Saul was that God had just spoken to Samuel that night and told him that Saul and his line were history and that they were going to be replaced because of Saul's disobedience.

There appears to be a mixup with the names in my version of the LXX. This verse makes perfect sense in the Hebrew; it makes much less sense in the Greek (the Alexandrian Septuagint does not mix up the names).

It appears, because of what is said next, that Samuel is in Carmel, which is deep into Judah, 30 miles south of Gibeah of Saul and about 7 miles south of Hebron.

1Samuel 15:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bōw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i>]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוֹאֵל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
kar ^e mel (כַּרְמֶל) [pronounced <i>kahr^e-MEL</i>],	<i>garden, plantation</i> and is transliterated <i>Carmel</i>	proper noun with a definite article and a directional hê	Strong's #3760 BDB #502
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i>]	<i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, pay attention, get this, check this out</i>	interjection, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243
nâtsa ^b (נָצַב) [pronounced <i>naw-TSAH^bV</i>]	<i>to station oneself, to take one's stand, to stand up, to set something upright, to erect</i>	Hiphil participle	Strong's #5324 BDB #662
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
yâd (יָד) [pronounced <i>yawd</i>]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #3027 BDB #388

There are a handful of specialized uses for this noun: **a.** *a sign, a monument* (1Sam. 15:12 2Sam. 18:18); **b.** *a part, a fractional part* (Gen. 47:24 2Sam. 19:44 2Kings 11:7 Neh. 11:1); **c.** *time, repetition* (Gen. 43:34 Deut. 1:29).²⁴ The relationship between a *monument* or *time* and *hand* is a *hand points out [something]* and *marks or denotes [a place]*.

Translation: "Saul had come in to Carmel and look, a setting up for him a monument [lit., *hand*]. By the way that this is said, it sounds as though Samuel is in Carmel, because the unnamed speaker says *behold* (as in, *look at this*), *a monument set up for Saul*. Certainly, it is possible that Samuel went to Gibeah of Saul, and he was told that Saul first went down to Carmel and then turned around and went down to Gilgal (he is said to *go down* because Gilgal is at a lower elevation). However, what appears to be the case is that Samuel found out that Saul was in Carmel (we don't know where Samuel was originally, but we can assume his home town); so Samuel then went down to Carmel, only to find that Saul turned around and went down to Gilgal.

²⁴ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 390.

Carmel is mentioned a few times in Scripture. By MacMillan's maps, it appears to be on the outskirts of the territory claimed by Caleb, in the southern portion of Judah, slightly more than halfway down the Dead Sea, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea (but closer to the Dead Sea). This would put it in the hills of Judah, which seem to be more or less an extension of the hills of Ephraim. *Carmel* is not to be confused with *Mount Carmel*, which is in the northwestern portion of Manasseh. Given the meaning of *Carmel* (*garden, plantation*), it is surprising that we do not have more *Carmel's* in the Old Testament. Carmel is mentioned at least thrice in Scripture (Joshua 15:55 1Sam. 15:12 25:2) and Saul is here because he would be traveling this route back from his war with the Amalekites.

This monument is an unusual thing. First of all, it is the simple word for *hand*; however, we have already seen in the Hebrew that the word does mean other things (compare 2Sam. 18:18). Saul's behavior has changed greatly over the past several years (I make it 20–30 years). In the beginning, he was too shy to consider ruling over Israel; and here, he is putting up a monument to himself. Saul throughout his life has been out of synch with God. When he had clearly been selected by God to rule over Israel, he hid from the people. However, as he became more and more used to his position, he became more and more used to doing his own thing. Certainly that with this monument, there was probably a ceremony or some sort, which is not mentioned in God's Word. Saul's inauguration is covered in great detail in Scripture because that was of God. Here, Saul is simply glorifying himself, and therefore, little is said about it. I should add one more thing: isn't it kind of pathetic that Saul is erecting a monument to himself? This is the kind of honor we would hope that others would do on our behalf; but if you have to do it for yourself, it's simply pathetic.

1Samuel 15:12c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
çâbab (בָּבַב) [pronounced <i>saw^b-VAH^bV</i>]	<i>to turn oneself, to be caused to go around, to be turned around</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #5437 BDB #685
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
âbar (בָּרַב) [pronounced <i>gaw^b-VAHR</i>]	<i>to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over</i>	3 rd person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5674 BDB #716
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yârad (יָרַד) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAHD</i>]	<i>descend, go down</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3381 BDB #432
gil ^e gâl (גִּלְגָּל) [pronounced <i>gil^e-GAWL</i>]	<i>sacred circle of stones and is transliterated Gilgal</i>	proper noun, location with the definite article	Strong's #1537 BDB #166

Translation: “Then he turned around and went down [to] Gilgal.”

If Saul was down south fighting the Amalekites, and then he moves north through Carmel, Gilgal is simply moving further north. However, here it says that Saul *turned around*. We need not take this literally as Saul making a 180° turn. What would have been expected is for Saul to return to Gibeah of Saul, which is where he continued to live. Instead, he goes to Gilgal. By the verbiage in this verse, it appears as though he is on the west side of the hills of Judah and that he passes over or crosses over to the east side, and then makes his way toward Gilgal. The *turning around* simply reflects a change of plans or a choice different than one would have originally expected. Although it is never specifically stated, it is possible that Saul is moving quickly and to places where one would not expect him to go to, with the idea of avoiding Samuel. He knows that he has not fully obeyed God, and that Samuel is going to give him what for when they meet. So, Saul moves quickly, and does not necessarily go exactly where one would expect him to. I think that Saul is simply trying to avoid Samuel, because he knows what he has done is wrong.

Application: The application is simple—you can only run from your problems for so long.



Note that Saul would have been up in Gibeah, where he normally hangs out. Then he went down south quite a ways to Carmel. Then he went north, up to Gilgal. This was taken from <http://www.anova.org/sev/atlas/htm/049a.htm>

And so came in Samuel unto Saul and so says to him Saul, “Blessing you to Y^howah! I have caused to stand [the] word of Y^howah!”

1Samuel
15:13

Finally, Samuel came in to Saul, and Saul said to him, “Blessings to you with regards to Y^howah! I have performed [or, upheld] the word of Y^howah!”

Once Samuel found Saul, he went in to see him, and Saul immediately said, “Blessings to you from Jehovah! I have done what Jehovah commanded!”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so came in Samuel unto Saul and so says to him Saul, “Blessing you to Y^howah! I have caused to stand [the] word of Y^howah!”

Septuagint And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, “Blessed [are] you of the Lord. I have performed all that the Lord said.”

Significant differences: The difference of the verb is probably one of translation.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Samuel finally caught up with Saul, and Saul told him, “I hope the LORD will bless you! I have done what the LORD told me.”

NLT When Samuel finally found him, Saul greeted him cheerfully. “May the LORD bless you,” he said. “I have carried out the LORD’s command!”

TEV Samuel went up to Saul, who greeted him, saying, “The LORD bless you, Samuel! I have obeyed the LORD’s command.”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ Samuel came to Saul, who said, "The LORD bless you. I carried out the LORD's instructions."

JPS (Tanakh) When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have fulfilled the LORD's command."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD."

Young's Updated LT And Samuel comes in unto Saul and Saul says to him, "Blessed are you of Jehovah; I have performed the word of Jehovah."

What is the gist of this verse? Saul greets Samuel jubilantly, seeing that he is on a high from destroying the Amalekites. Saul has already in his mind explained exactly how he has obeyed God's commands, even though he did not. Those who misrepresent the truth as artfully as Saul does go over and over in their minds the explanation/justification of their actions, and are prepared to deal with the most careful scrutinization.

1Samuel 15:13a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, then	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced boh]	to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
Sh ^e mûw'êl (שִׁמְעוֹן אֵל) [pronounced sh ^e -moo-ALE]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
'el (אֵל) [pronounced el]	in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוֹאֵל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
wa or va (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, then	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
'amar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	to say, to speak, to utter	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוֹאֵל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

Translation: Finally, Samuel came in to Saul, and Saul said to him,... Saul in his own mind has worked out all the details. When you lie or distort the truth, the idea is to do it with conviction to the point where you have sold yourself on your slightly skewed version. Saul has done that, and he is ready to deal with whatever Samuel says.

1Samuel 15:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK^e</i>]	<i>to kneel down, to bend there knees, and therefore to bless, to make happy, to prosper</i>	Qal passive participle	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
ʿattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ahT-TAW</i>]	<i>you</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced <i>koom</i>]	<i>to cause to raise up, to cause to stand, to establish, to fulfill, to cause to stand; to uphold, to perform [a testimony, a vow, a commandment, a promise]</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
dâ ^b vâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: "Blessings to you with regards to Y^ehowah! I have performed [or, upheld] the word of Y^ehowah!" Although the first phrase is a little clumsy in the English, it was probably a common saying along the lines of *Blessings to you from God* or *blessings to you with respect to God*.

What we have in this verse is a very interesting play on words, although it was not meant to be by Saul, who said it. He had just finished setting up (*qûwm*) a statue which probably commemorated his victory over the Amalekites, and here he tells Samuel that he performed (*qûwm*; the same word) the command of God. *Qûwm* means *to raise up, to stand up perpendicular, to establish, to cause to stand, to fulfill*. In Carmel, its most literal meaning is used—to *stand up perpendicular*; and here, its more derivative meaning is used: *to uphold, to fulfill, to perform*.

You will note that the CEV has thrown in the idea that Saul receives Samuel *cheerfully*. Even though this is not found in this context, it is a very reasonable way to interpret to circumstances. Saul is on a high. He has defeated the Amalekites; the people are 100% behind him again; his screw up with Jonathan was averted;²⁵ he just put up a statue or monument indicating that he was *Man of the Decade* in Carmel, so we would expect him to be cheerful and animated. Also, he increased his wealth considerably with all of the animals which he got.

²⁵ This might have been too far back in time for this to be a part of Saul's cheerful mood.

Furthermore, Saul had it all worked out in his head exactly what he would say to Samuel if Samuel quizzed him too closely. This would also make Saul rather happy.

And so says Samuel, “And what [is the] sound of the flock the this in my ears and [the] sound herd which I am hearing?”

1Samuel
15:14

Samuel then said, “Then what is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the cattle that I keep hearing?”

Samuel responded with, “Then what is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the cattle that I keep hearing?”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so says Samuel, “And what [is the] sound of the flock the this in my ears and [the] sound herd which I am hearing?”
Septuagint	And Samuel said, “What then [is] the voice of this flock in my ears, and the sound of the oxen which I hear?”

Significant differences: No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	“Then why,” Samuel asked, “do I hear sheep and cattle?”
NLT	“Then what is all the bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle I hear?” Samuel demanded.
TEV	Samuel asked, “Why, then, do I heave cattle mooing and sheep bleating?”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™	However, Samuel asked, “But what is this sound of sheep in my ears and this sound of cows that I hear?”
JPS (Tanakh)	“Then what,” demanded Samuel, “is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of oxen that I hear?”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

KJV (Scofield)	And Samuel said, What <i>meaneth</i> , then, this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?
NASB	But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating [lit., <i>sound</i>] of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing [lit., <i>sound</i>] of the oxen which I hear?”
NKJV	But Samuel said, “What then <i>is</i> this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”
Young’s Updated LT	And Samuel says, “And what <i>is</i> the noise of this flock in my ears, and the noise of the herd which I am hearing?”

Occasionally, we find the power and influence of the KJV. Every translator knows that the words found here prior to the animal groups is the word for *sound* or *voice*. However, the KJV is not simply an outstanding translation, but it is great literature as well. In my opinion, High School English classes should study a few books of the Bible as well as Shakespear, to get the feel of the color of the Old English. So, because we find *bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen...* in the KJV, we find similar phrasing throughout many of the English translations. Even Brenton rendered the English of the Greek to reflect this influence (footnoting the actual meaning); which translation I changed to match the Greek.

What is the gist of this verse? Saul has just greeted Samuel cheerfully, claiming to have upheld the word of God. Samuel, in a rather poetic way, says “*Bullshit, you didn’t obey God! What about the sheep and oxen from the Amalekites that I hear?*”

1Samuel 15:14

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #559 BDB #55
Sh°mûwʾêl (שְׁמוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>sh°-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong’s #8050 BDB #1028
w° (or v°) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
mâh (מָה) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong’s #4100 BDB #552
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong’s #6963 BDB #876
tsôn (צֹאן) [pronounced <i>tzohn</i>]	<i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>	feminine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong’s #6629 BDB #838
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, thus</i>	demonstrative adjective with a definite article	Strong’s #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260
b° (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b°h</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong’s #none BDB #88
ʾôzen (אָזֵן) [pronounced <i>OH-zen</i>]	<i>ear</i>	feminine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix; pausal form	Strong’s #241 BDB #23
w° (or v°) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong’s #6963 BDB #876
bâqâr (בָּקָר) [pronounced <i>baw-KAWR</i>]	<i>ox, herd, cattle</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong’s #1241 BDB #133
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong’s #834 BDB #81

1Samuel 15:14

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>ʾânôkîy (אָנֹכִי) [pronounced <i>awn-oh-KEE</i>]</p>	<p><i>I, me</i></p>	<p>1st person singular personal pronoun (sometimes a verb is implied)</p>	<p>Strong's #595 BDB #59</p>
<p>shâma' (שָׁמַע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHG</i>]</p>	<p><i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i></p>	<p>Qal active participle</p>	<p>Strong's #8085 BDB #1033</p>

Translation: Samuel then said, “Then what is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the cattle that I keep hearing?” There is no reason why I can't follow the lead of the KJV here either (which most translators did). The Hebrew is somewhat plain, speaking of the *sound* of the sheep and *sound* of the cattle; making a good translation does not mean that one ignores the concept of literary effect.

My ears is in the pausal form; that, along with the fact that *qôwl* is repeated indicates that Samuel is speaking, to some extent, in Hebrew poetry.

And so says Saul, “From Amalekites they brought them which spared the people upon [the] best of the flock and the herd to the intent of a slaughter to Y^ehowah your Elohim and the remaining we completely devoted.”

1Samuel
15:15

Saul answered, “From the Amalekites they brought those which the people spared beyond the best of the flocks and herds with the intent that [they be] slaughtered to Y^ehowah your God; we completed devoted [to destruction] the remaining ones.”

Saul answered, “We brought those animals out from the very best of those owned by the Amalekites. The people spared them to sacrifice to Jehovah your God. We did, of course, completely destroy the remaining animals.”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

And so says Saul, “From Amalekites they brought them which spared the people upon [the] best of the flock and the herd to the intent of a slaughter to Y^ehowah your Elohim and the remaining we completely devoted.”

Septuagint

And Saul said, “I have brought them out of Amalec, that which the people preserved, even the best of the sheep, and of the cattle, that it might be sacrificed to the Lord your God, and the rest I have utterly destroyed.”

Significant differences: None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV “The army took them from the Amalekites,” Saul explained. “They kept the best sheep and cattle, so they could sacrifice them to the Lord your God. But we destroyed everything else.”

NLT “It’s true that the army spared the best of the sheep and cattle,” Saul admitted, “But they are going to sacrifice them to the LORD your God. We have destroyed everything else.”

TEV Saul answered, “My men took them from the Amalekites. They kept the best sheep and cattle to offer as a sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have destroyed completely.”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™ Saul answered, “The army brought them from the Amalekites. They spared the best sheep and cows to sacrifice to the LORD your God. They the rest they claimed for God and destroyed.”

JPS (Tanakh) Saul answered, “They were brought from the Amalekites, for the troops spared the choicest of the sheep and oxen for sacrificing to the LORD your God. And we proscribed the rest.”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB And Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed.”

Young’s Updated LT And Saul says, “From Amalek they have brought them, because the people had pity on the best of the flock, and of the herd, in order to sacrifice to Jehovah your God, and the remnant we have devoted.”

What is the gist of this verse? Saul begins to put his spin on what occurred. He clearly disobeyed God and allowed his men to disobey God. However, he begins to *spin* this so that it appears as though he did obey God. His men did keep out some of the best of the livestock of the Amalekites, but that was so that these animals could be sacrificed to Jehovah. “Now, apart from the very best of the flocks and herds,” Saul continues, “ we did devote the remainder to God.”

Saul’s choice of words is very exact here. The livestock was something that *they* brought, referring to his soldiers. The purpose of setting them aside was to sacrifice to *your* God, referring to the God of Samuel. Now, for the portion of what Saul did obey of the Word of God, he uses the pronoun *we* (*we* devoted the remnant).

1Samuel 15:15a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa or va (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #559 BDB #55
Shâ`ûwl (שׂוּאָל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong’s #7586 BDB #982

1Samuel 15:15a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿāmâlêqîy (עַמְלֵקִי) [pronounced <i>guh-maw-lay-KEE</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalekite</i>	proper noun gentis	Strong's #6003 BDB #766
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i>]	<i>to take in, to bring, to come in with, to carry</i>	3 rd person plural, Hiphil perfect with a 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #935 BDB #97
Obviously, the meaning of the Hiphil is significantly different from the Qal for this verb.			
ʿāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
châmal (חָמַל) [pronounced <i>khaw-MAHL</i>]	<i>to spare, to have compassion, to show mercy</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #2550 BDB #328
ʿam (עַם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
ʿal is not usually the preposition that we would expect to find with mēyṭab; we would expect the min preposition. However, what is being emphasized here is, not only did they take the best, they took those animals who were above and beyond the best (and, if you will recall, they actually saved out the best and the second best animals).			
mēyṭab (מֵיטָב) [pronounced <i>may-TAH^BV</i>]	<i>the best of</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4315 BDB #406
tsôn (צֹאן) [pronounced <i>tzohn</i>]	<i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>	feminine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #6629 BDB #838
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bâqâr (בָּקָר) [pronounced <i>baw-KAWR</i>]	<i>ox, herd, cattle</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #1241 BDB #133

Translation: Saul answered, “From the Amalekites they brought those which the people spared beyond the best of the flocks and herds... Saul does not admit any wrongdoing. Note just exactly what Saul says and just how careful he is with his words. First of all, he has already told Samuel that he has upheld the Word of God. He wiped

out those Amalekites, just like God asked him to do. Now, by the way, Saul mentions that the people spared the best of the flocks and the herds, not Saul. Now, who has ownership of these flocks and herds? Saul does, of course—but it was *the people* who did this.

Now, the people did not put aside every item owned by the Amalekites—they only put aside only the very best of the flocks and herds of the Amalekites. Now, how do you suppose they decided to do that? Saul does not mention this, but, it would have to be an executive order coming directly from Saul—that would be the only way that his soldiers would set aside particular animals. God had declared the possessions of the Amalekites *cherem*; they were to be completely devoted to God—that is, all of their possessions and all of their animals were to be completely destroyed. How would Saul's soldiers know to do this? By an executive order from Saul. So, what the people do is dependent upon Saul's orders. They obviously did not just act on their own, even though this is the impression which Saul hopes to give.

1Samuel 15:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
לְמַעַן (ל מ ע ן) [pronounced <i>l^o-MAH- gahn</i>]	<i>for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that, in view of, to the end that</i>	compound preposition and substantive which acts like a preposition	Strong's #4616 BDB #775
This is the substantive <i>maʿan</i> (ל מ ע ן) [pronounced <i>MAH-gahn</i>], which means <i>purpose, intent</i> , combined with the <i>lamed</i> preposition (which is the only way that it is found in Scripture).			
זָבַח (ז ב ח) [pronounced <i>zaw^b- VAHKH</i>]	<i>to slaughter [usually an animal for sacrifice]</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #2076 BDB #256
לְמַעַן (ל) (pronounced <i>l^o</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
יְהוָה (י ה ו ה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
אֱלֹהִים (א ל ה י מ) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods or God; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: ...with the intent that [they be] slaughtered to Y^ehowah your God;... Now, Saul does not completely lay this upon his soldiers. The soldiers knew what they were doing. They weren't being greedy or undisciplined; they kept aside the very best of the flocks and herds to slaughter to Jehovah, *Samuel's God*. The God of which Saul speaks is not called *our God* or *Israel's God* or *the people's God*; Jehovah is called *your God*, referring to Samuel. Saul is not placing any blame here—he is simply making it clear that this was all done on behalf of the God of Samuel. These were not self-serving, selfish actions on the part of his soldiers (which is true; they did this by order of Saul who was being self-serving and selfish); his soldiers acting with an eye to God.

