

## Saul's Kingship Established (c. 1050 BC)

1 Samuel 11

### Saul Defeats the Ammonites

- 1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.
- 2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this *condition* will I make a *covenant* with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it *for* a reproach upon all Israel.
- 3 And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee.
- 4 Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.
- 5 And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What *aieth* the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.
- 6 And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.
- 7 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.
- 8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.
- 9 And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, To morrow, by *that time* the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed *it* to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.
- 10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.
- 11 And it was *so* on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

### Samuel and the People Reaffirm Saul's Kingship

- 12 And the people said unto Samuel, Who *is* he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.
- 13 And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.
- 14 Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.
- 15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

## Samuel's Farewell Speech (c. 1050 BC)

1 Samuel 12

### Samuel Affirms His Integrity

- 1 And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.
- 2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons *are* with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.
- 3 Behold, here I *am*: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.
- 4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.
- 5 And he said unto them, The LORD *is* witness against you, and his anointed *is* witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, *He is* witness.

### Samuel Warns Israel Not to Forget God

- 6 And Samuel said unto the people, *It is* the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.
- 7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.
- 8 When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.
- 9 And when they forgat the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.
- 10 And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.

11 And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.

12 And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God *was* your king.

13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, *and* whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

14 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

15 But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.

#### **Yahweh's Sign Confirming the People's Wickedness in Seeking a King**

16 Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.

17 *Is it* not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

18 So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

20 And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;

21 And turn ye not aside: for *then should ye go* after vain *things*, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they *are* vain.

22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

### **Saul's First Sin (c. 1050 – c. 1022 BC)**

1 Samuel 13:1–15a

#### **Saul and Jonathan Strike the First Blow Against the Philistines**

1 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, [cf. [Acts 13:21](#)]

2 Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

4 And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

#### **The Philistines Prepare to Retaliate**

5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

7 And *some of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

#### **Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice**

8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he

commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

15a And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin.

*Scripture quotations are from The King James Version (KJV). The KJV is in the public domain.*

### Chronological Notes

#### 1) Saul's Reign.<sup>1</sup>

- A) At precisely the place that one might expect the usual formula summarizing a king's reign—1 Samuel 13:1—there is a textual corruption: "Saul was ... years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel two years." Besides the lacuna concerning his age, it is impossible to squeeze all the events of Saul's reign into two short years. Two solutions are commonly offered: (1) "Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years" (thus the NIV); and (2) "Saul was thirty years old when he became king. When he had reigned for two years ..." The former has in its favor that it follows the pattern of the usual formula (cf. 2 Sam 5:4) and essentially agrees with Paul's round figure of forty years.
- B) Against this reconstruction, however, is the fact that both "thirty" and "forty-two" must be supplied, the former from a few late manuscripts of the Septuagint and the latter by conjecture. "Thirty" appears to be incorrect, since Jonathan, Saul's son, was a leader of men at the very beginning of Saul's reign (1 Sam 13:2–3) and could hardly have been the son of a thirty-year-old man. "Forty-two," it is usually argued, is necessary in order to account for Paul's datum and to explain the unusual plural, rather than dual, form of the "two" in the Hebrew text. Paul's information, however, could well be the result of the deductive process we are about to pursue, and the plural form of "two" is not without grammatical support elsewhere. The best reading, then, would appear to be, "Saul was [forty] years old when he began to reign. When he had reigned for two years ..." "Forty" is a reasonable suggestion, given that Saul had an adult son at the time.
- C) In support of Paul's statement that Saul ruled for forty years is the fact that Ish-Bosheth, the son of Saul who succeeded him as king, was forty when he began to reign (2 Sam 2:10) and yet was not born until after Saul ascended Israel's throne. This is clear from a comparison of the list of Saul's sons in the earliest years of his reign (1 Sam 14:47–51) and the list of all his sons (1 Chron 8:33; 9:39). The former names Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malki-shua, and the latter Jonathan, Malki-shua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal. Esh-Baal is identical to Ish-Bosheth, and Abinadab is presumably another name for Ishvi (see 1 Chron 10:2). When Saul was slain by the Philistines, his three sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malki-shua died with him (1 Sam 31:2). Since Ish-bosheth survived, he obviously was not Abinadab as some scholars maintain.
- D) Another factor of importance is the apparent interregnum between Saul and Ish-Bosheth, during which time Abner maintained control (2 Sam 2:8–11). For reasons not specified, Ish-Bosheth did not immediately follow Saul, as is clear from the fact that he reigned only two years before he was assassinated. In the year of Ish-Bosheth's death, David seized power over Saul's kingdom, and yet he had already been reigning in Hebron for more than seven years (1:1; 2:4; 5:1–5). This means that Abner held the power in the north for about five years before he appointed Ish-Bosheth as king. Ish-Bosheth, forty years old at the time, was therefore born thirty-five years before Saul's death, or around 1046. This further explains why his name does not appear in the list of Saul's children during the earliest part of his reign.
- E) In any case, if Ish-Bosheth was thirty-five at the time of Saul's death and yet was not born until after the commencement of Saul's reign, Saul must have been king for more than thirty-five years, a figure compatible with Paul's "forty." A date of c. 1050 – c. 1010 is therefore most likely.

<sup>1</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, Second Edition, (Baker Publishing, 2008), 209–212.