Application: *They prayed about it first!* Have you ever heard that? Someone talks about how they prayed all night and then went ahead and did this or that. Do you know that prayer is not the tool for divine guidance? You can pray until you are blue in the face, and nothing is going to come of it. God is not going to tap you on the left shoulder if He wants you to turn left; He is not going to call you on the phone or send you a telegram. He is not going to speak

to you in a still, small voice. You are guided by being filled with the Holy Spirit and by knowing God's Word. God has specific tools for specific jobs. Prayer, the filling of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of doctrine are tools, like a hammer, saw and screwdriver. You can use a screwdriver to nail a nail, but you are going to be there for a long time. You can cut something apart with the claw of a hammer, although it may not look too good when you are finished. You need to use the right tool for the right job. Just so that I make myself completely clear: prayer is worthless to use to know God's will for your life if you do not know God's Word. Okay, I have gone off topic here, but...

To further mitigate his responsibility here, Saul gives the intent of the people: *...to sacrifice to Jehovah your God.* Saul is deftly laying some of the responsibility upon Samuel. He has such nerve! **"They did this so they could sacrifice those animals to Jehovah, your God. The people had their priorities straight, Samuel, and they did this for your God."**

1Samuel 15:15c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (ת א) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
yâthar (ת א) [pronounced <i>yaw-THAHR</i>]	<i>to remain over, to remain</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #3498 BDB #451
châram (ח ר מ) [pronounced <i>khaw-RAM</i>]	<i>to completely devote to, to devote to, or to completely destroy</i>	1 st person plural, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #2763 BDB #355

Translation: *...we completed devoted [to destruction] the remaining ones.* Again, Saul makes it clear that he obeyed God. *We* completely destroyed those that remained. Notice here, Saul uses the personal pronoun. At this point, he is in the picture. He is acting as though he took part in the destruction of what remained, as that was a part of his obedience to God. Saul did not say, *we saved out the best of the flocks and herds*; but, when it comes to something which was in obedience to God, Saul is only too happy to include himself in there.

Saul is good. He knew exactly how to answer Samuel; he knew that he might be questioned and he had a pat answer ready. The animals that Samuel hears came from the very best of the flocks and herds of the Amalekites. Saul even uses a preposition that we would not expect to find here. The *people* (not Saul, per se) kept back those animals which were above and beyond the best that the Amalekites had. But recall what really happened: they (*Saul and the people*) kept out the best *and* the second best animals (1Sam. 15:9). So Saul bends the truth just a little. Saul has made it sound as though he was not involved and it appears as though all that was spared was the very, very best of the animals.

Note that throughout the first portion of what Saul said, there was no 1st person plural or 1st person singular used. It was *they*; it was *the people*. When it comes to what was an act of disobedience, Saul blames the people. But in the last phrase, where some obedience existed, Saul uses the 1st person plural. **"Of course, we completely devoted the remaining animals to a Godly destruction."** Now Saul is willing to assume some responsibility. When it came to keeping out the choices of the flock, *the people* did that; however, the devoting of everything else to destruction, *he* and the people took care of that, just as instructed. Saul bends the truth just enough so that he would have made an excellent lawyer.

Application: Are you one of those people who runs around justifying yourself to everyone? Someone misunderstood you, or did not understand why you did this or that, and you seek these people out and you justify yourself to them. Or, you have this elaborate explanation which you develop in your mind—you do something which is not quite right, so you figure out how to make your actions seem reasonable and just, and, in case anyone asks, you are immediately ready to explain why you did this or that. You have the explanation at your fingertips. You have put just the right amount of spin on it so it seems as though you have done nothing wrong, and that if something wrong did occur, that it apparently was the fault of someone else. This is Saul. He just flat out did not obey God. However, he had good reason not to obey God, in his own mind. And he knew how to spin it so that it did not seem as though he was really participating in disobedience to God. There is no real offense here. God wants these things of the Amalekites devoted to Himself? Well, that is what Saul did—his people kept aside the very best of the herds and flocks to sacrifice to God.

Saul has this explanation ready just in case Samuel asks him about it. My point in all of this? When you disobey God, there is no reason to make excuses, nor is there a reason to seek anyone out and explain yourself. God is the One Who sees all and knows your heart, and it is before Him that you stand. You can try to spin it anyway you want, but God is not going for it.

Saul was not the first person to put a careful spin on a situation where he was to blame. Adam, when he took the fruit from the woman and ate, and then had to explain this to God, said, **“The woman, whom You gave to me—she gave me from the tree, and I ate.”** (Gen. 3:12b). Adam managed to make it appear as though both God and the woman were just as at fault as he was.

When Moses went to receive the Law from God on Mount Sinai, his brother Aaron was left in charge. When Moses returned, Aaron and the people had fashioned a golden calf under Aaron's direction and they were all worshipping it. When Moses unloaded on Aaron, Aaron blamed the people: **“Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil.”** (Ex. 32:22b). Whereas Adam and Aaron were amateurs at passing along the blame and putting the right kind of spin on a situation, Saul was the resident expert; Saul had made blame-shifting and spin into an art form. When pressed, he will continue to shift the blame, which we will study in great detail in vv. 20–21.

McGee draws an analogy between Saul's phoney explanation and a contemporary issue: I become rather amused when it is reported that the liquor interests donate money for beautiful gardens and scenic spots for people to visit and enjoy. They always like to make it known—and the media is apparently delighted to report—how much the liquor interests pay in taxes each year. Of course, anyone knows that the alcoholics are costing our government more than any taxes the liquor interests pay. There is the tendency to cover our evil businesses with good works. Many of God's people try to turn their disobedience into some pious project. I am not sure but what we are all guilty of that sort of thing.

When I came out of seminary and entered the ministry, I drove an old, beat-up jalopy, an old Chevrolet. As a young preacher I was satisfied with it. I was not married, and I enjoyed driving it around, although my congregation was embarrassed by it. In fact, they felt it was sort of a joke. Then I met a young lady, and I began to pray that the Lord would give me a new car. I told Him I needed a new car so that I could be more efficient in my visitation. To be honest, “more efficient visitation” did not enter into it at all. I wanted a nice car to impress this young lady! It is so easy for human beings, believers and nonbelievers, to rationalize.²⁶

And so says Samuel unto Saul, “Stop and I will make known to you that which declared Y^ehowah unto me the night.” And so they say to him, “Speak.” 1 Samuel 15:16

Samuel then said to Saul, “Stop [talking] and I will make known to you that which Y^ehowah declared to me this night.” And they said to him, “Speak.”

²⁶ J. Vernon McGee; *I & I Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 84.

Samuel interrupted him, saying, “Stop talking for a moment so that I can tell you what Jehovah said to me last night.” And they answered, “Okay, speak.”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so says Samuel unto Saul, “Stop and I will make known to you that which declared Y^ehowah unto me the night.” And so they say to him, “Speak.”
Septuagint And Samuel said to Saul, “Stay, and I will tell you what the Lord has said to me this night; and he said to him, “Say on.”

Significant differences: They Hebrew has a plural pronoun in the second sentence; the Greek has a singular, which is what we would expect (as we expect that Saul would be saying this). However, as I have mentioned to you before, the LXX will always make more sense—they have taken text which is 400 years old and older, and translate it, with the idea that, they want it to make sense. So, whereas the Hebrew copyists would be careful not to change even the smallest letter, the Greek translator is looking to give an understandable translation. Therefore, now and again, the Greek translator is going to take some liberties, which is probably what happened here.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV “Stop!” Samuel said. “Let me tell you what the LORD told me last night.” All right,” Saul answered.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™ “Be quiet,” Samuel told Saul, “and let me tell you what the LORD told me last night.” “Speak,” Saul replied.
JPS (Tanakh) Samuel said to Saul, “Stop! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night!” “Speak,” he replied.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB Then Samuel said to Saul, “Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” And he said to him, “Speak!”
Young’s Updated LT And Samuel says to Saul, “Desist, and I declare to you that which Jehovah has spoken to me tonight;” and he says to him, “Speak.”

What is the gist of this verse? Samuel knows exactly what Saul is doing. He knows that Saul is simply shifting the blame, when in reality, it falls squarely on Saul’s shoulders. In this verse, Samuel tells Saul to shut up for a moment and he will pass along what God has told him.

1Samuel 15:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253

1Samuel 15:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Shēmûwʾêl (שֵׁמוּאֵל) [pronounced sh ^e -moo-ALE]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced el]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Shâʾûwl (שׂוּאֵל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
râphâh (רָפָה) [pronounced raw-FAW]	<i>let down, stop, desist, leave off</i> in the imperative	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperative, apocopated form	Strong's #7503 BDB #951
The morphology of râphâh is extremely important when determining its meaning.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced naw-GAHD]	<i>to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil imperfect with a voluntative hê	Strong's #5046 BDB #616
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
dâʾvar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAHR]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly yhoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

1Samuel 15:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿel (לָא) [pronounced <i>el</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition affixed to the 1 st person singular suffix; pausal form	Strong's #413 BDB #39
lay ^l lâh (לַיְלָה) [pronounced <i>LAY-law</i>]	<i>night; nightly, at night, in the night, during the night</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article; this word can take on adverbial qualities	Strong's #3915 BDB #538

Translation: Samuel then said to Saul, “Stop [talking] and I will make known to you that which Y^ehowah declared to me this night.” This was not Samuel’s first conversation with Saul. Samuel knew how Saul’s mind worked. Samuel was used to hearing a spin put on every story; he was used to hearing half-truths. Quite frankly, Samuel was tired of it, and he just tells Saul to “Stop!” Or, more colloquially, “Saul, Give it a rest.”

Now, it was Saul who mentions God and said that these animals were kept alive to sacrifice to Jehovah, Samuel’s God. So Samuel says, “*Speaking of Jehovah, my God—this is what He said to me last night.*” There are two interesting linguistic aspects to this half of the verse. There are two words for the word *to*: the lâmed preposition, which lacks formality, and the preposition ʿel, which is more formal and shows respect.²⁷ When Samuel is going to make know *to Saul* what God said to him, Samuel uses the less formal of the two prepositions, indicating little deference for Saul’s position as king. However, when God speaks *to Samuel*, it is with the more formal preposition, indicating more respect.²⁸

The second peculiarity of the Hebrew is the word *the night*, which we generally render *tonight*. When I say *tonight*, I am referring to the night which is coming. However, when the Hebrew says *tonight*, he can be referring to the previous night, as the Hebrew 24 hour day begins at sunset and runs until the next sunset (informally, our begins around sunrise and runs until sunrise; more formally, ours begins in the middle of the night, midnight, and runs until the following midnight). So, when a Hebrew says *tonight*, the night which belongs to that day is the previous night. When we say *tonight*, the night belonging to our day is the one which follows. There is no clear time frame given to us here with respect to Samuel’s search for Saul and Saul’s moving from Carmel to Gilgal. It is best to recall that the Hebrew minds groups things topically rather than chronologically. What appears to be the case is that Samuel was originally headed over to see Saul and apparently, he was expecting to meet with him in Carmel. More than likely, God so instructed him to meet with Saul. The night before Samuel arrived in Carmel, God spoke to him early that night, the basic content of which is found in v. 11. The next morning, Samuel arrives in Carmel, and is told that Saul had already left for Gilgal. So Samuel turns it around and heads back toward Gilgal, which he is able to reach within that very day. Therefore, when it says here that God spoke to him that night, it is the night before by the Gentile way of thinking.

What is very likely the case is that Samuel was very sorry about the situation and pleaded with God that previous night; however, in meeting with Saul and hearing Saul explain his behavior away as though he had done no wrong—that changed Samuel’s opinion. No longer did he see God’s judgment of Saul as being too harsh.

²⁷ In the Spanish language, there are two ways of saying *you*; one which is formal and the other which is less so. This is a similar situation.

²⁸ If you will notice, whenever the king speaks to someone, the king speaks *to* them, but they speak *unto* the king; we find that in this verse as well.

1Samuel 15:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
This is written <i>they say</i> but it is read <i>he says</i> ... ²⁹ In the Hebrew, <i>he says</i> is אָמַרְהוּ and <i>they say</i> is יֹאמְרוּ. As you can see, the difference is simply one letter in the Hebrew (recall that the vowel points were added many centuries after the original manuscripts).			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
dâ ^b var (דַּבַּר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAHR</i>]	<i>speak, talk [and back with action], give an opinion, expound, make a formal speech, speak out, promise, propose, speak kindly of, declare, proclaim, announce</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Piel imperative	Strong's #1696 BDB #180

Translation: *And they said to him, "Speak."* The verb here tells us that Samuel and Saul are not speaking one-on-one, but there is cadre of Saul's men with him. The other possibility is that the text was corrupted. This is read *he says* even though it is written *they say*.

And so says Samuel, "Not if little you [are] in your eyes, a head of staffs of Israel you? And so anoints you Y^ehowah king over Israel.

1Samuel
15:17

Then Samuel said, "Though you [are] little in your eyes, [aren't] you the head of the tribes of Israel? Yehowah did anoint you king over Israel [did He not?]."

Samuel continued: "Even though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? Did not Jehovah anoint you king over Israel?"

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text *And so says Samuel, "Not if little you [are] in your eyes, a head of staffs of Israel you? And so anoints you Y^ehowah king over Israel.*

Septuagint *And Samuel said to Saul, "Are you not little in his eyes, a leader of a staff of a tribe of Israel? And the Lord anointed you to be king over Israel.*

Significant differences: There are a few extra word in the Greek; however, this meaning remains unchanged.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV *Samuel continued, "You may not think you're very important, but the LORD chose you to be king, and you are in charge of the tribes of Israel.*

²⁹ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 303.

NLT And Samuel told him, “Although you may think little of yourself, are you not the leader of the tribes of Israel? The LORD has anointed you king of Israel.
 TEV Samuel answered, “Even though you consider yourself of no importance, you are the leader of the tribes of Israel. The LORD anointed you king of Israel,...

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™ Samuel said, “Even though you don’t consider yourself great, you were the head of Israel’s tribes. The LORD anointed you king of Israel.
 JPS (Tanakh) And Samuel said, “You may look small to yourself, but you are the head of the tribes of Israel. The LORD anointed you king over Israel,...

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB And Samuel said, “Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel, ...
 Young’s Updated LT And Samuel says, “Are you not, if you are little in your own eyes, head of the tribes of Israel? And Jehovah does anoint you for king over Israel, ...

What is the gist of this verse? Saul tried, in the previous verse, to not take any of the responsibility for sparing the animals for himself. Here, Samuel goes back to when Saul portrayed himself as being the least of the least of Israel, and he gently points out, “Aren’t you the head of all the tribes of Israel? Didn’t Jehovah God anoint you king over all Israel? The implication is, the disobedience for God’s order rests upon Saul’s shoulders alone; he is the king of Israel, he is the head of the tribes of Israel, and there is no way that he can shirk this responsibility.

1Samuel 15:17			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, then	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	to say, to speak, to utter	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #559 BDB #55
Sh ^e mûwʾêl (שִׁמְוֵאל) [pronounced sh ^e -moo-ALE]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong’s #8050 BDB #1028
hă (הֲ) [pronounced heh]	interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.		Strong’s #none BDB #209
lôʾ (לֹא or לֹא־) [pronounced low]	not, no	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong’s #3808 BDB #518
ʾim (אִם) [pronounced eem]	if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event)	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong’s #518 BDB #49

1Samuel 15:17

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
These 3 previous particles together elicit a negative response and can be rendered <i>if, though</i> .			
qâṭôn (קָטוֹן) [pronounced kaw-TOHN]	<i>small, insignificant; a word particularly used for youth, younger</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #6995 & #6996 BDB #882
ʾattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced aht-TAW]	<i>you (often, the verb to be is implied)</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿayin (עַיִן) [pronounced GAH-yin]	<i>spring, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes, spring</i>	feminine dual construct with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744
rôʾsh (רֹאשׁ) [pronounced rohsh]	<i>head, top, chief, front, choicest</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7218 BDB #910
shêbet (שֵׁבֶט) [pronounced SHAY ^B -vet]	<i>rod, staff, club, scepter and figuratively for a tribe, subdivision of a tribe or family</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #7626 BDB #986
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
ʾattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced aht-TAW]	<i>you (often, the verb to be is implied)</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; pausal form	Strong's #859 BDB #61
The pausal form here indicates that we are at the end of the question being asked by Samuel. Then, in the next phrase, Samuel will help Saul out with his answer...			
wa or va (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mâshach (מָשַׁח) [pronounced maw-SHAKH]	<i>to smear, to anoint</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4886 BDB #602
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

1Samuel 15:17

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MĒH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>ǵahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Yis ^o râ ^h êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw- ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: Then Samuel said, “Though you [are] little in your eyes, [aren’t] you the head of the tribes of Israel? Yehowah did anoint you king over Israel [did He not?]. Recall that Saul was originally quite taken back by God installing him as king over Israel, and he even hid from this responsibility. He did not see himself as king, and that is the first impression that Samuel has of Saul (see 1Sam. 9:21 where Saul claims to be the least in his family, which is from the least of the tribes in Israel; see also 1Sam. 10:22). Contrast that with the Saul of this day, who has just finished putting up a monument to himself. “Though you may feel as though you are little in your own eyes...” is the gist of what Samuel says to begin with. Then Samuel asks, not without a little sarcasm, “You are the head of the tribes of Israel, are you not?” You see, Saul has put the blame off on his troops, and Samuel asks him, “Aren’t you in charge of these men? Aren’t they under your command?”

Then, what appears to be the case is that Samuel answers his own rhetorical question here by saying, “Hell, yes, God did anoint you king of Israel.” On the other hand, this could possibly be a continuation of the rhetorical question: “God did anoint you king over all Israel, did he not?” Samuel’s questions are clearly dripping with sarcasm here. Samuel says, “Am I speaking to the right person? You are the king of Israel, aren’t you? I mean, I realize that you do not hold yourself in high regard, but you are the man in charge, are you not?” Saul has tried to shirk his responsibility in this matter, and Samuel holds him to it.

I recall a person once saying that their best attribute was that they always said what was on their mind; they were always willing to express their opinion. I hope that you realize that this is the attribute of any 3 or 4 year old child. They are always willing to tell you what they are thinking, to give you their frank opinion, and it takes many years of training to teach a child that you do not always express your frank, honest opinion every time there is a lull in the conversation. You don’t need to tell someone they are getting fat; you don’t need to tell every unattractive person that you meet that you find them unattractive. When someone says something stupid, be it on purpose or a slip of the tongue, it is not always necessary for you to tell them how stupid their remark was. I have just picked Saul apart in everything that he said; however, note what Samuel says. He speaks with class, with some deference to Saul’s position, and yet he lays it on the line. Saul is in the midst of his private group of cronies, so Samuel does not have to say, “Saul, you stupid ass, I can see right through you. Any idiot can see right through you. How is it possible for you to be so damned stupid and still be able to walk and talk? How the hell do you manage to hold onto your kingship?” But Samuel doesn’t say any of this. Well, he does, but he is classy and understated. Samuel deals directly with what Saul said, and is able to tell him what God said as well. Saul essentially blamed the people for saving out the animals alive (although he attributes to them good motivation). Samuel says, “Certainly, you have always seen yourself as the least of the least.” In other words, Saul portrayed himself as being unimportant, so he might distance himself from the Israelites who took the animals: “I’m just a nobody; my opinion is unimportant.” “However,” Samuel points out, “God made you king over Israel.” What Samuel is stressing is that Saul had a hand in this—he is the king of Israel, and he has to assume to responsibility.

Application: Now, go back and reread the translation. Samuel is able to upbraid Saul without being insulting. He is able to do this when Saul is standing in the midst of his cronies. That takes tact and intelligence. If, while under pressure, you have to give your opinion on something, and you are able to do it with tact and graciousness, then

you can call *that* an attribute. If you just shoot off your mouth whenever and say whatever is on your mind, that simply means that your parents either didn't bother to train you, or you resisted their good advice.

Application: So many people would love to be in charge; they would love to run the show. Who doesn't want to be the President? Who doesn't want to be the CEO of their company, or the shift manager, or the team leader, or the department head? They would love to be able to tell everyone around them how to do things right. With authority comes responsibility. Saul is shirking his here, which is part of the problem. God rejects Saul partially because Saul will not assume responsibility for his position. When you become a parent, it is not because you desire to have a smaller person that you can boss around (even though you might end up doing this). When you hold that child in your arms, you realize how completely dependent they are upon you and the responsibility that you have at that time and for years to come is almost unimaginable. If, in taking a position of authority, you can look at those under you in the same way as you did that child, then you might be ready to be in charge. If the first thing on your mind is how you are going to straighten everything and everyone out, then you got promoted beyond your abilities.

And so sends you Y^ehowah in a way and so says, 'Go and completely devote [to destruction] the sinners—Amalek and wage war in him until their completion [or, destruction] [to] them.'

1 Samuel
15:18

Y^ehowah sent you on a mission [lit., way] and said, 'Go and proscribe the deviants, [i.e.] Amalek, and you will wage war against him until their complete [and total] annihilation.'

Jehovah had sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and proscribe the Amalekites; wage a war of complete annihilation against them.'

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

And so sends you Y^ehowah in a way and so says, 'Go and completely devote [to destruction] the sinners—Amalek and wage war in him until their completion [or, destruction] [to] them.'

Septuagint

And the Lord sent you on a journey, and said to you, 'Go, and utterly destroy—you will slay the sinners against me, the Amalekites, and you will war against them until you have consumed them.'

Significant differences:

Except for the additional couple words, there are no significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

When the LORD sent you on this mission, he told you to wipe out those worthless Amalekites.

TEV

...and he sent you out with orders to destroy those wicked people of Amalek. He told you to fight until you had killed them all.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™

And the LORD sent you on a mission. He said, 'Claim those sinners, the Amalekites, for me by destroying them. Wage war against them until they're wiped out.'

JPS (Tanakh)

...and the LORD sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and proscribe the sinful Amalekites; make war on them until you have exterminated them.'

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB

...and the LORD sent you on a mission [lit., way], and said, 'Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated.'

Young's Updated LT

...and Jehovah sends you in the way, and says, 'Go, and you have devoted the sinners, the Amalekite, and fought against them til they are consumed;... Interestingly enough, Young saw this quotation from God being continued into the next verse.

What is the gist of this verse? Samuel reminds Saul that God had sent him on a mission to completely destroy all the Amalekites, calling them deviants (sinners).

1Samuel 15:18

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced shaw-LAKH]	<i>to send, to send for, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy, to put forth</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7971 BDB #1018
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
derek ^e (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced DEH-rek ^e]	<i>way, distance, road, journey, manner, course</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1870 BDB #202
wa or va (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	<i>go, come, depart, walk; advance</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
châram (חָרַם) [pronounced khaw-RAM]	<i>to completely devote to, to devote to, or to completely destroyed</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #2763 BDB #355
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84

1Samuel 15:18

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
chaṭṭâ' (חַטָּאִים) [pronounced <i>khat-TAW</i>]	<i>sinner, deviates, deviants, transgressors</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #2400 BDB #308
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'amâlêq (אֶמְלֵק) [pronounced <i>áh-maw-LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâcham (לָחַם) [pronounced <i>law-KHAHM</i>]	<i>engage in battle, engage in war, to wage war, to fight</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #3898 BDB #535
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity affixed to the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88
'ad (אֲדָ) [pronounced <i>áh-d</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
kâlâh (כָּלָה) [pronounced <i>kaw-LAWH</i>]	<i>to complete, to finish, to prepare; to come to an end, to finish; to consume, to waste, to destroy, to annihilate; to make pine away</i>	Piel infinitive construct affixed to the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #3615 BDB #477

In the MT, it reads *they have annihilated them*, but in the Aramaic, Septuagint and Syriac, it reads *until you [singular] have annihilated them*. Saul quite obviously does not kill each and every Amalekite. Therefore, either reading is acceptable. In the Hebrew text, Saul is to engage the Amalekites in battle until every one of them is slaughtered by Saul's army. In the Aramaic, LXX and Syriac, Saul is to continue fighting the Amalekites until he has destroyed them all (which means, by extension, his army).

I mention many of these alternate readings because of the general abysmal ignorance of Scripture. Recently on the radio I was listening to a radio program in which the speaker talked about how the Bible was revised in many places over time for religious reasons. The manuscript evidence suggests otherwise. Even though there are certainly errors which have crept into the text, the alternate readings (which, of course, suggest a possible error) rarely change the meaning of the passage. Our passage, for example...

'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	direct object generally untranslated	affixed to the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #853 BDB #84
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Translation: Y^{ehowah} sent you on a mission [lit., way] and said, 'Go and proscribe the deviants, [i.e.] Amalek, and you will wage war against him until their complete [and total] annihilation.' God clearly told Saul through Samuel that all of the Amalekites had to be destroyed along with all of their animals. "Now go and strike down Amalek and completely destroy all that he has, and do not spare him, but put to death both man and woman, child and infant,

ox and sheet, camel and donkey.” (1Sam. 15:3). God’s order was unambiguous. There is no way that Saul misunderstood it.

We find the word *sinnners* in this verse, which is actually used more rarely than you would suspect in the Old Testament (18 times). This gives us the only hint as to why the Amalekites were to be destroyed. They were *sinnners*. Seeing that we all fall under that category, it would be reasonable to suppose that their degeneracy had reached some spectacular heights (the men of Sodom are also so described).

There is a slight disagreement between Young and the other translations—Young has the quotation running through the next verse. Most translations end the quotation from God at this verse. However, there is no problem, even if we cannot determine which this should be—Samuel is delivering the Word of God; what he says to Saul right now is the Word of God. This is something which Moses discovered late in his life. For the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, Moses was very careful to indicate when God was speaking and when someone else was speaking. However, by the book of Deuteronomy, Moses realized that God could speak through him, and God speaking through Moses constitutes the bulk of the book of Deuteronomy. So, regardless of whether we interpret this quotation is continuing or not, in any case, what Samuel says to Saul is as though it was from God.

<p>And for why had you not listened to a voice of Y^ehowah? And so [why did] you swoop down into the plunder and so you did evil in [the] eyes of Y^ehowah.”</p>	<p>1Samuel 15:19</p>	<p>Why did you not listen to the voice of Y^ehowah? And [why] did you swoop down upon the plunder? You did evil in the sight of Y^ehowah.”</p>
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Why didn’t you obey the voice of Jehovah? Why did you instead take the livestock of the Amalekites? In this, you did that which is wrong before Jehovah.”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

<p>Masoretic Text</p>	<p>And for why had you not listened to a voice of Y^ehowah? And so [why did] you swoop down into the plunder and so you did evil in [the] eyes of Y^ehowah.”</p>
<p>Septuagint</p>	<p>And why did you not listen to the voice of the Lord, but you did haste to fasten upon the spoils, and you did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord?”</p>

Significant differences: No significant difference.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

<p>CEV</p>	<p>Why didn’t you listen to the LORD? Why did you keep the animals and make him angry?”</p>
<p>NLT</p>	<p>Why haven’t you obeyed the LORD? Why did you rush for the plunder and do exactly what the LORD said not to do?”</p>

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<p><i>God’s Word</i>TM</p>	<p>Why didn’t you obey the LORD? Why have you taken their belongings and done what the LORD considers evil?”</p>
<p>JPS (Tanakh)</p>	<p>Why did you disobey the LORD and swoop down on the spoil in defiance of the LORD’s will?” [lit., “and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD.”]</p>

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<p>NASB</p>	<p>“Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?”</p>
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Young's Updated LT

...and why have you not hearkened to the voice of Jehovah—and do fly unto the spoil, and do the evil thing in the eyes of Jehovah?’ As previously mentioned, Young continues the quotation of Jehovah God, as spoken by Samuel. There is no problem with God referring to Himself in the third person (e.g., Ex. 34:11–14). Being that He is a Triune God, this does not necessarily mean that He is speaking of Himself in the third person.

What is the gist of this verse? Samuel asks Saul why did he disobey God. Instead, Saul took the livestock of the Amalekites, doing evil before God.

1Samuel 15:19a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>le</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâh (ה מ) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
Lâmed + mâh can be rendered <i>why, for what reason, to what purpose, for what purpose</i> , indicating an interrogatory sentence.			
lô ^o (אֵל or אֵלֹ) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
shâma ^o (שָׁמַע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHĠ</i>]	<i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity affixed to the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88
qôw (קוּ) [pronounced <i>koh</i>]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6963 BDB #876
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yohh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: *And why did you not listen to the voice of Y^ehowah?* My guess is that this was not a rhetorical question. Samuel did have a desire to know just exactly why Saul had chosen not to obey God and the clear instructions that were delivered to him. The great emotion which Samuel feels is indicated in vv. 11 and 35. Saul

is more than just some errant king that Samuel has had to put up with. His mistakes and their consequences have personally devastated Samuel.

1Samuel 15:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
One might interpret this next phrase as a continuation of the question above.			
ʿîyṭ (טַיַּט) [pronounced <i>geet</i>]	<i>to dart greedily (like a bird of prey), to swoop down, to fly upon, to flit upon, to pounce upon</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5860 BDB #743
Owen is a bit messed up here; there appears to be an error in the Hebrew word (in his book—this word is represented as occurring twice in this verse) as well as the person, which is not 3 rd person masculine singular but 2 nd person masculine singular.			
This is a relatively rare word in Scripture, found only here and in 1Sam. 14:32 25:14.			
ʿel (לְ) [pronounced <i>eI</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
shâlal (לָלַץ) [pronounced <i>shaw-LAWL</i>]	<i>booty, spoil, plunder, recompense, reward</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7998 BDB #1021
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
raʿ (רָע) [pronounced <i>rahg</i>]	<i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; disagreeable, displeasing; unhappy, unfortunate; sad</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7451 BDB #948.
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity affixed to the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿayin (עֵינַי) [pronounced <i>GAH-yin</i>]	<i>spring, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes, spring</i>	feminine dual construct	Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: Why did you not listen to the voice of Y^ehowah? And [why] did you swoop down upon the plunder? You did evil in the sight of Y^ehowah.” Samuel has learned that what Saul has to say is just so much crap. However, he lays it out for Saul so that his offense is clear and unmistakable. He tells Saul, by a rhetorical question, that he did not listen (and obey) God, and that he swooped upon the plunder, like I see the blackbirds here in Texas swoop down upon the dead Armadillos on the streets and highways. However, it is not in Saul’s nature to simply say, “Yeah, you’re right—I screwed up big time.” Instead, he tries to play Samuel again.

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Saul Makes Excuses for His Disobedience to God

And so says Saul unto Samuel, “Which I have listened [and obeyed] in a voice of Y^ehowah and so I go to the road which sent me Y^ehowah and so I bring Agag, king of Amalek and Amalek I have devoted.

1Samuel
15:20

“Which voice of Y^ehowah I did hear [and I obeyed],” Saul insisted. “I went on the mission which Y^ehowah sent me and I brought back Agag, the king of Amalek, and I proscribed the Amalekites.

“And I did listen to the voice of Jehovah and I obeyed that voice.” Saul protested. “I went on the mission which Jehovah sent me on; I brought back King Agag; and then I destroyed all the Amalekites.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	And Saul said to Samuel: “Yea, I have listened to the voice of the Lord, and have walked in the way by which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag, the king of Amalek, and Amalek I have slain.
Masoretic Text	And so says Saul unto Samuel, “Which I have listened [and obeyed] in a voice of Y ^e howah and so I go to the road which sent me Y ^e howah and so I bring Agag, king of Amalek and Amalek I have devoted.
Septuagint	And Saul said to Samuel, “Because I listened to the voice of the people; yet I went the way by which the Lord sent me, and I brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I destroyed Amalek.

Significant differences: There is a fairly big difference between the Greek and the other languages. In the Greek, Saul is blaming the people, saying that he listened to them. In the Hebrew (and Latin and Syriac), he is claiming that he has obeyed God. In context, there is not a lot of difference, except in interpreting this verse.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	“But I did listen to the LORD!” Saul answered, “He sent me on a mission, and I went. I captured King Agag and destroyed his nation.
NLT	“But I did obey the LORD,” Saul insisted. “I carried out the mission he gave me. I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™	“But I did obey the LORD,” Saul told Samuel. “I went where the LORD sent me, brought [back] King Agag of Amalek, and claimed the Amalekites for God.
JPS (Tanakh)	Saul said to Samuel, “But I did obey the LORD! I performed the mission on which the LORD sent me; I captured King Agag of Amalek, and I proscribed Amalek,...

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB Then Saul said to Samuel, "I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission [lit., way] on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

Young's Updated LT And Saul says unto Samuel, "Because—I have hearkened to the voice of Jehovah, and I go in the way which Jehovah has sent me, and I bring in Agag, king of amalek, and Amalek I have devoted;..."

What is the gist of this verse? Saul confesses that he allowed Agag, the Amalekite king, to live. However, he phrases this in such a way as to sound like he was obeying God in this.

1Samuel 15:20

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוֹאֵל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced el]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Sh°mûw'êl (שְׂמוּעַל) [pronounced sh°-moo-ALE]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
ʾasher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81

The relative pronoun here is a little tricky. Even though we have *the voice of Jehovah* to follow this, it appears as though Saul jumped right in to the midst of what Samuel was saying, picked up the portion where Samuel told him that he did not obey the voice of God, and Saul immediately says, "[Which \[voice\] I did hear and obey.](#)"

shâma' (שָׁמַעַ) [pronounced shaw-MAHG]	<i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
b° (בְּ) [pronounced b°]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity affixed to the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6963 BDB #876

1Samuel 15:20

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâlak ^e (הלך) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; advance</i>	1 st person plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity affixed to the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88
derek ^e (דרך) [pronounced <i>DEH-rek^e</i>]	<i>way, distance, road, journey, manner, course</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1870 BDB #202
ʾăsher (אשר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
shâlach (שלח) [pronounced <i>shaw- LAKH</i>]	<i>to send, to send for, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy, to put forth</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #7971 BDB #1018
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bôw ^ʾ (בוא) [pronounced <i>boh</i>]	<i>to take in, to bring, to come in with, to carry</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
ʾêth (את) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʾăgâg (אגג) [pronounced <i>uh-GAWG</i>]	which possibly means <i>violent</i> and is transliterated <i>Agag</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #90 BDB #8
melek ^e (מלך) [pronounced <i>MĒH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
ʿamâlêq (עמלק) [pronounced <i>ʿah-maw- LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

1Samuel 15:20

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʿamâlêq (עַמְלֵק) [pronounced <i>gah-maw-LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766
châram (חָרַם) [pronounced <i>khaw-RAM</i>]	<i>to completely devote to, to devote to, or to completely destroyed</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #2763 BDB #355

Translation: “Which voice of Y^ehowah I did hear [and I obeyed],” Saul insisted. “I went on the mission which Y^ehowah sent me and I brought back Agag, the king of Amalek, and I proscribed the Amalekites.

I don't know if you grasp how comical this all is, in a way. Saul was not supposed to keep Agag alive, but he knows that he has to tell Samuel that Agag is alive; so, what he does, is act as though he believed that he was obeying God and, “...oh, by the way, Agag is right here, just like God told me to do.” When people do that which is wrong, they have a number of ways of dealing with it. Saul here acts as though he thought that he has been obeying God's orders. “Oh, yeah, I obeyed God: I killed all the Amalekites and kept Agag right here where we can keep an eye on him.” What is important is that I want you to recognize this as pure and simple bull crap from the mouth of Saul. It is what he does; it is the dance he dances. That way, you will understand why his repentance later on in this chapter is not very meaningful.

Application: Now, you and I—we're honest people and we tend to take what others say at face value. If someone tells you this or that, then you tend to believe them, apart from evidence to the contrary, because you are an honest person and what you say is generally the truth. However, you have to be discerning once and awhile and recognize that some people just say whatever they can which (1) justifies their position and (2) gets them out of trouble. They will say *anything*. Anything.

Application: Interestingly enough, these same people will be brutally honest when talking about others. The very same person will lie and deceive when the truth makes them look bad; but they are the first person to criticize another, and then say, “I'm just being honest!” I believe I saw a column of Miss Manners where she remarked that a person might lie on his taxes, they might lie when it comes to something which makes them look bad, but when it comes to the faults of another, no matter how obvious, they will point them out, and then say, “I'm just being honest.”

<p>And so seize the people from the spoil, flock and herd, firstlings of the corban [i.e., things under the ban] to slaughter to Y^ehowah your Elohim in Gilgal.”</p>	<p>1Samuel 15:21</p>	<p>“However, the people grabbed up from the plunder—sheep and oxen—the firstlings of the corban [i.e., things under God's curse] to slaughter to Y^ehowah your Elohim in Gilgal.”</p>
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However, some of the people saved out the firstborn of the sheep and oxen, those things under God's curse, in order to sacrifice them to Jehovah your God when we celebrate in Gilgal.”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so seize the people from the spoil, flock and herd, firstlings of the corban [i.e., things under the ban] to slaughter to Y ^e hovah your Elohim in Gilgal.”
Septuagint	But the people took of the spoils the best flocks and herd <i>out</i> of that which was destroyed; to sacrifice before the Lord our God in Galgal.”

Significant differences: No significant differences, apart from the personal pronoun with *God*.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	All the animals were going to be destroyed anyway. That's why the army brought the best sheep and cattle to Gilgal as sacrifices to the LORD your God.”
NLT	Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep and cattle and plunder to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> TM	The army took some of their belongings—the best sheep and cows were claimed for God—in order to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”
JPS (Tanakh)	...and the troops took from the spoil some sheep and oxen—the best of what had been proscribed—to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	“But the people took <i>some</i> of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	...and the people take of the spoil of the flock and herd, the first part of the devoted thing, for sacrifice to Jehovah your God in Gilgal.”

What is the gist of this verse? Saul is fairly certain that he sneaked in the name of Agag as captured, more or less, according to the mandate of God. Here he blames the keeping alive of the best animals on his own men (over whom he ruled, by the way).

1Samuel 15:21

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced <i>law-KAHKH</i>]	<i>to take, to take from, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize, to take possession of; to send after, to fetch, to bring; to receive</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3947 BDB #542
'am (אָם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

1Samuel 15:21

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
shâlal (לָלַשׁ) [pronounced <i>shaw-LAWL</i>]	<i>booty, spoil, plunder, recompense, reward</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7998 BDB #1021
tsôn (צֹאן) [pronounced <i>tzohn</i>]	<i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>	feminine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #6629 BDB #838
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bâqâr (בָּקָר) [pronounced <i>baw-KAWR</i>]	<i>ox, herd, cattle</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #1241 BDB #133
rêshîyth (רֵאשִׁית) [pronounced <i>ray-SHEETH</i>]	<i>first fruit, firstling, first of one's kind, first, chief; a beginning, a former state</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7225 BDB #912
chêrem (חֵרֵם) [pronounced <i>KHĀY-rem</i>]	<i>something completed devoted [to God], the act of completely devoting something to God, something dedicated to destruction, the curse, a cursed thing, the ban, or something completely in God's possession, whether good or bad; net</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2764 BDB #356
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
zâbach (זָבַח) [pronounced <i>zaw^b-VAHKH</i>]	<i>to slaughter [usually an animal for sacrifice]</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #2076 BDB #256
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

1Samuel 15:21

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾĕlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods or God; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #430 BDB #43
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity affixed to the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88
gil ^e gâl (גִּלְגַּל) [pronounced <i>gil^e-GAWL</i>]	<i>sacred circle of stones and is transliterated Gilgal</i>	proper noun, location with the definite article	Strong's #1537 BDB #166

Translation: “However, the people grabbed up from the plunder—sheep and oxen—the firstlings of the corban [i.e., things under God’s curse] to slaughter to Y^ehowah your Elohim in Gilgal.” Saul is unwilling to take any blame for what has transpired. He knew that his soldiers were keeping out sheep and oxen and whatever else struck their fancy. They didn’t keep out just the very best, they kept out the second-best as well. However, Saul had to put the right kind of spin on it. The spin was twofold: the people did it and not him; and they kept out these animals in order to sacrifice to God in Gilgal—Samuel’s God. Saul cloaks his rebellious conduct and that of his soldiers with a pretense of a greater religiosity.³⁰ It was almost as though the people answered to a higher calling by saving these animals out to slaughter before God. This was Saul’s story and he was sticking to it. He told Samuel essentially the same thing back in v. 15, and he repeats it here. Saul thought this out; these words didn’t simply come tumbling out of his mouth; he had mentally rehearsed what he would say to Samuel during the time that he was avoiding Samuel.

No matter; all of these animals were under the ban; they were all cursed before God; and the people kept them out to sacrifice some at Gilgal, but certainly to add to their own wealth. The idea is this: God did not instruct Saul to keep out the very best of the flock and offer them up later (during which time, these animals would have also been eaten by the Israelites); they were to be completely destroyed where they were found. And as I mentioned, it would not be unexpected for these animals to be infected with disease.

Also note once again that Saul tries to even place a little responsibility on Samuel. These animals were kept out “...to sacrifice to Jehovah, your God in Gilgal.” Barnes sees it in this way: *Saul says that Samuel blames him for what was done in honour of Samuel’s God; as if he had more zeal for the glory of God than was felt by Samuel.*³¹ Do you see the sort of spin that Saul has put on this? He is to blame but he makes it sound here as though he did this out of his greater zeal for God than Samuel.

What Saul says is simply a repeat of v. 15: “From the Amalekites they brought those which the people spared beyond the best of the flocks and herds with the intent that [they be] slaughtered to Y^ehowah your God; we completed devoted [to destruction] the remaining ones.” Why does God the Holy Spirit allow this repetition here? That is so that it is clear to all who read this that Saul has pondered his disobedience for some time now, and he knows how to put the spin on it so it is his soldiers which kept out the best of the flock (he forgets to mention that they kept out the seconds as well) and they did it to sacrifice to Jehovah, Samuel’s God. The repetition of ideas here indicates to us that Saul has rehearsed this. The applicable verse at this time would be Prov. 28:13: **He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes will find compassion.**

³⁰ Paraphrased from Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 461.

³¹ *Barnes’ Notes; 1Samuel to Esther*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 38–39.

Samuel will continue to grieve over Saul, even after this is all over (v. 35); however because Saul's refuses to accept any blame after twice having been given the chance to, Samuel will find it easier to pronounce judgement over him. That is what will follow in the next two verses.

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Samuel Pronounces God's Judgment Against Saul

It is at this point that we find Samuel uttering one of the best known passages from the book of Samuel:

And so says Samuel,

“Is [it] a delight to Y^howah in burnt offerings and slaughters as a listening [and obeying] in a voice of Y^howah? Behold, a listening [and obedience] from a slaughter pleasing to give attention from fat of rams.

1Samuel
15:22

Then Samuel said,

“Is [it] pleasing to Y^howah with burnt offerings and sacrifices as listening [and obeying] the voice of Y^howah? Observe, listening [and obeying is] more than sacrifice; [it is more] pleasing to given attention [to His word is] more than the fat of rams.

Then Samuel said,

“Which is more pleasing? Burnt offerings and sacrifices or listening to the voice of Jehovah? Listen here, obedience is more pleasing to Him than sacrificial offerings and obeying His word is more important than the fat of rams.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

And so says Samuel,
“Is [it] a delight to Y^howah in burnt offerings and slaughters as a listening [and obeying] in a voice of Y^howah?
Behold, a listening [and obedience] from a slaughter
pleasing to give attention from fat of rams.

Septuagint

And Samuel said, “Does the Lord take pleasure in whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in hearing the words of the Lord? Behold, obedience *is* better than a good sacrifice, and hearkening than the fat of rams.

Significant differences:

No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

“Tell me,” Samuel said. “Does the LORD really want sacrifices and offerings? No! He doesn't want your sacrifices. He wants you to obey him.

NLT

But Samuel replied, “What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams.

TEV

Samuel said, “Which does the LORD prefer: obedience or offerings and sacrifices? It is better to obey him than to sacrifice the best sheep to him.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™

Then Samuel said,

“Is the LORD as delighted with burnt offerings and sacrifices
 As he would be with your obedience?
 To follow instructions is better than to sacrifice.
 To obey is better than sacrificing the fat of rams.
 But Samuel said:
 “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
 As much as in obedience to the LORD’s command?
 Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice,
 Compliance than the fat of rams.

JPS (Tanakh)

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB

And Samuel said,
 “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
 As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
 Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
 And to heed than the fat of rams.

Young's Updated LT

And Samuel says, “Has Jehovah had delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in hearkening to the voice of Jehovah? Lo, hearkening than sacrifice is better; to give attention than fat of rams;...

What is the gist of this verse? Translating this verse is much more difficult than I would have expected. However, the message is still quite clear: you have God’s Word on the one hand, animal sacrifices on the other. Which is most important? Obeying God’s Word or offering up animal sacrifices. This verse tells us clearly that obedience is more important than animal sacrifices.

Translating this verse will be easier if you understand its poetic structure first, which is simple:

Question.

Answer to question.

Justification for the answer to the question.

1Samuel 15:22a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #559 BDB #55
Sh ^e mûw`êl (שִׁמְוֵאל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong’s #8050 BDB #1028
hă (הֲ) [pronounced <i>heh</i>]	interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.		Strong’s #none BDB #209
chêphets (חֵפֶט) [pronounced <i>KHAY-fets</i>]	<i>a delight, a pleasure</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong’s #2656 BDB #343

1Samuel 15:22a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿôlâh (עֹלָה) [pronounced <i>gó-LAW</i>]	<i>burnt offering, ascending offering</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong #5930 BDB #750
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
zebach (זָבַח) [pronounced <i>ZEH^è-vakh</i>]	<i>slaughtered animal [used in a sacrificial offering], slaughter, sacrifice, slaughterings, sacrificial animal</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #2077 BDB #257
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately; combined with an infinitive, it can also take on the meaning as, often, when, as soon as</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
shâma ^r (שָׁמַע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHÇ</i>]	<i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6963 BDB #876
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: Then Samuel said, “Is [it] pleasing to Y^ehowah with burnt offerings and sacrifices as listening [and obeying] the voice of Y^ehowah? This is a tad bit stilted when going from the Hebrew into the English.

Looser Translation: [Then Samuel said, “\[Which is \[more\] pleasing to Y^ehowah? Burnt offerings and sacrifices or listening \[and obeying\] the voice of Y^ehowah? Samuel begins by asking a question: which is more pleasing to God—the slaughter of burnt offerings or obeying His voice? In the next line, Samuel will answer, *obedience is greater than burnt offerings.*](#)

What Samuel needs to do is to shut down Saul's excuses. Saul has presented this lame scenario where he does not see himself as having done anything wrong (even though he knows that he has). His story is, “The people kept out the animals, but that was to sacrifice to your God. Also, I've got Agag, just like God wanted; I am keeping an eye on him for you.” Samuel knows that this is a lot of crap. He gave Saul precise instructions from God and he knows that Saul had to tell the people to keep out the best of the flocks and herds. So Samuel begins from another point of view: “What do you think is the best approach? Obeying God, or offering up burnt offerings and sacrifices.” The implication might even be here, “You have disobeyed God, and now you are going to offer up sacrifices to be forgiven for disobeying God? Why didn't you just obey God in the first place?”

1Samuel 15:22b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i>]	<i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, pay attention, get this, check this out</i>	interjection, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243
shâma' (שָׁמַע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHG</i>]	<i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
zebach (זָבַח) [pronounced <i>ZEH^b-vakh</i>]	<i>slaughtered animal [used in a sacrificial offering], slaughter, sacrifice, slaughterings, sacrificial animal</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2077 BDB #257

Translation: [Observe, listening \[and obeying is\] more than sacrifice;...](#) This line begins with the word *behold*. The idea is that this line answers the question asked in the first line. Which is better? Obeying God's Word or offering up animal sacrifices? This line tells us that obedience to God's Word is better than (*more than*) offering up animal sacrifices.

Samuel does not give Saul a chance to answer. He is tired of listening to Saul's excuses. Whatever he says, he knows that Saul probably has an answer, a spin on what happened or some kind of excuse. Saul will shift the blame, or he will make it seem as though he thought he was obeying Samuel. Whatever his approach, Samuel begins talking and does not allow Saul to slip in a word.

You will note that between vv. 13–21, it has been a conversation. Saul speaks, Samuel speaks, Saul speaks. At this point, Samuel is done listening to Saul. What we have is a pronouncement, it is apparent with the structure of this and the next verse, that this is Hebrew poetry, and probably spoken in such a way as to imply divine authority. There will be no give and take; none of this, “Here’s what I see; explain yourself.” Samuel now makes a judgement which appears to be almost directly from God. Saul will not be able to get in a word until Samuel is done.

1Samuel 15:22c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
ṭôwb (טוּב) [pronounced toe ^b v]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong’s #2896 BDB #373
Ṭôwb ^v appears to go with this third line, as the second line answers the first line. This third line explains why—because it is better and more pleasing to God to obey Him than it is to offer sacrifices.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong’s # BDB #510
qâshab (קָשַׁב) [pronounced kaw-SHAH ^b v]	<i>incline, attend to, give attention to, be caused to attend to</i>	Hiphil infinitive construct	Strong’s #7181 BDB #904
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong’s #4480 BDB #577
chêleb (חֵלֶב) [pronounced KHAY-le ^b v]	<i>fat</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong’s #2459 BDB #316
ʾayil (אֵיִל) [pronounced AH-yil],	<i>ram</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong’s #352 BDB #17

Translation: [it is more] pleasing to given attention [to His word is] more than the fat of rams.

Complete translation: Then Samuel said,
 “Is [it] pleasing to Y^ehowah with burnt offerings and sacrifices as listening [and obeying] the voice of Y^ehowah?
 Observe, listening [and obeying is] more than sacrifice;
 [it is more] pleasing to given attention [to His word is] more than the fat of rams.

McGee summarizes: *You and I demonstrate whether or not we are children on the Lord Jesus Christ by our love for Him. It is not what we say in a testimony; it is whether or not we are obeying Him. The Christian life is one of reality. It is not a life of “put-on” and pretense.*³²

Edersheim comments: It is scarcely necessary to indicate, that the words of Samuel (vers. 22, 23) do not imply that sacrifices were not of primary importance. This would have run counter not only to his own practice, but to the whole old Testament economy. But sacrifices, irrespective of a corresponding state of mind, and in actual rebelliousness against God,—religiousness without religious,—were not only a mere *opus operatum*, but a gross caricature, essentially heathen, not Jewish. Comp. Psa. 50:8–14;

³² J. Vernon McGee; *I & I1 Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 91.

51:17; Isa. 1:11; Jer. 6:20; Hos. 6:6; Micah 6:6–8.³³ Even though I agree with Edersheim here, I will still go into more detail.

Don't misunderstand Samuel. He is not minimizing animal sacrifices. After all, this was their exposure to the gospel of God (and it was done in such a way as to keep the gospel information from Satan). So those who observed and participated in animal sacrifices, again and again, often believed in the God of Israel as a result, not fully realizing that these sacrifices pointed ahead to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory.

Now, Saul did not actually make this conscious choice to keep the animals out to sacrifice, as he and his soldiers simply acted out of greed. Furthermore, their disregard for God's Word would not be balanced out later by concentrated religious activities offered as an afterthought. Even *had* Saul actually thought, "You know, we could offer up a lot of sacrifices to God with these animals; better keep them out, even though God told us not to;" it still would have been better for him to have obeyed God in the first place. Sacrifices and ceremony are not a substitute for obedience; and in this case, the sacrifices were a direct result of disobedience.

We find an amplification of this sentiment in the writings of several prophets (Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah); however, it is best expressed by Isaiah:

Isaiah 1:11–20a

"What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" says Jehovah.
 "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle.
 And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats.
 When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts?
 Bring your worthless offerings no longer; their incense is an abomination to Me.
 New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.
 I hate your new moon celebrations and your appointed feasts;
 they have become a burden to Me
 and I am weary of bearing them.
 So when you spread out your hands [to Me in prayer], I will hide My eyes from you;
 Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen.
 Your hands are full of bloodshed.
 Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
 remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.
 Cease to do evil, learn to do good;
 Seek justice, reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan and plead on behalf of the widow.
 Come now, let us reason together," says Jehovah,
 "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow;
 though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.
 If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land
 but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword."

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The key here is *ceremony*; the key is what is externally visible from the outside versus what do we find on the inside. Heathen offered animal sacrifices as well as human sacrifices; God did not look upon their animal sacrifices and think, "Hmmm, these people are alright!" The sacrifice is illustrative; the sacrifice was the key to their salvation (not offering the animals, per se, but what the sacrifice represented). The idea is to get the heart right with God first; then the sacrifices are meaningful.

³³ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 461.

Application: The Catholic Church is filled with pomp and genuflection and various ceremonies. Do you think that God looks upon the Catholic Church because of this overabundance of ceremony? Not at all. God looks upon the saved of the Catholic Church and looks favorably upon those who are saved and in fellowship; however, the massive amounts of genuflection are meaningless when performed by those who are unsaved or out of fellowship.

Application: We could replace animal sacrifice with a number of things today. Which is more important, your obedience to the Word of God or religious ceremony? Obedience to the Word of God or giving? Obedience to the Word of God or attending church? Obedience to the Word of God or singing? Certainly, giving, attending church, and the Eucharist are often done in obedience to God's Word; however, the message is clear: if you have to choose between obeying God's Word and religious function, you obey God's Word. Obeying God's Word is more important than religious function. Saul's protest that these animals were kept out for sacrificing to God, even if it were not a lie, would still not make up for the fact that keeping them alive in the first place was unequivocal disregard for God's Word. "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6). To do righteousness and justice is desired by Jehovah rather than sacrifice (Prov. 21:3) "And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33 Deut. 6:5). See also Psalm 50:8–9 51:16–17 Jer. 7:22–23 Micah 6:6–8. Finally, Heb. 10:4–13, which sums it all up: For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me. In whole burnt offerings and sin offerings, You have not been propitiated. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the rolls of the book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God.' " After saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sin offerings, You have not desired, nor have You been propitiated by them" (which are offered according to the Law). Then he said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ one for all. And every priest who stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet (the writer of Hebrews quoted from Psalm 40:6–8 110:1).

**For a sin of divination, rebellion
and iniquity and teraphim, a striking;
because you have rejected a word of
Y^ehowah,
and so He rejects you from king."**

1Samuel
15:23

**For the sin of divination [is] rebellion
and iniquity and teraphim [is] being
stubborn;
since you reject the Word of Y^ehowah,
He rejects you from [being] king."**

**For the rebellion is the sin of divination
and being defiant is iniquity and idolatry.
Since you have rejected the Word of Jehovah,
so He rejects you from being king over Israel."**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

Because it is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey. Forasmuch, therefore, as you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has also rejected you from being king.

Masoretic Text

For a sin of divination, rebellion and iniquity and teraphim, a striking; because you have rejected a word of Y^ehowah, and so He rejects you from king."

Septuagint

For sin is as divination; idols bring on pain and grief. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord also will reject you from being king over Israel."

Significant differences: The Latin and Hebrew are fairly close in meaning; however, it is apparent that the translators who took the Hebrew into the Greek and into the Latin, tried to give an equivalent meaning, but did not render this as a word-for-word translation (which is common throughout this book of Samuel). As we will find out, the Hebrew of this verse is fairly difficult, which explains the slight differences between the Hebrew, Latin and Greek.

The second line is almost exactly the same in any language.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Rebelling against God or disobeying him because you are proud is just as bad as worshiping idols or asking them for advice. You refused to do what God told you, so God has decided that you can't be king."
NLT	Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you from being king."
REB	Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, Arrogance as evil as idolatry. [<i>as evil as</i> is the probable reading; Hebrew: <i>evil and</i>] Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."
TEV	Rebellion against him is as bad as witchcraft, and arrogance is as sinful as idolatry. Because you rejected the LORD's command, he has rejected you as king."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	The sin of black magic is rebellion. Wickedness and idolatry are arrogance. Because you rejected the word of the LORD, He rejects you as king."
JPS (Tanakh)	For rebellion is like the sin of divination, Defiance, like the iniquity of teraphim. Because you rejected the LORD's command, He has rejected you as king."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	"For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from <i>being</i> king."
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	...for a sin of divination <i>is</i> rebellion, and iniquity and teraphim <i>is</i> stubbornness; because you have rejected the word of Jehovah, He also does reject you from <i>being</i> king."

What is the gist of this verse? In reading the translations, one would think that this is a fairly easy verse to understand; however this is not the case. I will go with the accepted interpretation of most every translation, which is that the sin of divination and the sin of idolatry are no different than Saul's rebellion and defiance of God's orders. Saul chose to reject God's clear communication, so God chooses to reject Saul as king.

Although the translations seem to be fairly consistent, this is actually a very difficult verse to translate, and one which requires additional words being thrown in so that it makes good English sense. However, in the Greek and Hebrew, certain words tend to be left out when a speech is intense, and this speech is intense.

Something else which is true of this verse is that there are several words found here which are not found anywhere else in the book of Samuel; and there are several words which are rarely found anywhere. If you will recall, the first few chapters of the book of Samuel were just about the simplest Hebrew that we have ever encountered in Scripture. Here, the Hebrew is every bit as difficult as that found in the book of Job.

1Samuel 15:23a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because, when</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
chattâ`th (חַטָּאת) [pronounced <i>khat-TAWTH</i>]	<i>sin or sin-offering</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #2403 BDB #308
qeçem (קֶּחַם) [pronounced <i>KEH-sem</i>]	<i>divination</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7081 BDB #890
m ^e rîy (מִרְיָה) [pronounced <i>m^eree</i>],	<i>rebellion</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4805 BDB #598
Because we do not find a conjunction between <i>sin of divination</i> and <i>rebellion</i> , and because <i>divination</i> is not in the construct, we assume that the verb <i>to be</i> goes between them.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
âven (אָוֵן) [pronounced <i>AW-ven</i>]	<i>iniquity, misfortune which results from iniquity</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #205 BDB #19
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
t ^e râphîym (תְּרַפִּים) [pronounced <i>t^eraw-PHEEM</i>]	<i>household idol, a kind of idol, an object of reverence, and a means of divination, often transliterated teraphim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #8655 BDB #1076
pâtsar (פָּצַר) [pronounced <i>paw-TSAHR</i>]	<i>to strike [on the mind], and therefore to be dull, to be stubborn; defiant?</i>	Hiphil infinitive construct	Strong's #6484 BDB #823

Translation: For the sin of divination [is] rebellion and iniquity and teraphim [is] being stubborn;... The idea is, apparently, that the sin of divination (which is something that Saul would not consider at this time) is rebellion against God; his being stubborn or defiant—those traits are equivalent to iniquity and [the possession of] idols. To God, these are the same sins (or their result is the same; or, one, by its very nature, is just as evil as the other). By the way, the Scriptural references for the forbidding of spiritism and divination are Ex. 22:18 Lev. 19:26, 31 20:6 Deut. 18:10.

Keil and Delitzsch comment: *Opposition to God is compared by Samuel to soothsaying and oracles, because idolatry was manifest in both of them. All conscious disobedience is actually idolatry, because*

*it makes self-will, the human I, into a god. So that all manifest opposition to the word and commandment of God is, like idolatry, a rejection of the true God.*³⁴

Possibly (and I am thinking out loud here) God clearly communicated to Saul what Saul was supposed to do. This was not some sort of divination where the results are unclear and intentionally foggy, but God clearly told Saul that he was to kill every man, woman, child and animal of the Amalekites; all that they had was to be destroyed. Saul's rebellion against God's direct orders was as though Saul was told by a diviner what to do—the instructions were unclear. His consulting of a household idol for guidance would have resulted in the same stubborn or defiant behavior. Teraphim, by the way, will be covered in greater detail in the **Doctrine of Teraphim** in 1Sam. 19:13.

And just in case you don't look this up,...

A Brief Summary of Teraphim

Teraphim are religious images and that they are sometimes consulted for guidance; and that they possibly acted as household protectors. It is not clear whether *teraphim* is strictly plural or whether it is used like the word Elohim (which can mean *God* or *gods*). These "images," teraphim (see Judges 17:5; 18:14; etc.), were usually small (v. 34) human figurines, occasionally larger, often made of wood (1 Sam. 19:13-16). Near Eastern excavations have brought them to light in profuse numbers, made of wood, clay, and precious metals. Some represent male gods, but the majority are figurines of female deities 2 to 3 in. in length. They were used as household gods or were carried on the body as protective charms. Since most of them represent nude goddesses whose sexual features are accentuated, they were probably thought to promote fertility. It is possible that they are related to the inheritance of the property or business of one's family.

We find teraphim in pretty much every time period of the history of Israel. We find them in the time of the judges, in the time of the patriarchs, during the formation of the monarchy, during the late monarchy, and in the post-exilic period. They are always spoken of in a negative way.

Here are the passages wherein we find *teraphim* mentioned: Gen. 31:19, 34, 35 Judges 17:5 18:14, 17, 18, 20 1Sam. 15:23 19:13, 16 2Kings 23:24 Ezek. 21:21 Hosea 3:4 Zech. 10:2

These may be likened to the pictures of the painting of Jesus which we have or the ubiquitous statues of Mary. However, those things are not formally related to inheritance today, it is reasonable that if a Catholic denounced these as idolatry, that some families would cut them off from their inheritance.

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1Samuel 15:23b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ya'an (יָאֵן) [pronounced yah-GAHN]	<i>on account of, because</i>	preposition	Strong's #3282 BDB #774
mâ`aç (מָאַץ) [pronounced maw-AHS]	<i>to reject, to despise, to lightly esteem, to refuse</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3988 BDB #549
`êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84

³⁴ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 468.

1Samuel 15:23b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dâ ^b vâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAWR]	word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yhoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as Jehovah, Yahweh, Y ^e howah	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
wa or va (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, then	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mâ ^ʾ aç (סָרַח) [pronounced maw-AHS]	to reject, to despise, to lightly esteem, to refuse	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3988 BDB #549
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	king, ruler, prince	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572

Translation: ...since you reject the Word of Y^ehowah, He rejects you from [being] king.” Again, although this appears on the surface to be a fairly simple verse, the actual Hebrew at the end is more difficult. We would expect for God to reject him from kingship or from ruling; however, God rejects him from king; therefore, we insert the verb *to be* to smooth this out (this appears to be justified by v. 26 where the same phrasing is used by Samuel, except that the Qal infinitive construct of *to be* is added in). “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has One Who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” (John 12:48). The NIV Study Bible writes: *A king who sets his own will above the command of the Lord ceases to be an instrument of the Lord’s rule over his people, violating the very nature of his theocratic office.*³⁵

It may be helpful to simplify this and examine...

God’s Steps in Replacing Saul as King	
Scripture	Incident
1Sam. 14:5–14	When Saul felt as though he had his back up against the wall, he offered sacrifices to God to placate Him, rather than wait for Samuel to come to perform his priestly duties. Not recognizing protocol or Samuel’s authority resulted in Saul’s dynasty coming to an immediate end (1Sam. 14:13–14).
1Sam. 15:1–23	Samuel gave Saul unambiguous orders to destroy all of Amalek—every man, woman, child and animal (v. 3). Saul only partially obeyed God’s mandate, and then tried to spin things as though he was obeying God’s explicit mandates. This resulted in God formally rejecting Saul as king over Israel (v. 23).

³⁵ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 394.

God's Steps in Replacing Saul as King	
Scripture	Incident
1Sam. 16:1–13	Samuel will go out, on God's command, and choose David to be Saul's successor.
1Sam. 16:14–23	David will become a servant of Saul's, attending to him directly, using music to calm Saul's pervasive and steadily increasing mental illness.
1Sam. 17–30	Although previously anointed by God as the king over Israel, David will not personally remove Saul from his throne. We watch as Saul's decisions and actions become more and more depraved, while David chooses the honorable route time after time.
1Sam. 31	God allows the Philistines to kill Saul. It is ironic that Saul probably would not have died at their hands had he not made that foolish vow for his men not to eat until he had avenged himself on the Philistines. The Israelite army would have been able to kill more men, and it is less likely that they would have come back from this defeat as quickly as they did. In other words, Saul's own disobedience is what probably shortened his own life, even apart from God. You may want to bear that in mind, the next time you feel like being disobedient to God.
2Sam. 1–3	David assumes the throne over Israel, but not without some political intrigue.

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The original communication from God as to what Saul was to do was clear and unambiguous. Saul could not have taken those words and misconstrued them. He has acted as though he obeyed the Word of God, when he knew damn well that he had not. Now, here is possibly what is happening: Samuel communicates to Saul in language which is more abstruse and more subject to interpretation than the language used to tell Saul what had to be done with the Amalekites. Saul will understand perfectly what Samuel is telling him here, even though it is much less clear than Samuel's instructions to Saul in 1Sam. 15:3: **"Now go and strike down Amalek and you [all] will completely destroy all that they have [lit., all that (is) to him] and you will not show [any] mercy to them [lit., him] and you will execute men and women, infants and newborns, oxen and sheep, and camels and donkeys."** Saul comes off in this meeting as though he didn't quite get the directions right (see vv. 20–21). So now what Samuel says is a lot less clear, but Saul will indicate that he now understands Samuel completely (see v. 24, coming up next). In other words, Saul is without excuse. There was no communication breakdown; he knew what his orders were and he disobeyed those orders. This sentence pronounced by Samuel made so powerful an impression on Saul, that he immediately confessed his sin.³⁶

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Saul's Partial Admission of Guilt and Samuel's Response

And so says Saul unto Samuel, "I have sinned for I have passed over a mouth of Y^howah and your words, for I feared the people and so I listened [and obeyed] in their voice.

1Samuel
15:24

Then Saul admitted to Samuel, "I have sinned in that I passed over the mouth of Y^howah and your words because I feared the people; therefore, I listened to [and obeyed] their voice.

Then Saul finally admitted to Samuel, "Yes, I did sin, disobeying both your words and the will of God. I did this because I feared the people, and therefore I followed their lead in this matter.

³⁶ Paraphrasing from Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 469.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so says Saul unto Samuel, "I have sinned for I have passed over a mouth of Y ^h owah and your words, for I feared the people and so I listened [and obeyed] in their voice.
Septuagint	And Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, in that I have transgressed the word of the Lord and your direction; for I feared the people, and I listened to their voice.

Significant differences: The slight difference in the verb could be a matter of translation.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	"I have sinned," Saul admitted. "I disobeyed both you and the LORD. I was afraid of the army, and I listened to them instead.
NLT	Then Saul finally admitted, "Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the LORD's command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	Then Saul told Samuel, "I have sinned by not following the LORD's command or your instructions. I was afraid of the people and listened to them.
JPS (Tanakh)	Saul said to Samuel, "I did wrong to transgress the LORD's command and your instructions; but I was afraid of the troops and I yielded to them.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command [lit., <i>mouth</i>] of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice.
Young's Updated LT	And Saul says unto Samuel, " I have sinned, for I passed over the command of Jehovah, and your words; because I have feared the people, I also hearken to their voice;...

What is the gist of this verse? Saul recognizes what has been said to him. Even though the Hebrew was poetic and difficult to follow, Saul understood it, and admits that he intentionally disobeyed God's commands. However, typical of Saul, he will not shoulder the whole burden. He blames the people by saying that he feared the people, and therefore listened to them instead of God.

1Samuel 15:24a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוֹאֵל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

1Samuel 15:24a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿel (אל) [pronounced <i>el</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Sh ^e mûw ^l ʿêl (שמׁוּׁוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
châṭâʿ (חַטָּא) [pronounced <i>khaw-TAW</i>]	<i>to sin, to miss, to miss the mark, to violate the law, to err; to do wrong, to commit a transgression</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #2398 BDB #306
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because, when</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʿâbar (עָבַר) [pronounced <i>gaw^b-VAHR</i>]	<i>to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5674 BDB #716
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
peh (פֶּה) [pronounced <i>peh</i>]	<i>mouth, edge</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6310 BDB #804
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
dâ ^b vâr (דְּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1697 BDB #182

In one early printed manuscript and in the Septuagint, *word* is singular.³⁷

Translation: Then Saul admitted to Samuel, “I have sinned in that I passed over the mouth of Y^ehowah and your words... Saul finally admits to doing wrong and recognizing that he did disobey God’s clear directives. Had he been a great man, he would have then stopped, except perhaps to ask, “What is to be my punishment, in addition to losing the throne?”

³⁷ Joseph Bryant Rotherham’s *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 304.

1Samuel 15:24b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because, when</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
yârê' (יָרֵא) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAY</i>]	<i>to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3372 BDB #431.
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'am (אָמ) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâma' (שָׁמַע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHG</i>]	<i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #6963 BDB #876

Translation: ...because I feared the people; therefore, I listened to [and obeyed] their voice. Unfortunately, Saul does not stop with an admission of guilt. He cannot bear this burden alone. He blames the people and says that he obeyed their voice because he was afraid. *These last words, with which he [Saul] endeavoured to make his sin appear as small as possible, show that the consciousness of his guilt did not go very deep.*³⁸

Saul was caught in the lie that he disobeyed God (and he claimed to have obeyed God). So now, rather than take it like a man, he blames the people. Even if this is a true reason for Saul doing what he did, Prov. 29:25 tells us: **The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in Y^howah will be exalted.** Barnes makes a very perceptive comment here, in contrasting David's confession of sin (2Sam. 12:13 Psalm 51) to Saul's: *Saul only shrank from the punishment of his sin. David shrank in abhorrence from the sin itself (Ps. li. 4).*³⁹

McGee comments: *Notice the low motivation of this man. He said he was afraid of the people and so he obeyed their wishes. He wanted to please everyone. Many folks are like Saul. Lots of preachers try to*

³⁸ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 469.

³⁹ *Barnes' Notes; 1Samuel to Esther*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 39.

please everybody. I heard about a prominent minister lately who has begun to compromise, and he says he is doing it because he wants to get along with everyone. That was Saul's approach. It is true that he confesses that he has transgressed, but his penitence is not genuine.⁴⁰ Or, to quote C. V. Lapidé: It was not true and serious repentance, or the result of genuine sorrow of heart because he had offended God, but was merely repentance of the lips arising from fear of losing the kingdom, and of incurring public disgrace.⁴¹

We do not know the exact mechanics of how these things were saved aside. You will recall that we speculated about why Agag was kept alive and probably came very close to determining the motivations behind his capture and lack of execution. However, with regards to Agag and the best of the livestock, we are merely told, **But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, they were not willing to destroy completely** (1Sam. 15:9a). Did Saul issue the order to save aside the best of the livestock? Did he not issue the order to destroy everything? Did some men keep out this or that, and then Saul did not assert his authority? We do not know; however, Saul is the king; and he is an on-site military leader (compare 1Sam. 17). So for whatever reason, when the livestock began to be saved aside, Saul was right there and it was up to him to stop it. However, he chose not to. Saul and his men are staring right at that grade-A barbeque, and there is no remuneration for their attack on Amalek. You see, ancient armies were paid by the plundering that they were able to do when they defeated another people. Here, the men of Israel were risking their lives, and, if they obeyed God, they would walk away with nothing for their effort. The foot soldiers certainly didn't care much for that and Saul sympathized with them. When he should have been strong, he was weak. When he should have been their king, he became their *yes-man*. The other option is, Saul specifically ordered that his men save these things aside—which is what I believe occurred. Otherwise, why would the best and second-best be set aside from the flocks and herds, and why was Agag delivered directly to Saul?

Again, as I have mentioned before, God ordered the destruction of Amalek on the basis of moral imperatives. He cannot have this tarnished by Israel's greed. Hundreds of years later, as one reads this narrative, God did not want it to appear as though His orders to destroy Amalek was simply a pretext for Israel to plunder Amalek. The fact that Israel did plunder the Amalekites will result in the removal of Saul as king (and in his eventual sin unto death).

And now bear, please, my sin and return with me and I bow down to Y^ehowah.” 1Samuel 15:25 **Therefore, please lift up my sin [offering] [or, bear my sin] and return with me and I will bow down to Y^ehowah.”**

Now, therefore, please bear my sin and return with me so that I may worship Jehovah.”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And now bear, please, my sin and return with me and I bow down to Y ^e howah.”
Septuagint	And now remove, I pray you, my sin, and turn back with me, and I will worship the Lord your God.”

Significant differences: The slight difference in the verbs is probably a matter of translation. There is also the additional of the words *your God* at the end of this verse in the LXX.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Please forgive me and come back with me so I can worship the LORD.”
NLT	Oh, please, forgive my sin now and go with me to worship the LORD.”

⁴⁰ J. Vernon McGee; *I & II Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 86.

⁴¹ Quoted in Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 469.

TEV But now I beg you, forgive my sin and go back with me, so that I can worship the LORD.”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™ Now please forgive my sin and come back with me so that I may worship the LORD.”
 JPS (Tanakh) Please, forgive my offense and come back with me, and I will bow low to the LORD.”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB “Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the LORD.”
 Young’s Updated LT ...and now, bear, I pray you, with my sin, and turn back with me, and I bow myself to Jehovah.”

What is the gist of this verse? Although most translations read that Saul asks Samuel to *forgive his sin*, my thinking is that he is probably asking Samuel to carry his sin offering. It is not clear where they are going to return to. I think that the meaning is more metaphorical. That is, they are not going to return to this place or that, but Saul is going to turn back from his sin. The *with me* simply indicates that Samuel is going to participate in this ceremony.

1Samuel 15:25a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
‘attâh (ה ת ע) [pronounced <i>gaht-TAWH</i>]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong’s #6258 BDB #773
nâsâ’ (א ש ו) [pronounced <i>naw-SAW</i>]	<i>to lift up, to bear, to carry</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong’s #5375 (and #4984) BDB #669
Although several English translations read that Saul is asking for Samuel to <i>forgive</i> his sin, Saul is actually asking Samuel to <i>lift up his sin-offering</i> as well as to <i>lift up and carry away</i> his sin. The idea is more than simple forgiveness, but what is involved is the offering of a sin-offering, as well as the complete removal of the sin in question.			
nâ’ (א ו) [pronounced <i>naw</i>]	<i>please, I pray you, I respectfully implore (ask, or request of) you, I urge you</i>	particle of entreaty	Strong’s #4994 BDB #609
’êth (ת א) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong’s #853 BDB #84
chattâ’th (ת א ו ת) [pronounced <i>khat-TAWTH</i>]	<i>sin or sin-offering</i>	feminine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong’s #2403 BDB #308

Translation: [Therefore, please lift up my sin-offering](#) [or, *bear my sin*]... Despite the fact that every translation, just about, reads that Saul is asking for Samuel to forgive his sin, it is more likely that he is asking Samuel to bear or

lift up his sin offering. Samuel has authority in the spiritual realm. Saul recognizes this, particularly after his spectacular blunder in 1Sam. 13:8–9, and realizes that only Samuel can offer up an animal on his behalf. The two things go hand-in-hand: the lifting up of the sin-offering and the forgiveness or bearing of the sin (by the animal which is sacrificed). The end result might be interpreted as ultimately forgiving him for his sin.

1Samuel 15:25b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shûw ^b v (וּשׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
îm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâchah (שָׁחָה) [pronounced <i>shaw-KHAW</i>]	<i>to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to do obeisance to; to honor [with prayers]; to do homage to, to submit to</i>	1 st person singular, Hithpael imperfect	Strong's #7812 BDB #1005
The Hithpael is the reflexive stem, which is the stem shâchah is generally found in.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
The Septuagint adds <i>your God</i> to this.			

Translation: ...and return with me and I will bow down to Y^ehowah.” I don't think that Saul is asking Samuel to go back with him to Carmel (which is where they had both come from). Saul wants to return to God; he moved away from God and now wants to return to Him, and he needs Samuel to accompany him for the offering of the animal.

Finally, Saul says that he will bow down or do obeisance to Jehovah. The Septuagint adds *your God* to this.

I believe in divine forgiveness. One might suppose in this passage that Saul has reached his limit with God. He has disobeyed once too often, and Samuel is not going to bear his sin or his sin offering. However, another more reasonable interpretation is this: Samuel gave Saul enough time to admit to his sin. Saul would not admit to his sin until it became clear that he had sinned. It was something that could not be hid, so Saul therefore finally admits to it, although he continues to place part of the blame elsewhere.

There are two points of view as to Saul's asking Samuel to return with him into Gilgal. I believe that Saul has true respect for Samuel (even though he tried to play him), and recognizes that the proper way to go about getting forgiveness of some sort is for Samuel to offer the proper sacrifices. In other words, Saul recognizes Samuel's spiritual authority. The other view is that Saul is still trying to play this situation for his own benefit. Samuel needs to continue to show him support, and coming back and worshiping with him will give the people (particularly his soldiers) the impression that Samuel still recognizes Saul's kingship. Possibly what Saul is trying to do here is not really to seek forgiveness, but he is playing all of the angles. Okay, he couldn't fool Samuel, so now he requests to go through a religious ritual to make everything all better. No doubt Saul is both self-serving and genuine in this request, even though that may not seem possible to you. It's not going to look right for Samuel to show up, and then suddenly leave without offering any sort of a sacrifice to God in association with Saul. Saul had been told that he is being replaced. For the time being, however, he wants to keep up appearances (which, strictly speaking, is *not* the meaning of v. 30). However, because Saul qualified his wrongdoing, and because at least part of his motivation is self-serving, Samuel still refuses this request.

And so says Samuel unto Saul, "I will not return with you because you rejected a word of Y^howah and so rejects you Y^howah from being king over Israel."	1Samuel 15:26	And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you because you rejected the word of Y^howah so Y^howah rejects you from being king over Israel."
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And Samuel replied to Saul, "I will not return with you because you have rejected the word of Jehovah, so He therefore rejected you from being king over Israel."

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so says Samuel unto Saul, "I will not return with you because you rejected a word of Y ^h owah and so rejects you Y ^h owah from being king over Israel."
Septuagint	And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not turn back with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord will reject you from being king over Israel."

Significant differences: No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	"No!" Samuel replied, "You disobeyed the LORD, and I won't go back with you. Now the LORD has said that you can't be king of Israel any longer."
NLT	But Samuel replied, "I will not return with you! Since you have rejected the LORD's command, he has rejected you from being the king of Israel."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> TM	Samuel told Saul, "I will not go back with you because you rejected what the LORD told you. so the LORD rejects you as king of Israel."
JPS (Tanakh)	But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not go back with you; for you have rejected the LORD's command, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	And Samuel says unto Saul, "I do not turn back with you; for you have rejected the word of Jehovah, and Jehovah does reject you from being king over Israel."

What is the gist of this verse? Samuel makes it clear that he will not return with Samuel. There will be no offering and there will be no religious ceremony. Saul clearly rejected the Word of God, Saul will not truly admit to his sin, and therefore God rejected him from being king over Israel.

1Samuel 15:26a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Sh ^e mûwʾel (שִׁמְוֵאל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced <i>el</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Shâʾûwl (שָׂאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
lôʾ (לֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
shûw ^b v (שׁוּבָה) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of vicinity with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix, pausal form	Strong's #5973 BDB #767

Translation: *And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you..."* Samuel indicates to Saul that there will be no religious ceremony and there will be no restoration. Samuel is not going to return with Saul anywhere. Saul really hasn't confessed his sin—he said that he transgressed the mandate of God, but then qualified this by saying, "I feared the people." He sinned under duress, so, in Saul's mind, he was not entirely to blame. In my opinion, Saul is still lying at this point. That is, I believe that he and the people saved aside the best of the flocks and herds of the Amalekites, as we find in v. 6 (*Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of [the flocks and herds]*). This seems to indicate more than Saul simply going along with the program.

1Samuel 15:26b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because, when</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mâ`aṣ (מָאַס) [pronounced <i>maw-AHS</i>]	<i>to reject, to despise, to lightly esteem, to refuse</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3988 BDB #549
`êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
dâ ^b vâr (דְּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mâ`aṣ (מָאַס) [pronounced <i>maw-AHS</i>]	<i>to reject, to despise, to lightly esteem, to refuse</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3988 BDB #549
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
`al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Yis ^e râ`êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>Yis-row-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: ...because you rejected the word of Y^ehowah so Y^ehowah rejects you from being king over Israel." Samuel repeats what he has already told Saul, but more slowly and with the verb that he left out before. Saul chose to reject God's Word and continued to try to cover this up in speaking to Saul; therefore, God rejected Saul from being king over Israel.

Edersheim explains in detail: Thus viewed, the command to execute the “ban” upon Amalek was the second and final test of Saul’s fitness for being king over God’s people. The character of this kingdom had been clearly explain by Samuel at Gilgal in his address to king and people (1Sam. 12:14, 20, 21, 24). There is evidently an internal connection between the first (1Sam. 13:8–14) and this second and final trial of Saul. The former had brought to light his want of faith, and even of simple obedience, and it had been *a test of his moral qualification for the kingdom*; this second was *the test of his moral qualification for being king*. As the first trial, so to speak, developed into the second, so Saul’s want of moral qualification had ripened into absolute disqualification—and as the former trial determined the fate of his line, so this second decided his own as king. After the first trial his line was rejected; after the second his own standing as theocratic king ceased. As God-appointed king he was henceforth rejected; Jehovah withdrew the sanction which he had formerly given to his reign by the aid of His power and the Presence of His Spirit. Henceforth “[the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul](#)” (1Sam. 16:14), and he was left, in the judgment of God, to the influence of that evil spirit to who natural disposition and the circumstances of his position laid him specially open (comp. Matt. 12:43–45).⁴²

And so turns [or, was turned] Samuel to go and so he takes in a wing of his robe and so he tears.

1Samuel
15:27

Then, [as] Samuel turned to go, [Saul] grabbed the extremity of his robe and it tore [or, was torn].

Then, as Samuel turned to go, Saul grabbed the end of his robe and it tore.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so turns [or, was turned] Samuel to go and so he takes in a wing of his robe and so he tears.
Septuagint	And Samuel turned his face to depart, and Saul caught hold of the skirt of his garment and tore it.
Significant differences:	No significant difference.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	As Samuel turned to go, Saul grabbed the edge of Samuel’s robe. It tore!
NLT	As Samuel turned to go, Saul grabbed at him to try to hold him back and tore his robe.
TEV	Then Samuel turned to leave, but Saul caught hold of his cloak, and it tore.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™	When Samuel turned to leave, Saul grabbed the hem of his robe, and it tore.
JPS (Tanakh)	As Samuel turned to leave, Saul seized the corner of his robe, and it tore.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	And as Samuel turned to go, <i>Saul</i> seized the edge of his robe, and it tore.
Young’s Updated LT	And Samuel turns round to go, and he lays hold on the skirt of his upper robe—and it is torn.

⁴² Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 458–459. All of this paragraph is a quotation; I did not italicize it in order to preserve Edersheim’s italics.

What is the gist of this verse? In one last desperate attempt to hold Samuel there, Saul grabs onto Samuel's garment as Samuel turns to leave. It was probably just as much of an unintentional or reflexive reaction as it was a conscious gesture.

1Samuel 15:27

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
çâbab (בּוּבָּ) [pronounced <i>saw^b-VAH^bV</i>]	<i>to turn oneself, to be caused to go around, to be turned around</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #5437 BDB #685
Sh ^e mûw`êl (שִׁמְוֵאל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
châzaq (חָזַק) [pronounced <i>khaw-ZAHK</i>]	<i>to take, to strengthen, to repair, to hold fast, to grab</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #2388 BDB #304
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
kânâph (כַּנָּפִי) [pronounced <i>kaw-NAWF</i>]	<i>wings of birds</i> (Gen. 1:21 Ex. 19:4 Deut. 32:11) as well as the <i>extremity of a garment</i> (Deut. 22:12, 30 Ruth 3:9)	feminine singular construct	Strong's #3671 BDB #489
Just as a bird's wing sticks out from the torso of the bird; so also the end of Samuel's robe was away from his body. Or, as the wing of a bird flaps, so did the extremity of Samuel's robe. This is the connection between the two meanings.			
m ^e çîyl (מִעֵיל) [pronounced <i>m^eçEEL</i>]	<i>robe, upper coat or cloak</i>	masculine singular construct with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4598 BDB #591
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

1Samuel 15:27

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qâra' (קָרָא) [pronounced kaw-RAHG']	<i>to tear</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #7167 BDB #902

Being the Niphal, and given that the robe is in the masculine singular, we may assume that the subject of this verb is the robe.

Translation: Then, [as] Samuel turned to go, [Saul] grabbed the extremity of his robe and it tore. What we have here is a quick, almost involuntary response—Samuel starts to walk away, and Saul reaches out for him and grabs his robe, tearing it as Samuel moves away. Samuel will use this as an object lesson in the next verse.

The almost universal Scriptural reference for this verse is I Kings 11:30–31: Ahijah tears a robe into 12 pieces and gives 10 of them to Jeroboam, as these represent the 10 northern tribes of Israel over which he will rule (Solomon will retain control over the remainder of Israel). Although it is a similar situation, it is by no means a parallel to our passage.

And so says unto him Samuel, “Has torn Y^ehowah a kingdom of Israel from upon you the day and He has given her to your associate, the pleasing [one] from you. 1Samuel 15:28

Then Samuel said to him, “Yehowah has torn the kingdom of Israel from adhesion [to] you [or, from your attachment] and He has given it to your fellow [or, acquaintance], the [one] more agreeable than you.

Then Samuel said to him, “Jehovah has torn the kingdom of Israel from your hand and He has given it to another who is more pleasing than you.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so says unto him Samuel, “Has torn Y^ehowah a kingdom of Israel from upon you the day and He has given her to your associate, the pleasing [one] from you.

Septuagint And Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn your kingdom from Israel out of your hand this day, and will give it to your neighbor who is better than you.

Significant differences: No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Samuel said, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel away from you today, and he will give it to someone who is better than you.

TEV Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel away from you today and given it to someone who is a better man than you.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh) And Samuel said to him, “The LORD has this day torn the kingship over Israel away from you and has given it to another who is worthier than you.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you.
Young's Updated LT	And Samuel says unto him, "Jehovah has rent [or, <i>torn</i>] kingdom of Israel from you today, and given it to your neighbor who is better than you;...

What is the gist of this verse? Samuel uses the robe as an illustration that God has torn the kingdom from Saul's hand that day. That this one is a neighbor simply means that we are dealing with a man from an adjacent kingdom (David). David is more pleasing than Saul because he was more willing to be obedient to God.

You may wonder why I choose the translations that I do. First of all, the NASB and Young are very accurate, generally speaking; they are both readable and close to the Hebrew. However, I like to include the JPS, to show how the Jews might translate this verse, besides the fact that the JPS is a very accurate and readable translation (of the Old Testament only). I also include the Septuagint, because that occasionally introduces some profound differences in translation. Beyond that, I simply include whatever. The CEV is very imaginative, and, although that causes me to grit my teeth now and again, I thought it good to include what is often the most imaginative rendering out there (or, at least in the top 5). I include God's Word™ if it introduces something not found in the other translations (or, if I use it to help back up a translation of my own); and I will include the NLT because it is very readable, sometimes imaginative, yet often it provides a different perspective. The more translations you see, the more likely there is going to be rough sledding through the Hebrew; the fewer translations you see, the more that they are in agreement with one another (e.g., this verse). Now, just because the translations appear to coincide, that does not mean that the translation is easy, nor does it mean that the commonly accepted translations are reasonable.

1Samuel 15:28

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Sh ^e mûw'êl (שִׁמוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
qâra' (קָרַע) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAHÇ</i>]	<i>to tear</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7167 BDB #902
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
mam ^l âkûwth (מַמְלַכּוּת) [pronounced <i>mahm^e-law-KOOTH</i>],	<i>kingdom, dominion</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #4468 BDB #575

1Samuel 15:28

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Yis ^{ra} êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-row-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752
Together, they mean <i>from upon, from over, from by, from beside, from attachment to, from companionship with, from accompanying [in a protective manner], from adhesion to</i>			
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i>]	<i>day, today (with a definite article)</i>	masculine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i>]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the feminine singular suffix	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
lâmed (לְ) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition affixed to a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
rêa' (רֵעַ) [pronounced <i>RAY-ahg</i>]	<i>associate, neighbor, colleague, fellow, acquaintance</i>	masculine singular noun with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7453 BDB #945
ṭôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced <i>toe^bv</i>]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better</i>	masculine singular adjective with the definite article	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

Translation: Then Samuel said to him, “Yehowah has torn the kingdom of Israel from adhesion [to] you [or, from your attachment] and He has given it to your fellow [or, acquaintance], the [one] more agreeable than you. Samuel uses the perfect tense when he speaks of God *having torn* the kingdom of Israel from Saul, as this is an action which is certain. There is no maybe, if Saul repents, that God’s plan will change here.

Saul is adhered or attached to the kingdom of Israel, and God will tear him away from this hold over Israel (recall that Saul is not an unpopular king; removing him would certainly cause some dissension among the people.

When Saul speaks of God giving the kingdom to another, *given* is also in the perfect tense, meaning that it is a done deal. Now, Samuel has not yet contacted David nor does David even have a clue at this time that he will succeed Saul—however, insofar as God is concerned, this decision has been made and it is irrevocable. Perfect tense—for all intents and purposes, it has already come to pass.

David is called an *associate* or a *neighbor*. David, like Saul, originally had no political aspirations. He is out with his flock of sheep taking care of them, which is how he expected to spend much of his life. Saul, when we found him, was looking for his family's donkeys. Both men were quite ordinary farmer/rancher/shepherd types. In that way, they were associates. They were neighbors inasmuch as David was a man of Judah and Saul was a man of Benjamin, adjacent territories (in fact, Jerusalem, which is technically a part of Benjamin, will later be a part of Judah). Furthermore, David will be called into the palace of Saul to soothe his emotional swings later on in the next chapter (1Sam. 16:16–21). Saul will also come to feel very close to David and honor him with a great promotion in 1Sam. 16:21.

Samuel calls David more *pleasing* than Saul because when God gives a command, David will obey it. The final preposition in this verse—*min*—will function in the sense of *more than* (which is what we would expect near a comparative adjective like *ṭōwb*).

Later on, after Samuel dies, Saul will seek him via a medium, and Samuel will miraculously be brought back and he will say almost the identical thing to Saul: “Y^ehowah has departed from you and has become your adversary. Furthermore, Y^ehowah has done just as He spoke through me: for He has torn the kingdom out of your hand and has given it to your acquaintance, David.” (1Sam. 28:16b–17).

<p>And also Eminence of Israel is not lying and he is not sorry for not a man [is] He to be sorry.”</p>	<p>1Samuel 15:29</p>	<p>Furthermore, the Enduring of Israel does not recant [possibly, /ie] nor [is He] moved to pity because He [is] not a man [so as] to pity [to recant His judgment].”</p>
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Furthermore, the Enduring One of Israel does not mislead nor is He moved to pity [over your emotion], because He is not a man moved to pity by a recalcitrant like yourself.”

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

<p>Latin Vulgate</p>	<p>But the triumphant one in Israel will not spare, and will not be moved to repentance: for he is not a man that he should repent.</p>
<p>Masoretic Text</p>	<p>And also Eminence of Israel is not lying and he is not sorry for not a man [is] He to be sorry.”</p>
<p>Peshitta</p>	<p>And also his Excellency the LORD of Israel will not lie nor seek counsel; for he is not a human being, that he should seek counsel.</p>
<p>Septuagint</p>	<p>And Israel will be divided in two; and He will not turn nor change his mind [lit., <i>repent</i>], for He is not as a man to change [his] mind.</p>

Significant differences: In the Greek, the first sentence is entirely different—it reads that *Israel will be divided in two*. In the other three languages, we are speaking of a specific person. In the Latin, it is the *Triumphant One in Israel*; in the Hebrew, it is *the Eminence of Israel*; and in the Syriac, it reads *his Excellency the LORD of Israel*. It makes little sense in context that God tells Saul through Samuel that the kingdom would be split into two. This would happen, this is true, but it has absolutely nothing to do with Saul. The text which the Greek translators could have been so dicey as to require a guess on their part, or, they were dealing with a poor manuscript at this point. Bear in mind, when we have a mess like this, with so many slight differences, we will generally default to the Hebrew, as it is the original text.

Then we have a verb, describing what the *Eminence of Israel* would not do, and in the Hebrew and Syriac, *He would not lie*. The next verb indicate that He would not *change his mind or be moved to repentance* (in the Greek and Latin); however, in the Hebrew, *He will not be sorry (or moved to pity)* by Saul's grief, repentance, etc. This makes the most sense, and the verb is repeated.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Besides, the eternal God of Israel isn't a human being. He doesn't tell lies or change his mind."
 The Message Israel's God-of-Glory doesn't deceive and he doesn't dither. He says what he means and means what he says."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

BBE And further, the Glory of Israel will not say what is false, and his purpose may not be changed: for he is not a man, whose purpose may be changed.
 God's Word™ In addition, the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind, because he is not a mortal who changes his mind."
 JPS (Tanakh) Moreover, the Glory of Israel does not deceive or change His mind, for He is not human that He should change His mind."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

KJV And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he *is* not a man, that he should repent.
 NASB "And also the Glory [or, *Eminence*] of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."
 NKJV "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent."
 NRSV Moreover the Glory of Israel will not recant or change his mind; for he is not a mortal, that he should change his mind." [recant according to the Septuagint and the Qumran manuscripts; MT, deceive]
 Young's Updated LT ...and also, the Pre-eminence of Israel does not lie nor repent [i.e., *change his mind*], for He *is* not a man to be penitent [i.e., *one to change his mind*]." Clarifications in this verse are mine.

What is the gist of this verse? Saul has been attempting in their entire conversation to mislead Samuel. He has downplayed his own part in his disobedience to God, and he has not really ever shared the entire truth with Samuel. He has attempted simply to tell Samuel what he believed Samuel wanted to hear. Samuel says that God is not this sort of person—God does not mislead or lie; nor is he moved to pity by sheer emotion (which Samuel obviously was when he spared Agag). God is not a man, and the implication is that God is not a man like Saul, who both deceives and is easily moved to pity.

1Samuel 15:29a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^o (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>veh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168

1Samuel 15:29a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nêtsach (נֶצַח) [pronounced NAY-tsahkh]	<i>forever, constantly, perpetuity, eternity, continually</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #5331 BDB #664
<p>Since so many of the translations incorrectly render this word <i>Glory</i> or <i>Strength</i>, I should offer some Scripture where this word is consistently rendered <i>forever</i>: 2Sam. 2:26 Psalm 9:6 77:8 79:5 Jer. 50:39 Amos 1:11. Although both Gesenius and BDB offer a plethora of meanings for this word, the ones given should suffice for Scripture.</p>			
<p>This is a good example of a word which indicates that the author has become more educated or that this is a different author than is found in early 1Samuel; this word is found nowhere else in the book of Samuel, and there were dozens of titles or names for God which Samuel could have used instead. Except for the book of Job, where this word occurs 6 times, this is the first instance of the use of this word.</p>			
(יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
<p><i>The Eternity of Israel</i> is a metonymy; the attribute is one applicable to God, and therefore the title is a title for God.⁴³</p>			
lô' (לֹא or לֹא־) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
shâkar (שָׁקַר) [pronounced shaw-KAHR]	<i>to lie, to deceive, to deal falsely, to do falsely</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #8266 BDB #1055
<p>According to the NRSV, <i>recant</i> is what is found in the Qumran manuscripts and in the Greek text.</p>			

Translation: [Furthermore, the Enduring of Israel does not lie...](#) Saul has attempted to mislead Samuel from the beginning. Saul had been lying to Samuel—he has outright lied, he has told half-truths, he has put a spin on the truth, he has done everything possible to put himself in a good light and to deflect any sort of blame onto anyone else. Even though we have only observed a couple of instances where Saul has done this, we reasonably assume that Saul has done this over and over again. In this case, he acted as though he obeyed God thoroughly, and, when caught, then blamed it on the people of Israel. Samuel's point is that God is nothing like Saul. When God tells Saul that the kingdom will be taken from his hand, God is being absolutely straight with Saul—there is no misleading here whatsoever. Saul gets the complete and unadulterated truth. Jesus Christ does not lie.

The *Enduring of Israel* is God, a reference to Christ Jesus in preincarnate form. [“Yours, O Y^howah, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O Y^howah, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.”](#) (1 Chron. 29:11). The NIV Study Bible mistakenly notes that we find this title for God in only one other place—Micah 1:15;⁴⁴ whereas, Micah 1:15 does contain the phrase *Glory of Israel*, our passage does not. Barnes correctly points out that the title in this verse is unique.⁴⁵

⁴³ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 587.

⁴⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 394.

⁴⁵ *Barnes' Notes; 1Samuel to Esther*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 39.

1Samuel 15:29b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô ⁷ (אֵל or אֵלֹ) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
nâcham (נָחַם) [pronounced <i>naw-KHAHM</i>]	<i>to be sorry, to be moved to pity, to lament, to grieve, to have compassion, to be sorry, to pity, to suffer grief, to rue</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #5162 BDB #636
<p>Scofield: In the O.T., "repentance" is the English word used to translate the Hebrew <i>nacham</i>, <i>to be eased or comforted</i>. It is used of both God and man. Notwithstanding the literal meaning of <i>nacham</i> it is evident, from a study of all the passages, that the sacred writers use it in the sense of <i>metanoia</i> in the N.T., meaning <i>a change of mind</i>. See Mt. 3:2; acts 17:30, <i>note</i>. As in the N.T., such change of mind is often accompanied by contrition and self-judgment. When applied to God, the word is used phenomenally, according to O.T. custom. God seems to change His mind. The phenomena are such as, in the case of a man, would indicate a change of mind.⁴⁶</p>			
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because, when</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
lô ⁷ (אֵל or אֵלֹ) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i>]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind, Adam</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 BDB #9
hûw ⁷ (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>he, it</i>	masculine personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nâcham (נָחַם) [pronounced <i>naw-KHAHM</i>]	<i>to be sorry, to be moved to pity, to lament, to grieve, to have compassion, to be sorry, to pity, to suffer grief, to rue</i>	Niphal infinitive construct	Strong's #5162 BDB #636

Translation: ...nor moved to pity because He [is] not a man [so as] to pity [to recant His judgment].” The verb we find here means *to be sorry, to be moved to pity, to grieve, to have compassion for*. Although this has not been discussed (or, at least not recorded), Samuel knows that Saul allowed Agag to live. This was a matter of pity; Saul simply pitied Agag—Saul was moved to compassion concerning Agag—perhaps he even identified with him. Therefore, Saul felt no obligation to complete the mission given him by God; his sense of compassion and humanity

⁴⁶ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 970.

overruled his sense of obedience. He was not going to destroy every person. In fact, Saul was not even going to destroy every bit of livestock of the Amalekites, even though those were his marching orders. This is how a man would react; and in this case, how a believer deep in reversionism would behave.

That God does not lie or change His mind nor is He moved to pity has already been discussed in the addendum to the chart [Times When God is Said to Have Changed His Mind](#) back in v. 9.

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Saul's Unequivocal Admission of Guilt and Samuel's Response

And so he says, "I have sinned; now, honor me please before elders of my people and before Israel and return with me and I will bow down to Y^ehowah your Elohim."

1Samuel
15:30

So Saul responded, "I have sinned; now, please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel and turn back with me and I will worship Y^ehowah your Elohim."

Then Saul responded, "I have sinned—now please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel and return with me so that I may worship Jehovah your God."

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

And so he says, "I have sinned; now, honor me please before elders of my people and before Israel and return with me and I will bow down to Y^ehowah your Elohim."

Septuagint

And Saul said, "I have sinned; yet honor me, I pray you, before the elders of Israel, and before my people, and turn back with me, and I will worship the Lord your God."

Significant differences:

Saul is not named in the MT. That is the only significant difference between the Greek and Hebrew.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

Saul said, "I did sin, but please honor me in front of the leaders of the army and the people of Israel. Come back with me, so I can worship the LORD your God."

TEV

"I have sinned," Saul replied. "But at least show me respect in front of the leaders of my people and all of Israel. Go back with me so that I can worship the LORD your God."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh)

But [Saul] pleaded, "I did wrong. Please, honor me in the presence of the elders of my people and in the presence of Israel, and come back with me until I have bowed low to the LORD your God."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB

Then he said, "I have sinned; but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God."

Young's Updated LT

And he says, "I have sinned; now, honor me, I pray you, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn back with me; and I have bowed myself to Jehovah your God."

What is the gist of this verse? Saul finally admits to sinning, in an unqualified manner (which is a major improvement). He then asks for Samuel to turn back with him (because Samuel is in the process of leaving) and help him to worship Jehovah, God of Israel, as Samuel does function as a priest to Saul and to Israel.

1Samuel 15:30

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
châṭâʾ (חָטָא) [pronounced <i>khaw-TAW</i>]	<i>to sin, to miss, to miss the mark, to violate the law, to err; to do wrong, to commit a transgression</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #2398 BDB #306
ʿattâh (עַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ġaht-TAWH</i>]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong's #6258 BDB #773
kâbêd (כָּבֵד) [pronounced <i>kaw^b-VADE</i>]	<i>to make heavy, to make insensible; to honor, to do honor to</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Piel imperative with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3513 BDB #457
nâʾ (נָא) [pronounced <i>naw</i>]	<i>please, I pray you, I respectfully implore (ask, or request of) you, I urge you</i>	particle of entreaty	Strong's #4994 BDB #609
neged (נֶגֶד) [pronounced <i>NEH-ged</i>]	<i>what is conspicuous when it is a substantive and, as a preposition, in front of, in the sight of, opposite to, before (in the sense of being in front of)</i>	preposition	Strong's #5048 BDB #617
zâkên (זָקֵן) [pronounced <i>zaw-KANE</i>]	<i>elders</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #2205 BDB #278
ʿam (אָם) [pronounced <i>ġahm</i>]	<i>people</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
neged (נֶגֶד) [pronounced <i>NEH-ged</i>]	<i>in front of, in the sight of, opposite to, before (in the sense of being in front of)</i>	preposition	Strong's #5048 BDB #617
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

1Samuel 15:30

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shûw ^b v (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of vicinity with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâchah (שָׁח) [pronounced <i>shaw-KHAW</i>]	<i>to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to do obeisance to; to honor [with prayers]; to do homage to, to submit to</i>	1 st person singular, Hithpael perfect	Strong's #7812 BDB #1005
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʿêlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods or God; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: So Saul responded, "I have sinned; now, please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel and turn back with me and I will worship Y^ehowah your Elohim." Note, the one big improvement in this verse is that Saul does admit to sinning and he does not qualify or downplay it in any way. His motivations may not be pure, but his admission of sin is. Now, you may ask, he has sinned, he has confessed his sin, so why will the kingdom be taken from him? The answer is straight out of my many years at Berachah Church. When you sin, you can expect (1) to be disciplined and (2) not to be disciplined. Once you confess your sin, if you have been receiving discipline, several different things could happen: (1) the discipline could suddenly stop; (2) the discipline could be lessened; (3) the discipline could continue as it began. In the latter two cases, the discipline has been changed to suffering for blessing. I should add to this that there are natural results to a sin. If you break the law, then you are liable for what you have done. You may face a fine or incarceration at a later date, which is separate from God's discipline. If you are in fellowship at the time, it will ultimately be for your blessing; if you are not, it can be a part of your discipline at that point in time in your life. Realize that God has forgiven you for the crime that you have committed, no matter how heinous; however, our court system has a legal and legitimate responsibility to follow through and prosecute you for committing whatever crime you have committed. Now, maybe it was not that bad. Maybe you did not commit a crime, but you cheated on your spouse. You may face personal guilt (a sin) which could continually crop up for committing adultery; your spouse could leave you if he or she knows. This can be apart from God's discipline to you, and it could occur long after you name this sin to God. I can think of things

which I have done as an unbeliever which still cause me guilt, shame and embarrassment. When I feel those things, I rebound; but, knowing that I have done these things does not make me feel good.

Now, at this point, Saul has finally admitted, unconditionally that he has sinned; therefore, Samuel can return with him to properly worship God. However, bear in mind that when you sin and confess your sin, you may be forgiven, but your life may not be the same again. Sin, even that which has been forgiven, has consequences. To give you a simple example: you might go down to the local convenience store, rob them at gun point, and then confess that sin. God does forgive you of that sin; however, that does not mean that there are not consequences for committing that sin—even if you return the money you stole.

Note that Saul refers to Israel as *my people*, which indicates a willingness on his part to accept responsibility for their actions.

Some commentaries misunderstand the emphasis of honor here. Saul asks Samuel to honor him before the elders of his people. This does not mean that Samuel, by joining Saul, makes Saul important before the elders of Israel. What is being offered will be a sin offering; when Samuel does that, Saul will be admitting before all of his soldiers that he has sinned in this matter of the Amalekites. It would have been akin to President Clinton making a public confession before the people and Billy Graham concerning his affair with Monica Lewinsky. The honor is the fact that Samuel will offer the sin offering; not that Samuel is making some sort of recognition of Saul's kingship.

This request gives us great insight into the relationship between Saul and Samuel. Samuel, by duty, had to chew Saul out for his failure to follow the clear instructions of God. Therefore, we do not find any wavering in Samuel's condemnation of Saul. We also see Saul trying everything to get Samuel to believe that he really tried to follow God's orders. So, the scenario suggests us an uneasy relationship between these two. However, Saul will continue to press Samuel to join him in worship until Samuel relents. The key is not Saul's persistence, however, but his willingness to finally admit to his sin without excuse or mitigation. Certainly, it is possible that Saul was just looking for God to change His mind, even though Samuel has stated unequivocally that God does not change His mind. However, I am certain that part of this request is based upon Saul's real respect for Samuel and Samuel's authority and relationship to God. We will see later in this chapter that Samuel himself was not cold and unfeeling toward Saul, but had respect and love for him as well.

Barnes comments: *The pertinacity with which Saul clings to Samuel for support is a striking testimony to Samuel's integrity. With all his worldly-mindedness Saul could perceive and appreciate the purity of Samuel's character as a man of God.*⁴⁷ Samuel agrees, but his primary reason was to complete what Saul did not do.

And so turns back Samuel after Saul and so worships Saul to Y^ehowah. 1 Samuel 15:31 **So Samuel turned back [following] after Saul and Saul worshiped Y^ehowah.**

Then Samuel turned back to follow after Saul, and Saul worshiped Jehovah.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so turns back Samuel after Saul and so worships Saul to Y^ehowah.
Septuagint So Samuel turned back after Saul, and he worshipped the Lord.

Significant differences: None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

⁴⁷ Barnes' Notes; 1 Samuel to Esther; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 39.

The Message Samuel did. He went back with him. And Saul went to his knees before GOD and worshiped.
 NLT So Samuel finally agreed and went with him, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh) So Samuel followed Saul back, and Saul bowed low to the LORD.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB So Samuel went back following Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.
Young's Updated LT And Samuel turns back after Saul and Saul bows himself to Jehovah;...

It is a mistaken notion to think that Saul, by asking again and again, finally got Samuel to worship with him.⁴⁸ Saul did not nag Samuel into this. Samuel did not finally yield to Saul's persistence. The key is *what* Saul said, not how many times he asked Samuel. The key is, Saul finally admitted that he sinned.

What is the gist of this verse? Now that Saul has confessed his sin, without offering any mediating factors, Samuel is free to guide him into forgiveness (there were sin offerings in the Old Testament). So Samuel returns with Saul and Saul bows himself before Jehovah.

1Samuel 15:31			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shûw ^b v (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
Sh ^e mûw ^l êl (שִׁמְעוֹן) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
ʿachar (אַחַר) [pronounced <i>ah-KHAHR</i>]	<i>after, following, behind</i>	preposition affixed to a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #310 BDB #29
Shâ ^l ʿwl (שׂאֵל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

⁴⁸ This seems to be Gnana Robinson's take in *1 & 2 Samuel; Let Us Be Like the Nations*; International Theological Commentary, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand rapids, ©1993; p. 92.

1Samuel 15:31

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâchah (שָׁחַח) [pronounced shaw-KHAW]	<i>to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to do obeisance to; to honor [with prayers]; to do homage to, to submit to</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hithpael imperfect	Strong's #7812 BDB #1005
Shâ'ûl (שָׂאֹל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l̄)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly yohoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: So Samuel turned back [following] after Saul and Saul worshiped Y^ehowah. Although it sounds here as though Saul was more or less on his own in worshipping God, and that Samuel simply followed after him; it is more likely that Samuel was involved in the offering of sin-forgiving sacrifices. Samuel could really have nothing to do with Saul until the previous verse, where Saul confesses his sin without qualification.

Samuel also accompanies Saul for an additional reason. Agag is still alive, and God's command was for Saul to destroy all the Amalekites. Samuel will see to it that the execution of Agag is taken care of.

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Samuel Kills Agag, King of the Amalekites

And so says Samuel, "Bring [you all] unto me Agag king of Amalek." And so came unto him Agag [in] bonds. And so says Agag, "Surely has turned aside bitterness of the death." 1Samuel 15:32

So Samuel said, "Bring Agag, king of Amalek, to me." So Agag came to him in restraints and he [lit., Agag] said, "Certainly the bitterness of a violent death has been withdrawn [or, taken away, departed]."

Samuel then said, "Bring Agag, the king of the Amalekites, to me." So Agag was brought to him in restraints, and Agag said, "Certainly the prospect of being violently executed is a resolved issue."

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Dead Sea Scrolls

[Then] Sam[ue]l said, ["Bring Aga]g kin[g of the Amalekites here to me." And Agag came to him cheerfully, for he thought, "The threat of death is surely over."] What is in brackets is missing in our Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts do to various types of damage.

Latin Vulgate

And Samuel said: Bring Agag, the king of Amalec, here to me. And Agag was presented to him very fat, and trembling. And Agag said: "Does bitter death separate in this manner?"

Masoretic Text	And so says Samuel, "Bring [you all] unto me Agag king of Amalek." And so came unto him Agag [in] bonds. And so says Agag, "Surely has turned aside bitterness of the death."
Peshitta	And Samuel said, "Bring Agag the king of the Amalekites here to me." And Agag said, "Surely, death is bitter."
Septuagint	And Samuel said, "Bring me Agag the king of Amalec;" and Agag came to him trembling; and Agag said, "Is death thus bitter?"

Significant differences: Even though there is almost nothing of the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts of this verse, what the translators/commentators/authors (Abegg Jr., Flint, Ulrich) did is present an unusual interpretation of this verse (unusual, as it is different from most texts and translations). Agag is brought to Samuel, and he is cheerful, thinking that he is not going to be executed. In the other versions, Agag is either trembling or in bonds.

The meaning of the final words of Agag are difficult to determine; however, there is really little meaning to be attached to the final words of an unbeliever.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Then Samuel shouted, "Bring me King Agag of Amalek!" Agag came in chains, and he was saying to himself, "Surely they won't kill me now." [<i>Surely...now</i> ; Hebrew; one ancient translation "It would have been better to die in battle!"]
NLT	Then Samuel said, "Bring King Agag to me." Agag arrived full of smiles, for he thought, "Surely the worst is over, and I have been spared!"
TEV	"Bring King Agag here to me," Samuel ordered. Agag came to him, trembling with fear, thinking to himself, "What a bitter thing it is to die!" [trembling with fear...die; or confidently, thinking to himself, "Surely the bitter danger of death is past!"]

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	"Bring me King Agag of Amalek," Samuel said. Agag came to him trembling [or, <i>in shackles</i>]. "Surely, the bitterness of death is past," Agag said.
JPS (Tanakh)	Samuel said, "Bring forward to me King Agag of Amalek." Agag approached him with faltering steps; and Agag said, "Ah, bitter death is at hand."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Then said Samuel— Bring ye near unto me—Agag, king of Amalek, And Agag came unto him in fetters. Then said Agag, Surely <terrible> is the bitterness of death!
NASB	Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag, the king of the amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully [or, <i>in bonds</i>]. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."
NRSV	And Agag came to him haltingly. [Meaning of Hebrew here is uncertain; this is their best guess at restoring the text] Agag said, "Surely this is the bitterness of death." [As per the Qumran manuscripts and the LXX; MT: <i>Surely the bitterness of death is past</i>].
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	...and Samuel says, "Bring near unto me Agag king of Amalek," and Agag comes unto him daintily, and Agag says, "Surely the bitterness of death has turned aside."

What is the gist of this verse? Samuel then demands that Agag be brought to him. Obviously, he knew Agag was kept alive as Saul admitted to that. Amalek is brought out, in restraints, and Agag says, "Certainly, the prospect

of my being executed is an issue which has already been resolved.” That is, Agag figured if he had been kept alive until then, he would not simply be executed a few days later.

1Samuel 15:32a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Sh ^o mûw`êl (שִׁמוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>sh^o-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
nâgash (נָגַשׁ) [pronounced <i>naw-GASH</i>]	<i>bring near, to bring hither</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperative	Strong's #5066 BDB #620
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced <i>el</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) with the 1 st person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #413 BDB #39
ʾăgâg (אֲגָג) [pronounced <i>uh-GAWG</i>]	which possibly means <i>violent</i> and is transliterated <i>Agag</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #90 BDB #8
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
ʿamâlêq (עַמְלֵק) [pronounced <i>ʿah-maw-LAYK</i>]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun (used infrequently as an adjective gentis)	Strong's #6002 BDB #766

Translation: So Samuel said, “Bring Agag, king of Amalek, to me.” Now Samuel is calling the shots. Saul was expecting Samuel to lead the ritual of the sin offering; however, he did not realize that Samuel was going to handle what Saul should have done. However, notice that Saul does not offer any resistance to Samuel’s order.

1Samuel 15:32b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229

1Samuel 15:32b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿel (לָא) [pronounced <i>el</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #413 BDB #39
ʿāgāg (אָגָג) [pronounced <i>uh-GAWG</i>]	which possibly means <i>violent</i> and is transliterated <i>Agag</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #90 BDB #8
maʿādannōwth (מַאֲדַנּוֹת) [pronounced <i>mah-ġuh-dahn-NOHTH</i>]	<i>bonds, fetters, restraints, chains</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #4575 BDB #588
or			
maʿādān (מַאֲדָן) [pronounced <i>mah-ġuh-DAWN</i>],	<i>dainty food, delightful</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4574 BDB #726

Zodhiates and the New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance both have this noun as Strong's #4574 and Owen suggests BDB #722 or 588. The word that Owen has is maʿādannōth, which is the same as Strong's #4575 (although a very slight variation of spelling), and this word does not match the plural forms of Strong's #4574 at all. That Agag would be in chains is likely. Although we could interpret this as him walking in *gingerly* (or, as others have rendered this, *cheerfully*), I see no reason to take this word in this way.

You may wonder, since the word is closer to Strong's #4575, why choose the other? The problem is that we would expect the bēyth preposition, so that Agag comes to them *in* chains (or restraints).

Translation: [So Agag came to him in restraints...](#) Now Samuel is calling the shots. God said that every man woman and child was to be destroyed from the Amalekites, and there is one remaining. So Samuel calls for that man. Agag is brought to him in chains.

An interesting aspect to ancient Israel is that there is no provision for a jail (at least, I am not aware of any). Crimes were dealt with by some sort of punishment (very often death; occasionally mutilation or a fine). In war, soldiers were killed or enslaved; the virgin women were killed or made wives. This passage is one of the few instances where we have any indication of some sort of incarceration; and, because of the problem with the translation, we are not even 100% certain that Agag has been incarcerated (although, I would give it a 95% probability that he was in chains or some form of restraints while Saul was determining what to do with him).

You will notice, as per the translators of the Dead Sea Scrolls and as per the NLT, Agag comes in cheerfully. He feels pretty good about what has happened. I like this rendering; however, I don't really have any way of supporting it in the Hebrew, Greek, Latin or Syriac. I have discussed the Hebrew in greater detail above.

1Samuel 15:32b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wāw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

1Samuel 15:32b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʾăgâg (אָגָג) [pronounced uh-GAWG]	which possibly means <i>violent</i> and is transliterated <i>Agag</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #90 BDB #8
ʾākên (אָכֵן) [pronounced aw-KAYN],	<i>surely, truly</i>	adverb	Strong's #403 BDB #38
çûwr (צוּר) [pronounced soor]	<i>to turn aside, to depart, to go away</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693

Gesenius gives us two sets of meanings for the Qal stem of çûwr: ❶ The first set of meanings are *to turn aside, to go away, to depart*, particularly when followed by the preposition *min*. (a) It means *to turn away from, to depart from* when followed by *min*. (b) It means *to turn against* when followed by the *bêyth* preposition. (c) When followed by the accusative and the word *law*, it means *to violate the law*. (d) It can mean *to escape from, to withdraw from* calamity or darkness. (e) This can have an absolute sense, as in someone as *departed from God*; i.e., they have become degenerate. (f) Finally, it can even be used in the sense of *having passed away, taken away* (1Sam. 15:32 | Kings 15:14 22:44 Hosea 4:18). ❷ This second set of meanings come under the heading of *to draw near*, particularly when followed by the preposition *ʿal*. It can be used *to turn aside into a house* (2Kings 4:8).

mar (מָר) [pronounced mahr]	<i>bitter, bitterness</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4751 BDB #600
mâveth (מָוֶת) [pronounced MAW-veth]	<i>death, death [as opposed to life], death by violence, a state of death, a place of death</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4194 BDB #560

Translation: ...and he [lit., Agag] said, “Certainly the bitterness of a violent death has been withdrawn [or, taken away, departed].” When Agag is brought before Saul, whom he knows, and Samuel, whom he may not know, he says to them, “Surely, the prospect of my being violently executed is a dead issue, right?” It is possible that this is what he said to himself.

Agag did not know why he was being called into their presence, but he assumed that since he was not killed in the battle that he did not have to worry about being executed at this point. My guess is that the inflection of his statement was in the form of a question. We have an inflection on our speech which indicates that something is a question. The Hebrews did this grammatically with a particle (we do not know if there was a similar inflection in their voice). However, Agag is not a Jew, therefore, it is possible that his questions were phrased by inflection rather than by grammatical insertions.⁴⁹ A possible modern-day translation would be, “You’re not going to kill me now, are you?” Another option, as mentioned, is that this is a statement which Agag thinks to himself.

⁴⁹ We do not know how good his Hebrew was or whether he even spoke Hebrew—this could be a translation of what he said. However, I would think that, being the leader of his country, and living next door to the Jews, that he spoke Hebrew. Whether he spoke it fluently (which would mean that what he says here is simply a statement) or whether he mixed Amalekite inflection with Hebrew speech, which would allow for this to be a question.

And so says Samuel, “As which had bereaved women your sword, so is bereaved in women your mother.” And so hews in pieces Samuel Agag to faces of Y^ehowah in the Gilgal. 1Samuel 15:33

Samuel then said, “Just as your sword has made women childless, so is your mother made childless among women.” With that, Samuel cut Agag into pieces before Y^ehowah in Gilgal.

Samuel then said, “Just as you have made women childless with your sword, so your mother will be made childless.” With that, Samuel cut Agag into pieces before Jehovah in Gilgal.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so says Samuel, “As which had bereaved women your sword, so is bereaved in women your mother.” And so hews in pieces Samuel Agag to faces of Y^ehowah in the Gilgal.

Septuagint And Samuel said to Agag, “As your sword has bereaved women of their children, so will your mother be made childless among women.” Then Samuel slew Agag before the Lord in Galgal.

Significant differences: No significant difference; we have the addition of two words in the Greek which do not affect the meaning at all.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV But Samuel said, “Agag, you have snatched children from their mothers’ arms and killed them. Now our mother will be without children.” Then Samuel chopped Agag to pieces at the place of worship in Gilgal.

TEV Samuel said, “As your sword has made many mothers childless, so now your mother will become childless.” And he cut Agag to pieces in front of the altar in Gilgal.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh) Samuel said:
 “As your sword has bereaved women,
 So shall your mother be bereaved among women.”
And Samuel cut Agag down before the LORD at Gilgal.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB But Samuel said, “As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.” And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

Young's Updated LT And Samuel says, “As your sword bereaved women—so is your mother bereaved above women;” and Samuel hews Agag in pieces before Jehovah in Gilgal.

What is the gist of this verse? Agag, at least in battle, killed several Israelites (at least, that is what I would assume), making their mothers childless. The other possibility is that Agag was closely involved with child sacrifices and this is how he made women childless. In either case, Samuel says, “Therefore, your mother will be childless.” and then he kills Agag. He apparently cuts him into pieces. It says here *before Jehovah in Gilgal*, because this is according to the orders of God.

1Samuel 15:33a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾāmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Sh ^e mûw`êl (שִׁמְוֵאל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately; combined with an infinitive, it can also take on the meaning as, often, when, as soon as</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
Together, kaʾāsher (כִּאֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>kah-uh-SHER</i>] means <i>as which, as one who, as, like as, just as</i> .			
shâkal (שָׂכַל) [pronounced <i>shaw-KAHL</i>]	<i>to bereave, to make childless, to cause barrenness, to make abort</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #7921 BDB #1013
ʾishshâh (אִשְׁשָׁה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAWH</i>]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #802 BDB #61
chereb (חֶרֶב) [pronounced <i>khe-RE^{BV}</i>]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2719 BDB #352
kên (כֵּן) [pronounced <i>kane</i>]	<i>so, thus; upright, honest; rightly, well; [it is] so, such, so constituted;</i>	properly, an active participle; used primarily as an adverb	Strong's #3651 BDB #485
shâkal (שָׂכַל) [pronounced <i>shaw-KAHL</i>]	<i>to be bereaved</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7921 BDB #1013
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾishshâh (אִשְׁשָׁה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAWH</i>]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #802 BDB #61

1Samuel 15:33a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾēm (אֵם) [pronounced <i>aim</i>]	<i>mother</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #517 BDB #51

Translation: Samuel then said, “Just as your sword has made women childless, so is your mother made childless among women.” Samuel first warns and explains why Agag is being executed. Agag had used his sword to make women childless in his lifetime. We have three possibilities: (1) the Amalekites were a warlike people, at the behest of Agag, and killed many men in battle (they could have acted as raiding parties, as did the Philistines). (2) Agag killed several Israelites when Israel attacked the Amalekites (or he had killed Israelites in past skirmishes). (3) Agag could have practiced the child sacrifice. God wanted all of the Amalekites removed from this earth, and God generally requires that of a society which has become extremely degenerate. In the ancient world, this degeneracy often included child sacrifice. If I were to guess, Agag was probably guilty of all three of these offenses, or at least #1 and #3. And, as we have been told from the very beginning, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man will his blood be shed.” (Gen. 9:6a).

In the previous verse, we discussed whether or not what Agag said was a statement or a question. In any case, Samuel responds to what he says. Samuel does not simply execute Agag, but he lets Agag (and those present) know why he is being executed. In fact, of all the Amalekites, no one deserves to be executed more than Agag, their king.

Application: I don’t care what you think—the Jews are God’s people. Do not practice anti-Semitism in any form.

1Samuel 15:33b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâçaph (שָׁחַף) [pronounced <i>shaw-SAHF</i>],	<i>to hew in pieces</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #8158 BDB #1043

This verb is only found in 1Sam. 15:33, which calls into question its meaning or existence. However, there is a very similar verb, shâçāʿ (Strong's #8156 BDB #1042), which means *to divide, to cleave, to tear apart, to tear into pieces* (the latter is the Piel connotation). It is possible that this is the verb that should be here or it is possible that this is simply a very similar verb (in spelling and meaning). In either case, we can be reasonably certain of its meaning.

Sh ^e mûw`êl (שִׁמְעוֹן) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84

1Samuel 15:33b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾăgâg (אָגָג) [pronounced uh-GAWG]	which possibly means <i>violent</i> and is transliterated <i>Agag</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #90 BDB #8
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, they mean <i>upon the face of, before, before the face of, in the presence of, in the sight of, in front of</i> . When used with God, it can take on the more figurative meaning <i>in the judgment of</i> .			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
gil ^e gâl (גִּלְגָּל) [pronounced gil ^e -GAWL]	<i>sacred circle of stones</i> and is transliterated <i>Gilgal</i>	proper noun, location with the definite article	Strong's #1537 BDB #166

Translation: [With that, Samuel cut Agag into pieces before Y^ehowah in Gilgal](#). Although the word *to cut into pieces* is unclear, it is very similar to a word which means the same thing (in the Piel); there is one letter difference. Therefore, we can be reasonably assured that it means *to cut into pieces* or something very close to that. Herein, Samuel did what God commissioned Saul to do.

Barnes: *Samuel thus executed the cherem (v. 3) which Saul had violated, and so both saved the nation from the guilt of a broken oath, and gave a final example to Saul, but apparently in vain, or uncompromising obedience to the commandments of God. There is something awful [ominous?] in the majesty of the Prophet rising above and eclipsing that of the king (cp. I K. xxi. 20; Jer. xxxviii. 14 seq.; Dan. ii. 46, iv. 27).*⁵⁰

McGee also comments: *And Samuel killed Agag. Now that may be strong medicine for some folk today, but my friend, our God is a God of judgment and He is going to judge wrong and evil. I am glad that God is going to judge. I don't know about you, but I thank God that no one is getting away with evil today. There may be those, even in high places, who think they are getting away with their sin, and dishonesty, and murder, and adultery, but they are not. God is going to judge them. No one is going to get away with sin, and we need to make that very clear today. So Samuel executed the judgment of God upon this vile, wicked ruler, Agag.*⁵¹

Now, you may have assumed that this is the last Amalekite. Not so. Although Israel attacked the Amalekites with the mandate to kill every man, woman, child and animal, when Israel began the attack and were clearly prevailing, someone noticed the great livestock that the Amalekites owned and said, "You know, we need to set a few of these

⁵⁰ Barnes' Notes; 1Samuel to Esther; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 39.

⁵¹ J. Vernon McGee; I & II Samuel; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 88.

aside—to offer to Y^ehowah, of course.” Recall that an offering also meant a barbeque for the family of the person who offered the animal. At that point, many of the soldiers became just as interested in preserving some of the livestock as they were in defeating the Amalekites. Bear in mind that they are in the middle of a war against the Amalekites, the war is going well; and they are probably burning down the cities of the Amalekites. In all of this confusion, these animals are not going to save themselves. So some of the soldiers either were put in charge of saving some animals, or many of the soldiers grabbed an animal for himself. This being a lost cause to them, many Amalekites scattered to the four winds while Israel was so distracted. Because of this, there will be enough of them still alive during the time of David to cause him problems (1Sam. 30).

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Saul and Samuel Part Company for Good

And so goes Samuel the Ramah-ward and Saul went up unto his house Gibeah of Saul. 1Samuel 15:34 **Then Samuel departed for Ramah while Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.**

Then Samuel departed for Ramah while Saul went up to his home in Gibeah.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text And so goes Samuel the Ramah-ward and Saul went up unto his house Gibeah of Saul.

Septuagint And Samuel departed to Armathaim, and Saul went up to his house at Gabaa.

Significant differences: No significant differences; there is an additional word in the Hebrew.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

TEV Then Samuel went to Ramah, and King Saul went home to Gibeah.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

JPS (Tanakh) Samuel then departed for Ramah, and Saul went up to his home at Gibeah of Saul.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul.
Young's Updated LT And Samuel goes to Ramath and Saul has gone unto his house—toi Gibeah of Saul.

What is the gist of this verse? This is pretty self-explanatory—Saul and Samuel both return to their respective homes.

1Samuel 15:34

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

1Samuel 15:34

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
Sh ^e mûw'êl (שִׁמְוֵאל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
Râmâh (רָמָה) [pronounced <i>raw-MAW</i>]	<i>height, high place; transliterated Ramah</i>	feminine noun used primarily as a proper noun; with the directional hê here	Strong's #7413 BDB #928
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
Shâ'ûwl (שָׁאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
'âlâh (אָלַח) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i>]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to rise, to climb</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
'el (אֶל) [pronounced <i>el</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #413 BDB #39
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i>]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
Gib ^e râh (גִּבְעָה) [pronounced <i>gⁱv^e-GAW</i>]	transliterated <i>Gibeah</i> ; this same word means <i>hill</i>	proper feminine singular noun; construct form	Strong's #1390 BDB #149
Shâ'ûwl (שָׁאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

Translation: Then Samuel departed for Ramah while Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. This was the final parting between Samuel and Saul. There was serious, lifelong regret on the part of Saul (this will be very clear when Samuel dies).

We know that Samuel was born in Ramah and, in his later years, returned to Ramah to build his permanent home (1Sam. 1:19–20 7:17). Gibeah, of course, was Saul's original hometown, the city in which he remained even after becoming king (1Sam. 10:5, 26 11:4 15:34).

And did not add Samuel to see Saul until a day of his death, for had mourned Samuel to Saul and Y^ehowah repented that He had made king Saul over Israel. 1Samuel 15:35

Samuel did not again see [lit., *continue to see*] Saul until the day of his death, for Samuel was in mourning concerning Saul. Y^ehowah also lamented that he made Saul king over Israel.

Samuel did not see Saul again until he [Samuel] died, for Samuel was in mourning over Saul's actions. Yehowah, as well, regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And did not add Samuel to see Saul until a day of his death, for had mourned Samuel to Saul and Y ^e howah repented that He had made king Saul over Israel.
Septuagint	And Samuel did not see Saul again till the day of his death, for Samuel mourned after Saul, and the Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Significant differences: No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Even though Samuel felt sad about Saul, Samuel never saw him again. The Lord was sorry he had made Saul the king of Israel.
NLT	Samuel never went to meet with Saul again, but he mourned constantly for him. And the LORD was sorry he had ever made Saul king of Israel.
TEV	As long as Samuel lived, he never again saw the king; but he grieved over him. The LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king of Israel.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	Samuel didn't see Saul again before he died, though Samuel mourned over Saul. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king of Israel.
JPS (Tanakh)	Samuel never saw Saul again to the day of his death. But Samuel grieved over Saul, because the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	And Samuel has not added to see Saul till the day of his death, for Samuel mourned for Saul, and Jehovah repented that He had caused Saul to reign over Israel.

What is the gist of this verse? Whereas, most of what we have had in this chapter was quite clear, we might read too much into the first statement. I believe that it simply tells us that Samuel never went to see Saul again. That is, Samuel never took the initiative to seek out Saul in order to advise him, bring to him a prophesy from God, etc. Now, Saul will seek out Samuel later on (1Sam. 19:22–24). Also, Saul will go to a medium and Samuel was brought back in some form from the dead (although, brought back by God, and not by the medium). Then Saul did not see Samuel (it is actually unclear here), but he was able to communicate with him. Samuel behaved as a person in mourning with regards to Saul; that is, God had removed Saul from being king over Israel in principal, but not in actuality. Therefore, Samuel behaved as though Saul had died and he was in mourning for him. Finally, we have an anthropopathism. God knew from eternity past that Saul would screw up and that he would have to be replaced; God also knew that Saul was the only man for the job when God made him king. So that we can understand God first making Saul king and then removing him as king, the author presents us with an anthropopathism, when a human emotion or motivation is attributed to God, even though He does not actually have the emotion or motivation.

1Samuel 15:35a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	generally negates the word immediately following; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
yâçaph (וַיַּצֵּף) [pronounced <i>yaw-SAHPH</i>]	<i>to add, to augment, to continue to do a thing</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3254 BDB #414
Sh ^e mûw ^{êl} (שְׁמוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i>]	<i>to see, to look</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Shâ'ûwl (שָׁאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
'ad (עַד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i>]	<i>day, today</i> (with a definite article)	masculine singular construct	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
mâveth (מוֹת) [pronounced <i>MAW-veth</i>]	<i>death, death [as opposed to life], death by violence, a state of death, a place of death</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4194 BDB #560

Translation: [Samuel did not again see](#) [lit., *continue to see*] [Saul until the day of his death](#),... We have to explain this in the light of 1Sam. 19:22–24, where Saul goes to Ramah and prophesies naked before Samuel. God worked through Samuel and God worked through Saul. When the problem of the Amalekites arose, God went to Samuel, and Samuel sought out Saul (1Sam. 15:1–2). Once the war with the Amalekites was finished and Saul had not done what God required, Samuel sought Saul out once again, first going to Carmel and then to Gilgal (1Sam. 15:12). However, God will no longer work through Saul, as Saul cannot be depended upon to execute God's orders. Therefore, even though God will still speak to Samuel, Samuel will have no reason to find Saul and relay any messages or commands. The idea is that Samuel used to seek out Saul to communicate God's will; however, he will no longer do that. Remember: God through Samuel has given Saul unequivocal directions, and Saul disobeyed God's mandates. Therefore, there is no longer a need for Samuel to go to Saul to relay God's latest directions. Saul has made it clear that he was not going to obey God's commands—the commands of the God Who placed Saul in power—therefore, there is no longer any reason for Samuel to continually go back to Saul and say, "Okay, maybe you will obey these orders and maybe you won't; but this is what God would have you do." At

that point in time, when God went to a king with an unequivocal mandate, then the king needed to obey the mandate. Saul and Samuel would actually see one another at least once more and possibly twice more; however, Samuel would no longer come to Saul with God's mandates.

Let's see if I can approach this with an illustration. The Bible is not using the verb *to see* here in its literal sense. I was dating this gal for sometime, and she broke up we me, so *we are no longer seeing one another*. This does not mean that I will never literally see this girl again; this does not mean that we will not communicate ever again; it simply means that, in the sense of being boy friend and girl friend, we are not going to see one another. Samuel was the prophet to Saul and was there to guide Samuel and to give him spiritual advice; this verse tells us that he would no longer fulfill that function, not until the day of Saul's death. On that day, Samuel will again give advice to Saul—well, not so much advice as tell Saul what God planned to do (which is also the function of a prophet).

On the other hand, Saul will, on two occasions, seek out Samuel. In 1Sam. 19, Saul is in pursuit of David (as he is for much of the latter chapters of 1Samuel), and he sends three sets of messengers to Samuel in Ramah. All three sets of messengers fall into prophetic states. Samuel decides to go to Ramah himself and he also falls into a trance-like state, resulting in his getting semi-naked and laying on the floor (the end of 1Sam. 19 is pretty weird). The second time that Saul seeks Samuel, it is after Samuel has died and Saul goes through a medium (1Sam. 28). This second time the Saul seeks out Samuel is the day of his death, and this fulfills our passage here, which tells us that **Samuel would not again see Saul until the day of his death**.

Given this information, we must interpret 1Sam. 15:35a as meaning that, since God no longer works through Saul, there is no reason for Samuel to seek him out. Therefore, Samuel will no longer seek out Saul. However, it is possible that Samuel did literally see Saul (and more than he wanted to), as 1Sam. 19:24 tells us that Saul laid out naked on the ground before Samuel and prophesied.

1Samuel 15:35b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because, when</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʾâbal (אָבַל) [pronounced <i>aw-^BVAHL</i>]	<i>to mourn, to act like a mourner, to go through the motions a ceremonies of mourning</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hithpael perfect	Strong's #56 BDB #5
Generally speaking, the Qal is found in poetry and the Hithpael in prose.			
Sh ^e mûw ^l ʾel (שִׁמְעוֹן אֵל) [pronounced <i>sh^e-moo-ALE</i>]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028
ʾel (אֵל) [pronounced <i>eI</i>]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
Shâʾûwl (שָׂאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

Translation: ...for Samuel was in mourning concerning Saul. It is important to understand here that Samuel did not simply regret making Saul king; this was not his call. Again and again he maintained that Israel did not need a human king. However, the people of Israel overruled him and God allowed the people to have a king, even though that was not God's first choice for Israel. In other words, Samuel had nothing to regret. He followed God's orders

completely. However, he had formed a personal relationship with Saul over the years and he mourned this decision of God, even though it was right, because of this personal relationship. Because we see Samuel standing up to Saul, we lose sight of the fact that there was a friendship there and mutual respect. This is why Saul continued to implore Samuel to join him in worship, despite the fact that Samuel pronounced judgment against him.⁵² This is why Saul will seek out Samuel’s advice beyond the grave in 1Sam. 28.

The word *mourning* here is generally used of someone who is dead (see Gen. 37:34 1Sam. 6:19 2Chron. 35:34). The idea is that Saul, although he is still breathing, is dead to God and therefore dead to Samuel. The loss of Saul is certainly a cause of mourning to Samuel.

There are two reasons that Samuel mourns over Saul. First, there was a genuine friendship and mutual respect. Sure, Saul has strayed from God and from obedience to God; however, there is no reason to suppose that Samuel’s natural feelings toward Saul have suddenly changed. It is more as though he has suffered the loss of his best friend. Furthermore, there is the nation Israel. When a king is installed over a nation, the future of that nation and the king are indelibly intertwined. Saul’s mistakes become a part of Israel’s present and future. What he does and doesn’t do will affect Israel for centuries to come (this chapter provides us the perfect example of the Amalekites, who should have been completely destroyed). A king was generally removed from his throne by revolution or death—or so Samuel had observed from other nations. Therefore, this is pretty much the best that we can expect for Saul—to be removed in the near future by death and/or revolution. And still, for every day that Saul remains alive, he continues to make decisions which negatively impact Israel. So, no matter what happens, there is reason for grief on the part of Samuel.

Calvin: We see here the prophet affected as other men. As Samuel beholds the vessel which God’s own hand had made, more than broken and minished, he is deeply moved. In this he showed pious and holy affection. But he was not wholly free from sin in the matter—not that the feeling itself was wrong, but that it exceeded the proper measure, and that he too much indulged in personal grief.⁵³

Edersheim writes: If the tragic events just recorded, and the share which Samuel had in them, had left on the mind a lingering feeling as of harshness or imperiousness on the part of the old prophet, [this verse and the next chapter]...must remove all such erroneous impressions. So far from feeling calm or satisfied under the new state of things which it had been his duty to bring about, Samuel seems almost wholly absorbed by sorrow for Saul personally, and for what had happened; not unmixed, we may suppose, with concern for the possible consequences of his rejection.⁵⁴

1Samuel 15:35c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^ə (or v ^ə) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong’s #3068 BDB #217

⁵² Certainly, Saul was hoping to correct the situation as well and to reverse God’s judgement; however, it is not unusual for a man to have mixed motivations for doing or saying something.

⁵³ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 463.

⁵⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 463.

1Samuel 15:35c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâcham (נחם) [pronounced <i>naw-KHAHM</i>]	<i>to be sorry, to be moved to pity, to lament, to grieve to have compassion, to be sorry, to pity, to suffer grief, to rue</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect, pausal form	Strong's #5162 BDB #636
kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because, when</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mâlak ^e (מלך) [pronounced <i>maw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>to make king, to cause to reign, to cause to rule over</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #4427 BDB #573
ʾêth (את) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Shâʾûwl (שׂוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i>]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
ʿal (על) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: *Y^ehowah also lamented that he made Saul king over Israel.* This is an anthropopathism. We have already been told unequivocally that God is not a man, therefore he does not *nâcham* (*lament* or *grieve*) (v. 29). And here, we have Him grieving and lamenting that he made Saul king. What an anthropopathism does is help to bring God's actions and thoughts down to our level. He knew in eternity past what Saul would do. He knew every mistake, every action, every act of disobedience. Yet, God made Saul king over Israel because he was the man for the job at that time. There was no one better in Israel to rule Israel. However, the problem with a king, as opposed to a judge, is that they are lifetime fixtures. Good judges might judge for the majority of their lives, but they tend to relinquish their office peacefully (recall that both Eli and Samuel tried to set up their sons as judges and/or priests near the end of their lives). However, a king generally occupies that post for life and he usually leaves office by death. God knew all of this in eternity past, and Samuel knew enough principals from his knowledge of Bible doctrine to know that a king was not the best thing for Israel (which is being borne out by Saul's lack of obedience). However, God allowed Israel to have a king, and Samuel followed suit, and King Saul, at first, appeared as though he would be a great king. And, in some areas, Saul was almost unparalleled, e.g., in the realm of bravery. Saul, despite the fact that things looked hopeless against the Philistines a chapter ago, still stood with his 600 men fearlessly, only a few miles away from the Philistine base camp. But, after being king for awhile, Saul has fallen out of the habit of obeying God completely. As king, he calls the shots. When Samuel brings him a directive from God, Saul does not necessarily set out to disobey God's commands—it's just as the situation unfolds, Saul seems to think that the orders can be modified to fit the situation. For this reason, he is no longer fit to be king. Therefore, God will remove him from office. To explain this in a few words, the writer here tells us that God regretted that he made Saul king.

McGee explains: *When the Bible says that God repented, it means that His actions look as though he changed His mind. He has not. God said all along that if Saul did not make good, He would remove him.*

Saul sinned, and so God removed him from his position as king. God still hates sin and will judge it. Saul was the choice of the people, and he failed. Yet Samuel mourned for him...Samuel loved Saul a great deal...He hated to see this man fail and turn aside. That is why his words to Saul were so strong and harsh; they came from a person who loved him. The words of Samuel were also coming from the heart of God.

My friend, God's love will not deter Him from judging sinners. He can love them and still execute judgment. Our God is holy and righteous and just, as well as loving.⁵⁵

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⁵⁵ J. Vernon McGee; *I & II Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 88.